

Vatican II and Liturgical Renewal

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On December 4, 2013, the Church celebrated the 50th anniversary of the first great document of the Second Vatican Council: the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. This is one of the most important and even a “constitutional” document of the Council because it flowed out of the way the new way in which the Church perceived herself and the manner she wanted to live that out.

The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, was one of two documents issued on the same day, December 4, 1963. The other document, *Inter Mirifica*, is on social communication. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* is one of the most important documents of the Council, one that has been the least understood, has wrought the most havoc — not by having been fulfilled — but by having been ignored or misinterpreted.

As the emeritus Pope Benedict XVI clarified as pontiff: “The question of liturgy is not peripheral: The Council itself reminded us that we are dealing with the very core of the Christian faith.”¹ Now there should be no argument about the central intent of the Council concerning the liturgy. The Council actually spells out its intent, in paragraph 14 of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*: “Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations, which is

demanded by the very nature of the liturgy.” The key words here are “full, conscious, and active participation.” The Latin for “active participation” is *actuosa participatio*.

The term was first used in 1903 by Pope St. Pius X, whose motto was “*Omnia Instaurare in Christo*” (To restore all things in Christ). He considered himself a pope of renewal. He was elected in August, 1903 and in November he issued one of the first documents of his pontificate, a *motuproprio* called *Tra Le Sollicitudini*. This was a document on the renewal of sacred music. In it, the Holy Father states, “In order that the faithful may more actively participate in the sacred liturgy, let them be once again made to sing Gregorian Chant as a congregation.”

The first use therefore of *actuosa participatio*, i.e., active participation, referred explicitly and exclusively to the restoration of the congregational singing of Gregorian Chant. In 1928, Pope Pius XI reiterated the point in his Apostolic Letter, *Divini Cultus*. Nineteen years later, Pius XII delivered the *Magna Carta* of liturgical reform, *Mediator Dei*, using the same term with the same meaning. Until the Second Vatican Council, the term “active participation” referred exclusively to the singing of Gregorian Chant by the people.

There is no doubt that the manner in which the teachings of Vatican II were received, occasioned, at best, difficulty in implementing the vision of the Council — and at worst, downright chaos in the prayer life of the Church, especially the Mass.

Pope Benedict once stated when he was a cardinal: “I am convinced that the ecclesial crisis in which we find ourselves today results in large part from the collapse of the liturgy. The liturgical reform produced extremely grave damage for the faith” (“Restoring the Liturgy”):² What went wrong? The liturgical reform was originally intended to open the treasures of the

Catholic faith to the greatest number of people possible. The richness of the Roman Missal, the beauty of Church music and active participation in the sacramental act of Christ were its purpose. Sacraments, through the rituals, are instruments of Jesus' flesh and by Divine institution lead people through Jesus' flesh to a participation in his divinity. Yet even Pope Benedict recognized a liturgical collapse.

The reaction to what happened in 1963 has been interpreted using three standards: rupture, continuity and reform.

Those who view Vatican II as a rupture think and act on the decrees, including the one on the liturgy, as though there was a new age initiated in 1963 that completely rejected all that had gone before it. For them, this new age was based on the exaltation of the subjective self as opposed to the objective world making liturgy become a celebration of the community. For them active participation actually meant creating the ritual on a daily or weekly basis, often by groups, and so liturgy was self-made.

“When liturgy is self-made, however, then it can no longer give us the proper gift it should be: the encounter with the mystery that is not our own product, but, rather, our origin and source of life. Then the community is celebrating only itself, an activity which is utterly fruitless”³

There can be no human development without having to do anything with the past. The past is a prelude to the future and therefore must take it into account. The ritual expresses eternal realities, and for that reason, liturgy must be approved by the Church so much so that not even the priest and bishop can make it up as they go along.

Many who saw the post-conciliar liturgy as a rupture or falling-out still make reference to a so-called “spirit of the Council” to justify this practice. Every document since 1963, including *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, is clear: “Therefore, no other person, even if he be a priest, may add, remove or change anything in the liturgy on his own authority” (22, 3).

In the view of those who see the Council as a breakup with the past, active participation (*participatio actuosa*) is rooted in the authority of the self and is a merely external celebration of the unity and solidarity of the community responding to the spirit of the age.

Continuity is the acknowledgment of the former rituals as being extremely important. This recognizes the Divine, eternal character of the ritual of the liturgy as it has grown over the centuries in both the Eastern and Western Churches.

IMPLEMENTING THE LITURGICAL REFORMS OF VATICAN II

If members of the Preparatory Commission and the Council Fathers found their task to be daunting, the greater challenge was yet to come. The reforms would need to be implemented and the whole Church formed in a new worship style, language, and form. In 1964, Pope Paul VI formed what was called the *Consilium*, charged with the task of revising existing liturgical books so that they were in harmony with the directives of the Council. Even more important would be the editing and revision of the Latin *editio typica* (of post conciliar liturgical books), which would then be translated into vernacular languages by regional commissions. The *Consilium* also worked on composing new liturgical texts such as three new Eucharistic Prayers in 1968 (Chupungco, 508-10). The *Consilium* was eventually incorporated into the newly formed Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship in 1969.

Reforming the liturgy in a post-Conciliar Church was part of a much larger agenda that would work in tandem with an overall renewal of the Church's life. Unlike its Tridentine form, Vatican II worship was to reach out widely to embrace all of God's world. Liturgy, then, was necessarily concerned about life outside of the sanctuary walls: human liberation, justice, and mercy for the poor and oppressed, dialogue with other Christians and

with believers who are not Christian. It was also about the Church's relationship to non-believers and to the secular cultures in which it dwells.

For some, perhaps for many pastoral leaders in those years, the implementation of a new liturgy unleashed a freedom and zest for liturgical creativity. Much of this experimentation of the 1960s and '70s emerged at the grassroots level, some of which was more successful than others. Critics of the Council have argued that the reforms came too quickly and the faithful were unprepared for what would emerge. As we look back over these past 50 years, few would disagree that mistakes were made. In some cases, liturgical changes were introduced without understanding. Many bishops returned home from the Council enthusiastic about the prospect of a renewed liturgical life, but felt largely unprepared for the task of implementation. Thus, the results around the globe have been largely uneven. Even today, the kind of liturgical participation and careful preparation envisaged by the Council is barely visible in some countries while it is abundantly present in others.

February 1964, Archbishop Joseph-Marie Martin of Rouen, President of the French Liturgical Commission, sent a memorandum to Cardinal Paolo Giobbe on behalf of the Commission.⁴ The issue regarded the topic of liturgical translation and rumours that the Roman Curia was attempting to reverse the Council's decision on the matter:

The Council did not decide that the Assemblies would propose this or that concession for the vernacular for approval by the Apostolic See; ... Neither did the Council state that the bishops' conferences would submit translations for approval by the Apostolic See; it agreed that the translations would be approved by the bishops' conferences; that is all. ... People are saying just two months after its promulgation, the Constitution is beaten in the breach, that the decisions made by the episcopal assemblies may be effectively neutralized by the Roman Curia, that the role of the bishops' assemblies is being undermined at the very

moment of its establishment by the Council, that the decisions of the Council are being contested even before the Council has finished.⁵

If one employs the solid principles of Vatican II as the barometer, there appear to be more shadows than light in the past 10 years as far as the liturgical world's relationship to the Roman Curia is concerned. Some argue that the Church is suffering from "a liturgical malaise." Tensions between the International Committee on English in the Liturgy (ICEL) and the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments are widely known, culminating in the 2001 Vatican instruction *Liturgiam Authenticam*. Noted liturgical scholar Nathan Mitchell writes that the rules for translating liturgical texts found in that document "are a spectacular example of ecclesiastical micromanagement that may well turn the already difficult process of crafting a worthy, idiomatic and memorable English liturgy into an endlessly unedifying sideshow"⁶ Lest we think that the problem is limited to the English-speaking world, similar tensions are also present in the relationship between liturgical commissions and the Congregation in other countries as well.

For their part, a number of bishops and episcopal conferences have expressed concerns not unlike the lament of those French bishops 50 years ago. They contend that the Council's liturgical agenda is being challenged both within the Roman Curia and by influential conservative groups within the Church. This may explain why there is a marked difference in tone, style, and competency between the Conciliar/post-Conciliar texts when compared with more recent Vatican documents such as *Dominus Iesus* or *Liturgiam Authenticam*.

The Spirit of God guides the Church and the doors opened at the Second Vatican Council cannot be closed again. This was stressed by the former Papal Master of Liturgical Celebrations, Archbishop Piero Marini in

his statement on the 40th anniversary of the Liturgy Constitution, it was the Holy Spirit who brought about the liturgical movement and it is that same Spirit who leads the Church along its path even still.⁷ Pope Francis exhorts the Church through his apostolic exhortation to be open, he says “A church which ‘goes forth’ is a church whose doors are open.... Often it is better simply to slow down, to put aside our eagerness in order to see and listen to others, to stop rushing from one thing to another and to remain with someone who has faltered along the way.” He urges pastors and faithful to “abandon the complacent attitude that says: ‘We have always done it this way.’ I invite everyone to be bold and creative in this task of rethinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelization in their respective communities.”

LITURGICAL FORMATION

Fifty years after the Council we have yet to understand just what our liturgical participation demands when we gather together each Sunday for our common celebrations. What it demands, of course, is nothing less than everything. Not only do we need to offer our hearts, minds, voices, and entire bodies as we participate fully and actively in the liturgical celebration, but we need to commit ourselves fully to the service of human liberation wherever oppression exists in its myriad forms both in our own countries and throughout the world.

Francis re-emphasizes “the profound connection between evangelization and human advancement” and the right of Pastors “to offer opinions on all that affects people’s lives”. “No one can demand that religion should be relegated to the inner sanctum of personal life, without a right to offer an opinion on events affecting society”. He quotes John Paul II, who said that the Church “cannot and must not remain on the side-lines in the fight for justice”.

This formation is meant for all, the laity, the clergy and religious. There some parts of the world including our country, India, where seminarians are not taught the craft of presiding at the rites nor are they trained in liturgical preaching. To be presider and preacher does not come with the grace of ordination. It is an art learned and which requires time, practice, and regular feedback. This is a crucial part of liturgical formation and will influence the credibility of Sunday worship either positively or negatively.

THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE LAITY AND LITURGICAL MINISTRY

“Active participation,” here, means an interior action in which people allow themselves through the sacrifice of Christ to offer their hearts with him and be interiorly changed by him to know as God knows and love as God loves.

The liturgy forms the prayer life both of the celebrant and the people. “Everything, then, comes together: the horizontal and the vertical, the uniqueness of God and the unity of humankind, the communion of all who worship in spirit and in truth”.⁸ The process of this reform initiated by Pope Benedict has yet to bear mature fruit. The presiding minister does have a role to play but it should not be a dominant role.

A number of lay Catholics are theologically trained and many of them are assuming administrative positions within the Church that had formerly been occupied by clergy. Such positions of leadership would have been unthinkable 40 or 50 years ago. These are positive signs that the Conciliar Church is coming of age.

LITURGY AS THE FOUNDATION FOR DIALOGUE, AND THE CHALLENGE OF GLOBALIZATION

Liturgy is the heart of all dialogue and the two realities are inseparable elements in the renewal of our post-Conciliar Church. Our liturgical participation compels us to explore points of convergence not only with other Christians, but also with Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, and of other traditions very different from our own. Such exchange leads to mutual enrichment without compromising on our own beliefs or traditions. But this dialogue must begin first of all within our own Church.

The Holy Father also affirms some of these in *'Evangelii Gaudium'*. He says that with regard to the theme of peace, "a prophetic voice must be raised" against attempts at false reconciliation to "silence or appease" the poor, while others "refuse to renounce their privileges". For the construction of a society "in peace, justice and fraternity" he indicates four principles: "Time is greater than space"(222) means working "slowly but surely, without being obsessed with immediate results"(223). "Unity prevails over conflict" (226) means "a diversified and life-giving unity"(228). "Realities are more important than ideas (231) means avoiding "reducing politics or faith to rhetoric" (232). "The whole is greater than the part" means bringing together "globalization and localization"(234).

"Evangelization also involves the path of dialogue", the Pope continues, which opens the Church to collaboration with all political, social, religious and cultural spheres. Ecumenism is "an indispensable path to evangelization". Mutual enrichment is important: "we can learn so much from one another!", for example "in the dialogue with our Orthodox brothers and sisters, we Catholics have the opportunity to learn more about the meaning of Episcopal collegiality and their experience of synodality" (246); "dialogue and friendship with the children of Israel are part of the life of Jesus' disciples" (248);

“interreligious dialogue”, which must be conducted “clear and joyful in one’s own identity”, is “a necessary condition for peace in the world” and does not obscure evangelization (250-251); in our times, “our relationship with the followers of Islam has taken on great importance”(252): the Pope “humbly” entreats those countries of Islamic tradition to guarantee religious freedom to Christians, also “in light of the freedom which followers of Islam enjoy in Western countries!”. “Faced with disconcerting episodes of violent fundamentalism” he urges us to “avoid hateful generalisations, for authentic Islam and the proper reading of the Koran are opposed to every form of violence”(253). And against the attempt to private religions in some contexts, he affirms that “the respect due to the agnostic or non-believing minority should not be arbitrarily imposed in a way that silences the convictions of the believing majority or ignores the wealth of religious traditions”(255). He then repeats the importance of dialogue and alliance between believers and non-believers (257).

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF VATICAN II FOR ASIA

The Council Fathers from the Asian churches were neither familiar with one another nor did they know much about the situation of the Catholic churches in other Asian countries. The four sessions of the Second Vatican Council, therefore, were special moments to get to know each other and learn about the many aspects in the various fields, the Asian Church had in common. It was during these sessions that the seed for a federation of Asian churches came into being. It was officially founded in 1970. The contributions made by the Asian bishops to the different documents of Vatican II were in *liturgy*, opting for the vernacular as liturgical language; in *ecumenism*, *missiology*, in the *theology of religions* (proposing that the Council should deal not only with Judaism, but should also be

open to other religious traditions in its consideration, thus preparing the way for the declaration *Nostra Aetate*).⁹

The Asian and African bishops were also actively involved in the discussions on the “Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church” (*Ad Gentes*). The Missionary Decree (*AG 7*) simply stated: “Therefore, though God in ways known to Himself can lead those inculpably ignorant of the gospel to that faith, without which it is impossible to please Him (Heb 11:6), yet a missionary activity today as always retains its power and necessity.”

MOST IMPORTANT FRUIT OF VATICAN II FOR THE ASIAN CHURCH

The Asian bishops used the visit of Pope Paul VI in Manila to found the FABC. The plenary assemblies and the various study programs for bishops in the fields of social apostolate, interreligious dialogue, lay apostolate, theological reflection, and others, have enabled the Asian Church to find common ways in their pastoral and theological orientations.

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF VATICAN II IN THE ASIAN LOCAL CHURCHES

Vatican II was a stepping stone for all churches to implement the new theological insights on the mission of the Church in the modern world, by interpreting the “signs of the times” in their pastoral, missionary, ecumenical, interreligious and social activities.

An example for other Asian churches was the initiative taken by the Indian Church to implement the insights of Vatican II. Under the leadership of its founding director D.S. Amalorpavadass (1932-1990), the National, Biblical, Liturgical and Catechetical Center (NBCLC) in Bangalore, founded in 1966, became the catalyst for renewal within the Church in India. In March 1969, the All India Seminar for a Church in India Today, was held in

Bangalore and gave important stimuli for the reception of the Council. The seminar was most probably the most important event in the Church history of India.

CHALLENGES TO THE ASIAN CHURCH

The true universality of the Christian faith needs to be discovered and realized. In order to do this the Asian churches need to develop a distinctive form of Asian Christian living of the gospel and of being Church. "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (Rev 2:7) To respond to the challenges presented by the political, economic, social, religious, and cultural condition within the societies, the bishops, priests, religious and laity have to discern the "signs of the times and interpret them in the light of the gospel." This mission implies that the Church "recognize and understand the world in which we live, its expectations, its longings, and its often dramatic characteristics" (GS 4).

At the Asian Synod of 1998, several bishops addressed the issue of liturgical authority and competence within the framework of collegiality. In one intervention, Bishop Francisco Claver, S.J., retired Apostolic Vicar of Bontoc-Lagawe in the Philippines and well-known lecturer at the East Asian Pastoral Institute, spoke of liturgical language as an issue of trust and dialogue:

Why do we have to send vernacular translations of the liturgy to Rome for approval? Or to the bishop of the place, for that matter, if he doesn't speak the language in question. Don't we trust our people enough to speak the language of orthodoxy? But in truth the best judges of the correctness, even theological, of translations and texts are the faithful and clergy of the place where the language is spoken.¹⁰

Bishop Remigius Peter of Kumabakonam (now of Kottar), India, echoed Claver's concerns in reporting on his small group's discussions at

the Synod: "Speaking of translation, it was observed that the local churches make use of the services of experts in church matters as well as of experts in the local languages to translate liturgical texts. Many expressed their experience of inordinate delay by the Roman commissions in approving translations"¹¹

It is of paramount importance that the issue of liturgical translation and of the competent authority to judge liturgical matters for the local Church is fundamentally an issue of collegiality. This implies dialogue and trust with good fraternal exchange between diocesan bishops, their episcopal conferences, and the Congregation for Divine Worship. It would seem self-evident that bishops to whom the Holy See has entrusted the leadership of local churches should be sufficiently competent to judge what will best suit that particular church or region, assisted by cultural anthropologists, liturgists, and other experts. Implied here is a close working relationship between bishops, episcopal conferences, and the Congregation for Divine Worship. Such a relationship based on trust is non-negotiable for authentic liturgical inculturation that is both faithful to the Church's tradition and at the same time expressive of the cultural genius of that particular community.

Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* calls for a "conversion of the papacy," saying he wants to promote "a sound decentralization" and candidly admitting that in recent years "we have made little progress" on that front.

He suggests that bishops' conferences ought to be given "a juridical status..., including genuine doctrinal authority." He notes the possibility of a greater role for bishops' conference, saying: "Excessive centralization, rather than proving helpful, complicates the church's life and her missionary outreach."

In effect, that would amount to a reversal of a 1998 Vatican ruling under John Paul II that only individual bishops in concert with the pope, and not episcopal conferences, have such authority.

LITURGICAL INCULTURATION

Inculturation of the Church's worship will be an essential part of our future if our liturgy is to remain a credible force in shaping the Christian life. The genius of the Roman Rite was precisely that it corresponded to and, indeed, flowed from the genius of fifth century Roman culture. In other words, liturgical texts and forms followed a structure that was consistent with Roman literary forms known within secular culture. The frustrations mentioned above regarding Vatican delays in approving liturgical translations from the *editio typica* point to a far more systemic question: is it fair, even possible, to import Roman texts into a non-Roman world and simply translate them into local idiom, or is not something more substantial needed?

The Church's historical consciousness is helpful here. The Christian East succeeded in maintaining its rich liturgical diversity over two millennia and resisted numerous Western attempts to suppress Oriental liturgical practices in favour of Roman centralization.¹² In the West, the Church of Milan held firm in celebrating its Ambrosian Rite much to the frustration of Rome, demonstrating that one can be truly Catholic without needing to be "Roman." Roman Congregations become concerned and fear the loss of liturgical unity. But the Eastern and non-Roman Western rites remind us that unity and diversity need not be mutually exclusive.¹²

At the conclusion of the Asian Synod and as a concrete fruit of their deliberations, participants made the following proposition on the subject of "Inculturation":

For many Asian Catholics, the official liturgy is often experienced as alien and does not touch their hearts. This points to the need for inculturating the liturgy in such a way that the liturgy becomes more meaningful and nourishing for people in the setting of their own cultures. Consequently, local Churches need the authority and freedom to inculturate the liturgy by adapting it to the local

cultures while recognizing the need for dialogue and communion with the Holy See, the principle of unity in the Church. The Synod requests the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments to grant Episcopal and Regional Bishops' Conferences the authority or competence to approve translations of liturgical texts in the vernacular which are to be ultimately forwarded to the said Dicastery.¹³

Though the Second Vatican Council set a path for opening the door to recovering an integral relationship between liturgy and life, liturgical inculturation remains largely unfulfilled.

Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium*, makes the following remark with regard to inculturation, "Christianity does not have simply one cultural expression" and that the face of the Church is "varied". "We cannot demand that peoples of every continent, in expressing their Christian faith, imitate modes of expression which European nations developed at a particular moment of their history". The Pope reiterates that "underlying popular piety ... is an active evangelizing power" and encourages the research of theologians, reminding them however that "the Church and theology exist to evangelize" and urges them not to be "content with a desk-bound theology". (*Evangelii Gaudium* 61-75)

THE INDIAN CHURCH

Fr. D. S. Amalorpavadass, the CBCI and NBCLC:

Regardless of the degree to which the Indian bishops themselves, in their collective identity as a "competent territorial ecclesiastical authority"—the CBCI—actually received deferential authority from the Council Fathers (an interpretation which was at least partly warranted, as has been seen, by *Sacrosanctum Concilium*) in their freedom to experiment with, to recommend

to the Apostolic See, and ultimately to implement changes to the liturgies celebrated in their own ecclesiastical territory, in their turn, they certainly wasted no time in placing a remarkable degree of trust and authority into the hands of one specific individual, an 'expert' in matters of adaptation and inculturation who consequently became an unusually (if not inordinately) influential priest, Rev. Dr. Doraisamy Simon (D. S.) Amalorpavadass (1932-1990). Indeed, in October 1966, during its first post-conciliar meeting, the CBCI appointed Amalorpavadass (who was not, it should be noted, himself a bishop) to be the founding Director of the National Catechetical and Liturgical Centre—a post he held until 1982. For sixteen years, Amalorpavadass presided over what came to be known as the National Biblical, Catechetical, and Liturgical Centre (NBCLC) in Bangalore, even as the Bishops' Conference entrusted him also to be Secretary (not Chairman) of their Commission for Liturgy (1967-82), Secretary of their Commission for Catechetics (1967-82), and Secretary of their Commission for the Bible (1971-82).¹⁴

The influence Amalorpavadass thus exercised by virtue of these positions was immeasurable, and only grew with the subsequent founding of similar regional and diocesan centers which followed the lead of the NBCLC in its advocacy, development, institution and dissemination of highly inculturated forms of bible study, catechesis, liturgy, worship, art and architecture through educational literature, conferences, and above all by way of example. Amalorpavadass thus became, by virtue of his position as Director of the NBCLC, one of the most prominent and influential priests in India, as a theologian, liturgist, conference organizer, and the chief architect of many initiatives furthering the inculturation of what began to be called (unofficially) "An Order of Mass for India."

He was also deeply involved in the international ecumenical movement, participating in such organizations as the World Council of Churches, the

ICEL (International Commission for English in the Liturgy), and Pro Mundi Vita, in addition to being a founding member of the WCFBA (World Catholic Federation for Biblical Apostolate) and EATWOT, (the Ecumenical Association for Third World Theologians).

Inculturation implies creativity and originality, dynamism and relevance: if the Local Church is considered as only a part of the universal Church and as a lower administrative unit, the attitude of the Local Church will be one of importing and copying, of implementing orders and conforming to what comes from the top, in a passive mentality of receiving. There will be uniformity and sameness everywhere; but it will be irrelevant and cease to be a Church. On the other hand, if every Local Church contains the full mystery of Christ and expresses it in its socio-cultural milieu, then there will be creativity and originality.¹⁵

In a (2007) essay, "Liturgical Inculturation in India after Vatican II," Rev. Jacob Theckanath has both usefully summarized the history of post-conciliar efforts at inculturation in the Indian Church and presented some statistical analyses of the attitudes toward the relative successes and failures thereof amongst the Indian clergy and laity. With regard to "inculturation efforts made in the Roman Rite in India primarily in the Eucharistic Celebration," Theckanath notes first that "most of them have been by individuals in the areas of art and architecture, dance and music, **yoga**, and in many other ways such as prayer, meditation, and spirituality."¹⁶

Yet he chooses to focus not on the efforts of more-or-less isolated individuals, but "only on the efforts at inculturation made at the level of the Bishops' Conference and Commission for Liturgy...those that have been undertaken at the National level [including those of the] NBCLC."¹⁷

Appealing to a survey conducted in 1978, (nearly a decade after the introduction of 'the twelve points,') and stored in the records of the NBCLC in Bangalore, Theckanath reveals that the majority of those polled are

favorably disposed toward the liturgical innovations allowed in the interest of producing an inculturated, indigenous Indian liturgy. The responses he records are, for a survey, remarkably detailed:

58% accept them with enthusiasm. They consider that the 12 points enable them to worship God in keeping with the spirit and genius of India. They are conducive for a deeper experience of the Mystery and helpful for maintaining a prayerful spirit throughout. The use of symbols, the chants and bhajans sustain involvement and a contemplative spirit.¹⁸

Amongst all of the responses reported by Theckanath, a sizeable number of them make specific mention of the use of various postures, gestures and ritualized actions. Theckanath notes, significantly, that among those who had direct exposure to the NBCLC by having attended any of the numerous seminars they frequently host, “the response is overwhelmingly positive.” Of these:

89% felt that such elements have contributed to a deeper prayer and worship. They appreciate the Indian atmosphere. They reported in particular that the chants, bhajans and some symbols and gestures helped them to pray better.¹⁹

Theckanath also reports a mixture of qualified, detailed endorsements and specific criticisms, as well as a minority who expressed outright opposition to liturgical inculturation:

Some say that it might help much more new converts and those whose life is rooted in the traditional cultures of India (14%). **Some oppose inculturation (17%). They feel that it creates confusion. Distinctiveness of Christian worship may be watered down.** Some 8% have reservations on the “passive” posture of sitting on the floor throughout the Mass, and others on panchangapranam, arati, etc. Some others mention that the postures at Mass should be those adopted for daily life. 12

12% feel that all of this amounts to Hinduization. They say that the Christian identity will be lost if inculturation is pursued.²⁰

In 2009, Archbishop Thomas Menamparampil, SDB, assessed certain failures and limits of inculturation in India, as well as documenting some of its successes. Menamparampil sharply contrasts the isolated efforts of individuals with others which have been coordinated with those of larger (parish/diocesan) communities and especially with those of the Indian Catholic hierarchy:

...much progress has been made in areas wherever serious research and reflection have preceded individual inculturation initiatives, and where there has been a serene effort to reach consensus involving the liturgical commission and the local ordinaries of a region. Whenever persons who are both competent and sensitive have succeeded to interpret the mind of the Church and the sensitivity of the community correctly, new ground has been broken. For example, barefoot entry into holy places has to a large extent become universal. Aaratis were easily adopted during some of the sacred moments of the liturgy. The initiative for introducing tribal dances into the processions during the entrance, offertory and recession was very widely welcomed. The traditions like the washing of the hands, placing of the shawls or gamchas on the shoulders, placing of kumkum on the forehead, offering of bouquet, throwing of flowers, or sprinkling of scented water as a sign of welcome were easily accepted, each in its own context. Some retained the practice of throwing salt towards a holy object, others betel leaves, others flower petals. Standing, sitting on benches, on muras or the floor...each would have its own meaning in different cultural contexts, and has been adopted by the believing community as they have felt comfortable with it. Genuflections, bows, handshakes...homage paid to ancestors...these have been differently accepted by different communities (emphases in original).²¹

It is striking to note here the number of bodily postures, gestures and actions to which the Archbishop points as examples of successful efforts at authentic liturgical inculturation.

Without specifying the Indian Church, Menamparampil suggests that “many particular churches have only reached the point of acculturation, not inculturation.” In light of the often-controversial nature of the efforts at inculturation, his prescription for “successful inculturation” is telling. It should, he says,

...create a sense of security, not tension; enhance identity, not cause alienation; create social harmony, not disaffection; provide a sense of purpose and direction, not theological deviation and an irresponsible leap into the dark.²²

Whether the efforts at liturgical inculturation made by Amalorpavadass and others in post-conciliar India have achieved these lofty ideals remains an open question. Yet Menamparampil’s reflections on the relevance of inculturation for the proper relationship between local and universal Churches are clearly reminiscent of Amalorpavadass’:

The more a Christian community becomes indigenized, the more it becomes open to the universal Church. A closed attitude can bring into existence culture-bound churches that cannot understand each other. Each Christian community needs the insights drawn from the faith experiences of other communities in different cultural contexts to acquire a deeper grasp of the revealed word. Christians from other cultures and civilizations can tell us of our own cultural biases in the theologies and traditions which we have developed, and we may be able to point out similar deficiencies in theirs. That is how believing communities move together towards the fuller realization of the Christian possibility.²³

In (2007) an essay, “Inculturation of Liturgy: Its Problems and Possibilities” Rev. Paul Puthanangady, SDB, does precisely the same.

Puthanangady considers the procedures which have shaped the inculturation of liturgy in post-conciliar India, particularly the supervision and oversight of such efforts by the CBCI and other ecclesiastical bodies and summarizes historical phases through which they have passed.

Puthanangady's personal opinions provide a relatively less rewarding perspective, though one worthy of attention. Aiming first at the construction of his own normative definition and proceeding toward an acknowledgment of the "possibilities" of liturgical inculturation—its positive aspects—Puthanangady argues that it "cannot be restricted merely to...replacing one set of symbols with another nor is it a technique to make liturgy more interesting and varied."²⁴

For example, noting a significant change in post-Vatican II ecclesiology, which placed a renewed emphasis on the sacramental character of the Church, he suggests that because the Church visualizes Christ in the midst of the world as the sacrament of salvation and because this happens in a special manner during the liturgy...therefore when the liturgy is celebrated using the symbols taken from the culture of a particular people, the encounter between him and the people becomes easier and more experiential. They will be able to recognize him as the living Lord in their midst because the symbols will proclaim his presence in a more intelligible manner.²⁵

Reflecting on the conclusions reached at the Special Asian Synod of Bishops held in Rome from 18 April to 14 May, 1998, the Pontiff, in a visit to India the following year, officially promulgated his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation in New Delhi on 6 November, 1999. It reiterated many of the Church's conciliar and post-conciliar documents concerning the necessity and value of inculturation, suggesting that, among many requisite aspects, the liturgy nonetheless plays a key role, being as it is...a decisive means of evangelization, especially in Asia, where the followers of different religions are so drawn to worship, religious festivals and popular devotions.²⁶

Liturgical inculturation requires more than a focus upon traditional cultural values, symbols and rituals. The specific needs of the poor, migrants, refugees, youth and women cannot be overlooked in any genuine liturgical inculturation in Asia (emphasis added).²⁷

Finally, the Pontiff also stressed the responsibilities of the national and regional Bishops' Conferences to work closely with the Vatican's Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments "in the search for effective ways of fostering appropriate forms of worship in the Asian context," reminding his listeners once again of the proper balance between the local and universal Churches:

Such cooperation is essential because the Sacred Liturgy expresses and celebrates the one faith professed by all and, being the heritage of the whole Church, cannot be determined by local Churches in isolation from the universal Church.²⁸

Over a decade earlier, to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the promulgation of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* on 4 December, 1988, John Paul II had delivered an Apostolic Letter, *Vicesimus Quintus Annus*, wherein he likewise took account of the successes and challenges facing the processes of "adaptation." Noting the successful introduction of vernacular languages into the liturgy, and the "more delicate...but equally necessary...adaptation of rites," he pointed to

...the considerable task of continuing to implant the Liturgy in certain cultures, welcoming from them those expressions which are compatible with aspects of the true and authentic spirit of the Liturgy.²⁹

Reiterating the affirmation of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* that the liturgy contains aspects both immutable (because of their divine institution) and others "open to change," which the Church occasionally has a "duty" to adapt, especially to "the cultures of recently evangelized peoples,"³⁰ the

Pope underscored several challenges which face such efforts, some of which may be “dangerous to faith” and/or challenge the Church’s unity.

Liturgical diversity can be a source of enrichment, but it can also provoke tensions, mutual misunderstandings and even divisions. In this field it is clear that diversity must not damage unity. It can only gain expression in fidelity to the common Faith, to the sacramental signs that the Church has received from Christ and to hierarchical communion. *Cultural adaptation also requires conversion of heart and even, where necessary, a breaking with ancestral customs incompatible with the Catholic faith.*³¹

The opening up of liturgical inculturation to the various, wonderfully diverse Indian cultures, while creating considerable challenges, is as essential for the Indian Church at this historical moment as liturgical renewal and inculturation into the world’s many cultures has ever been and continues to be for the Church universal. By finding and maintaining the proper balance between the local and the universal, between the part and the whole, between the Church’s own culture and the several human cultures with which she strives peacefully to coexist, both the Indian Church and the global Catholic Church must be open to grow. When the Churches are able truly to be open, the renewal of the liturgy envisioned and promoted by the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council in *Sacrosanctum Concilium* will occur more or less naturally and efforts toward liturgical inculturation will likewise discover a harmony and mutual enrichment between the Church and all the human cultures in which she lives.

CONCLUSION

We should note that the Council never intended to produce one uniform “modern rite” that would be imposed throughout the Western Church as the *Missale Romanum* of 1970 was. It intended moderately to reform the

received liturgical tradition, a tradition which included the differing rites of religious orders and also of some ancient dioceses. The “triumph” of the Missal of Paul VI over these rites (another notable event in liturgical history) is not attributable to *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. The constitution respects legitimate liturgical diversity.

We cannot return often enough to the constitution’s *raison d’être*: because the Sacred Liturgy is the source and summit of the life and mission of the Church, we must form people to be able to participate fruitfully in it. Ritual reform itself is not what is essential: being able to drink the living water offered by he who comes to us in the Sacred Liturgy is.

As we look back over these 50 years we need not be discouraged by apparent obstacles to authentic liturgical renewal that we have encountered along the way. Much has been accomplished and there is much for which to be grateful. We have just had the introduction of the New Revised Roman Missal in all languages from the Advent of December 2011. The revision of other rituals are also taking place. We live with a renewed understanding of what it means to be baptized into Jesus Christ and his paschal mystery. And we live with a renewed worship which is infinitely better than what preceded it. We can take courage that it is indeed the Spirit who is guiding the Church and that same Spirit will guide our liturgical future, as well. In the words of Archbishop Piero Marini:

The people of God are always on pilgrimage and all of us need to walk forward with joy, certain that the Spirit surrounds us like a cloud and guides us like a column of fire. May we experience the liturgy of the Council as the column of fire of the Spirit who continually renews the heart of the Church on her pilgrim way towards the Kingdom, filling her with beauty ever new, with joy and hope³²

AN UNFINISHED AGENDA: LOOKING TOWARD OUR LITURGICAL FUTURE

There is a lot of scope for improvement and the need of the hour is to prioritize key liturgical issues for the future at the diocesan, regional and if need be at the national levels. These will vary according to the different regions of the world. Nonetheless, there are some major areas of importance that extend across cultural boundaries and in our last liturgical association meetings some of these areas have not only been mentioned but also studied. I would like to mention five: liturgical formation, the changing role of the laity, the task of liturgical inculturation, liturgy as the foundation for dialogue, and the challenge of globalization. The inculturation of the Liturgy should be done in such a way that the liturgy becomes more meaningful and nourishing for people in the setting of their own cultures. Consequently, local Churches need the authority and freedom to inculturate the liturgy by adapting it to the local cultures while recognizing the need for dialogue and communion with the Holy See, the principle of unity in the Church.

(Endnotes)

¹"The Ratzinger Report," 120.

²"How We Must Proceed, Part 2," *Inside the Vatican*, 2005, 95).

³Ratzinger, *Milestones*, 148.

⁴Giobbe later became a member of *Consilium* and then the Congregation for Divine Worship. The "Memorandum was probably sent to other offices of the Roman Curia, as well."

⁵"Memorandum by the Liturgical Commission of the French Episcopate," 7 February 1964, in Piero Marini, *Consilium ad exsequendam Constitutionem de Sacra Liturgia: October 1963 to March 1965* (Document N.II), (unpublished manuscript), 443.

⁶Mitchell Nathan, 2004 "The Council's Call" in *America* (19-26 January), 10.

⁷Piero Marini's Presentation: "The Fortieth Anniversary of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy," in the volume published by the Centre national de pastorale liturgique, *Renouveauliturgique * Documents fondateurs* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 2004) (Collection Liturgie, n. 14).

⁸Ratzinger, *Spirit of the Liturgy*, 49.

⁹Talk at the East Pastoral Institute Alumni Home, 4 October 2005, Manila, Philippines).

- ¹⁰Claver, Francisco S.J, 2002 "Inculturation as Dialogue" edited by Peter C. Phan, *The Asian Synod: Texts and Commentaries* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis), 101.
- ¹¹Claver, Francisco S.J, 2002 "Inculturation as Dialogue" edited by Peter C. Phan, *The Asian Synod: Texts and Commentaries* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis), 130
- ¹²See Taft 1998; See also the post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Asia*: (no. 21-B) as quoted in Kroeger and Phan 2002:155
- ¹³"Proposition 43: Inculturation," edited by P. C. Phan, *The Asian Synod: Texts and Commentaries*, 159.
- ¹⁴ The several positions of authority held by Fr. Amalorpavadass (together with the years in which he exercised them) are carefully documented and displayed in a museum-like display of photographs, paintings, artifacts, and textual commentary permanently installed at the Anjali Ashram, a community founded by Amalorpavadass in Mysore, Karnataka, in 1979; I visited the ashram in August 2009.
- ¹⁵ Fr. D. S. Amalorpavadass, *Inculturation: Some Practical Implications and Conclusions*. NBCLC: Inculturation Pamphlet Series no. 8. (Bangalore: National Biblical, Catechetical, and Liturgical Centre, no date).
- ¹⁶ Rev. Jacob Theckanath, "Liturgical Inculturation in India After Vatican II." In *Re-Launching Our Evangelizing Mission: A Renewed Encounter Between Gospel and Cultures in India*. Ed. Rev. Mário Saturnino Dias. (Povoação, Benaulim, Goa: Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences Office of Evangelization, 2007), 111.
- ¹⁷Rev. Jacob Theckanath, "Liturgical Inculturation in India After Vatican II." In *Re-Launching Our Evangelizing Mission: A Renewed Encounter Between Gospel and Cultures in India*. Ed. Rev. Mário Saturnino Dias. (Povoação, Benaulim, Goa: Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences Office of Evangelization, 2007), 111.
- ¹⁸Rev. Jacob Theckanath, "Liturgical Inculturation in India After Vatican II." In *Re-Launching Our Evangelizing Mission: A Renewed Encounter Between Gospel and Cultures in India*. Ed. Rev. Mário Saturnino Dias. (Povoação, Benaulim, Goa: Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences Office of Evangelization, 2007), 119.
- ¹⁹ Rev. Jacob Theckanath, "Liturgical Inculturation in India After Vatican II." In *Re-Launching Our Evangelizing Mission: A Renewed Encounter Between Gospel and Cultures in India*. Ed. Rev. Mário Saturnino Dias. (Povoação, Benaulim, Goa: Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences Office of Evangelization, 2007), 120.
- ²⁰ Rev. Jacob Theckanath, "Liturgical Inculturation in India After Vatican II." In *Re-Launching Our Evangelizing Mission: A Renewed Encounter Between Gospel and Cultures in India*. Ed. Rev. Mário Saturnino Dias. (Povoação, Benaulim, Goa: Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences Office of Evangelization, 2007), 120.
- ²¹ Archbishop Thomas Menamparampil, SDB. "Inculturation of the Sacred Liturgy in Asia: Possibilities and Problems." *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection* 73:2 (February 2009), 103-4

²² Archbishop Thomas Menamparampil, SDB. "Inculturation of the Sacred Liturgy in Asia: Possibilities and Problems." *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection* 73:2 (February 2009), 103-4.

²³ Archbishop Thomas Menamparampil, SDB. "Inculturation of the Sacred Liturgy in Asia: Possibilities and Problems." *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection* 73:2 (February 2009), 103-4

²⁴ Rev. Paul Puthanangady, SDB, "Inculturation of Liturgy: Its Problems and Possibilities," In *Re-Launching Our Evangelizing Mission: A Renewed Encounter Between Gospel and Cultures in India*. Ed. Rev. Mário Saturnino Dias. (Povoação, Benaülím, Goa: Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences Office of Evangelization, 2007), 104

²⁵ Rev. Paul Puthanangady, SDB, "Inculturation of Liturgy: Its Problems and Possibilities," In *Re-Launching Our Evangelizing Mission: A Renewed Encounter Between Gospel and Cultures in India*. Ed. Rev. Mário Saturnino Dias. (Povoação, Benaülím, Goa: Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences Office of Evangelization, 2007), 105-6

²⁶ Pope John Paul II, "Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia* of the Holy Father John Paul II to the Bishops, Priests and Deacons, Men and Women in the Consecrated Life and all the Lay Faithful on Jesus Christ the Savior and His Mission of Love and Service in Asia," §22.

²⁷ Pope John Paul II, "Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia* of the Holy Father John Paul II to the Bishops, Priests and Deacons, Men and Women in the Consecrated Life and all the Lay Faithful on Jesus Christ the Savior and His Mission of Love and Service in Asia," §22.

²⁸ Pope John Paul II, "Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia* of the Holy Father John Paul II to the Bishops, Priests and Deacons, Men and Women in the Consecrated Life and all the Lay Faithful on Jesus Christ the Savior and His Mission of Love and Service in Asia," §22.

²⁹ Pope John Paul II, "Apostolic Letter *Vicesimus Quintus Annus* of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II on the 25th Anniversary of the Promulgation of the Conciliar Constitution '*Sacrosanctum Concilium*' on the Sacred Liturgy," §16
http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_04121988_vicesimus-quintus-annus_en.html.

³⁰ Pope John Paul II, "Apostolic Letter *Vicesimus Quintus Annus* of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II on the 25th Anniversary of the Promulgation of the Conciliar Constitution '*Sacrosanctum Concilium*' on the Sacred Liturgy," §16.
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³¹Pope John Paul II, "Apostolic Letter Vicesimus Quintus Annus of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II on the 25th Anniversary of the Promulgation of the Conciliar Constitution '*Sacrosanctum Concilium*' on the Sacred Liturgy," §16.

³²Piero Marini, "The Fortieth Anniversary of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy."