RITUAL IN THE AGE OF AUTHENTICITY:
AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF LATIN MASS CATHOLICS

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While the reform of Catholic liturgy that followed the Second Vatican Council by no means rejected Latin as a language of liturgical celebration, the Latin Mass quickly became the province of traditionalist groups that refused to accept the revised Order of Mass and offered the pre-conciliar Tridentine Mass in defiance of the Roman Catholic hierarchy. Nevertheless, there have always been some Catholics who either obtained permission to celebrate the Tridentine Mass or found celebrations of the post-conciliar Mass in Latin that maintained certain practices associated with the pre-conciliar Mass.

This dissertation focuses on this latter group of Latin Mass Catholics, who have remained within the bounds of the institutional church and who, since 2007, have had permission to celebrate the Tridentine Mass as an “extraordinary form” of the Mass of the Roman Rite.

In particular, this study seeks a better understanding of the motives of contemporary Latin Mass Catholics in America. Critics sometimes view attachment to the Latin Mass as an example of modern Catholicism’s still incomplete liberation from “dead ritual.” Supporters, on the other hand, often valorize the same attachment as a sign of resurgent interest in “the sacred” following Vatican II’s alleged desacralization of the
liturgy. As an alternative to both of these positions, this study explains adherence to the Latin Mass as the embodiment of one particular approach to the formation of an “authentic” human subject of liturgical prayer. Personal sincerity and continuity with tradition are both essential to how Latin Mass Catholics evaluate authenticity in liturgical prayer and cultivate authenticity in their own selves. In practice, these modes of authentication are held together by an acquired *habitus* of “reverence.”

An ethnographic account of contemporary adherence to the Latin Mass fleshes out the particular practices associated with this inculcation of reverence. Fieldwork in four Latin Mass communities and interviews with Latin Mass adherents reveal the viability of this approach to liturgical formation. It is argued that the liturgical reform and adherence to the Latin Mass can provide complementary insights into the formation of an authentic human subject of liturgical prayer in the modern world.
So from hand to hand, from finger to finger,
From fingertip to fingertip, the eternal generations,
Who are eternally going to Mass,
In the same breasts, in the same hearts up to the death of the world,
Like a relay,
In the same hope, the word of God is passed on.

Charles Péguy

(The Portal of the Mystery of Hope, tr. David Louis Schindler, Jr. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996], 65.)
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ABBREVIATIONS

(For publications, refer to the full citations in the bibliography.)

CIC ..................................Code of Canon Law

DOL..................................Documents on the Liturgy, 1963-1979

EF ..................................extraordinary form

FSSP ...............................Priestly Fraternity of Saint Peter

OF ..................................ordinary form

SC .................................Sacrosanctum Concilium

SP .................................Summorum Pontificum

SP cover letter ....................Letter to Bishops accompanying Summorum Pontificum

SSPX ..............................Society of Saint Pius X

ST .................................Summa Theologiae
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INTRODUCTION
“IT’S TOO THEATRICAL THAT WAY”

“Which is more theatrical to your mind: having the priest face the congregation, or having the priest face away?”

Was Rick asking me a simple question, or was this some kind of test? In retrospect I can only detect sincere curiosity about my own position—fair enough, since I would be asking him to defend his. At the time, the irony of responding to such a question with what I thought he wanted to hear completely escaped me. Had I been perfectly honest, I would have said that the ad orientem celebrations of the Mass that I had witnessed at Rick’s parish reminded me of a meticulously staged and rehearsed play. Instead, I thought up a way in which the priestly orientation I favored could be called “theatrical.” Pawning it off as my “immediate reaction,” I suggested that Mass celebrated versus populum was “more like theater.” Feebly, I explained, “You’re used to seeing performances where someone is looking at you.”

If Rick was surprised by my attempt to preemptively take what I assumed to be his side in this debate, it didn’t make him miss a beat.

That’s interesting, because the criticism I hear from each camp is that “well, you know, when the priest is facing away, it’s like he’s doing theater.” Whereas my side would say, “When the priest is facing you, then everything is focused on the priest; it’s not focused on God—it’s more like theater.” That’s always the criticism, of whatever side you’re on, that’s the criticism. “It’s too theatrical that way.”
Just then, as if on cue, Rick interrupted his analysis to perform a small bit of theater, transferring the rest of the pipe tobacco that he was smoking from a plastic bag into a handsome tin. “I suppose it’s illegal to put the cheap stuff in the expensive tin,” he admitted. “I fool myself.” Then, returning to his comparatively even-handed assessment of who should be calling whose Mass “theatrical,” he repeated the unsettling thought that the same complaint is heard from people on opposing “sides.” It’s too theatrical. “That’s what they always say.”

The Liturgical Act

The following study aims to expand Rick’s insight into a theory of attachment to the Latin Mass.1 While the explanations that Latin Mass Catholics give for their attraction and adherence vary from one personal narrative to another, their stories collectively revolve around concern for the authenticity of their public worship. As Rick’s comments indicate, this concern is not unique to them. It is shared by other modern religious adherents, including those who criticize Latin Mass Catholics for the theatricality of their preferred way of worshipping. Yet if this concern is typical of a period in Western modernity that Charles Taylor calls “The Age of Authenticity,”2 the ways in which Latin Mass Catholics authenticate their religious practices are less typical. This is not surprising, for the modern ideal of authenticity, described by Taylor and numerous others, is rooted in the same developments that caused the traditional Latin liturgy to be

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1 For the purposes of this introduction, the meaning of “Latin Mass” is not restricted to the Tridentine Mass, but may be assumed to refer also to the less commonly celebrated Latin Mass in the ordinary form (i.e. according to the post-Vatican II Missal of Paul VI). See the discussion of terminology below, pp. 17—28, for more precise definitions.

widely perceived as inauthentic—as “mere theater.”\(^3\) Indeed, the rise of authenticity is often understood (both positively and negatively) as a movement to liberate morality and spirituality from the constraints of “ritual,” and the chief representative of “ritual” in these accounts is often the traditional Latin Mass.\(^4\) Consequently, if we can understand how modern authenticity is not only compatible with attachment to the Latin Mass, but vital to its contemporary adherents, then we will have discovered something about the relationship between ritual and authenticity that involves more than a simple opposition.

This investigation will not get very far if we assume at the beginning that Latin Mass Catholics are simply interested in a different kind of “authenticity”—one that has tradition as its source—while the modern value that goes by the same name sees the self as the source of authenticity. The argument here is that personal sincerity and continuity with tradition are both essential to how Latin Mass Catholics evaluate authenticity in liturgical prayer and cultivate authenticity in their own selves. While it’s possible to make an analytical distinction between authenticity as being “true to oneself” and authenticity as being “faithful to the tradition,” in practice these modes of authentication are tightly intertwined. The question of traditional performance of liturgical prayer is never far removed from the question of sincere performance.


Romano Guardini, a giant of the twentieth-century movement for liturgical renewal in the Catholic Church, pointed to the reason for this in 1964, just as work was about to begin on revising the liturgical books of the Roman Rite according to the decree of the Second Vatican Council. Guardini believed that the revision could do much to rectify “ritual and textual problems” arising, for example, from a Mass whose prescribed form had remained virtually unchanged since 1570. The modern techniques of comparative liturgiology had revealed the history of such prescribed forms—their sources, diversity, and evolution over time—in ways that could allow a deeper connection to the church’s heritage of liturgical prayer to be found. But in his letter, Guardini argues that this can happen only if a solution is found to a more “central problem,” the problem of “the cult act or, to be more precise, the liturgical act.” To be even more precise, Guardini speaks of “the integrated liturgical act,” which embraces “not only a spiritual inwardness, but the whole man, body as well as spirit.” There must be a joining of the “spiritual” to the “corporal”—an “expression of the inward through the outward”—in order for participation in the liturgical act to be “genuine and honest.” Such liturgy is truly corporate prayer because the individual’s “self-expression” and that of the communal “corpus” are incorporated into one another in a performance that is genuinely “done by every individual, not as an isolated individual, but as a member of a body in which the Church is present.”

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5 Romano Guardini, “A Letter from Romano Guardini,” *Herder Correspondence* 1, no. 8 (August 1964): 237–39. The responses to Guardini’s “open letter” are many and varied, but one that is particularly helpful in relating Guardini’s concerns about liturgical renewal to issues in the anthropological study of ritual can be found in Nathan Mitchell, *Liturgy and the Social Sciences* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999).

The contemporary “problem” is that it is difficult “to get modern man to ‘perform’ the act without being theatrical or fussy.” Theatricality is the enemy of sincere corporate ritual because it assumes a picture of the human person in which “body and spirit, outward and inward personality” do not “form an integrated whole.” When the temporal and material particulars of worship are seen as “merely external decorations,” when prayers uttered and gestures made in common are “dismissed as artificial and officious,” and when those interested in liturgical renewal are perceived as “aesthetes” who lack “Christian sincerity,” then we know that a deep suspicion of corporate ritual has taken hold. However sincerely liturgical scholars may labor to recover forgotten texts, symbols, and ritual orders, their work will be in vain unless modern worshippers can “relearn a forgotten way of doing things.” Guardini does not claim to know the solution to this problem. He is so uncertain that “modern man” can perform the liturgical act sincerely that he asks whether “it would be more honest to give it up altogether” and find a way to “celebrate the sacred mysteries” of Christian faith in a way that doesn’t rely on ritual performances.7

Guardini hints at a way forward, however, for those who think that “liturgy is indeed fundamental.” They should focus their efforts on understanding the liturgical act not just as a performative act but also as a “formative act,” one that includes “more than mere talk, intellectual explanations, and formal organizing.”8 In order for modern people to “be brought to participate in the act of worship without turning this act into a theatrical

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7 Ibid., 237-39.
8 Ibid., 239.
performance and empty gestures,”⁹ their “faculties of looking, doing, and shaping must be fostered” in addition to their faculties of thinking, understanding, and believing.¹⁰ There can be little doubt that formation for sincere participation in the liturgical act—“full, conscious, and active” participation that is both “internal and external”—was a paramount concern underlying the liturgical reforms that issued from Vatican II.¹¹ And I do not wish to argue, as some have, that either the council’s Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy or its implementation in the Missal of Paul VI (among other places) was too one-sidedly intellectual in its approach to liturgical formation.¹² My assumption, on the contrary, is that the goal of having the faithful participate in the liturgy with their minds sincerely “attuned to their voices” has been greatly advanced by the church’s decision to study “with sympathy” the “qualities and talents of the various races and nations” and admit into the liturgy not only vernacular languages, but much local variety in music, movement, art, and architecture that is able to “harmonize” with the liturgy’s “true and authentic spirit.”¹³

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⁹ Ibid., 237. These words are not Guardini’s but those of the editors who pithily summarize the central problematic of Guardini’s letter.

¹⁰ Ibid., 239.


¹² See, for example, James Hitchcock, The Recovery of the Sacred (New York: Seabury Press, 1974); Kieran Flanagan, Sociology and Liturgy: Re-presentations of the Holy (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1991); David Torevell, Losing the Sacred: Ritual, Modernity and Liturgical Reform (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000). Even in his response to these critics, John Baldovin admits that “there was a certain period of infatuation with ideas and concepts in the late 1960s and the 1970s” that may have negatively impacted the reception of the liturgical reform. John F. Baldovin, Reforming the Liturgy: A Response to the Critics (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2008), 103.

¹³ SC 11, 37. See also SC 123.
Nevertheless, an ethnographic encounter with contemporary Catholics who adhere to the pre-conciliar Mass shows that these modern people have neither neglected authentic participation nor taken an approach to liturgical formation that makes an integrated liturgical act impossible. Their approach emphasizes the inculcation of “reverence” toward God, which Thomas Aquinas cites as the principal reason why the worship of God takes the form of an “external cult”.\(^\text{14}\) External practices that effectively inculcate reverence in the context of one historical period or cultural milieu may sometimes devolve into empty gestures if they continue to be performed in changed historical and cultural circumstances by force of habit alone. Vatican II and the liturgical reform that followed it clearly perceived this risk. But for the Latin Mass Catholics described in this study, habituation to practices that they describe as “reverent” is crucial to their cultivation of authenticity, understood both as fidelity to a tradition of liturgical prayer and as sincerity in their present performance of that prayer.

Many of these practices—including the use of Latin itself—are possible to maintain while celebrating Mass according to the post-conciliar liturgical books (though in fact it is significantly easier for American Catholics to find a “Tridentine” Mass than it is for them to find a post-Vatican II Mass celebrated in Latin). Some Latin Mass Catholics are strongly attached to the written prayers and rubrics of the pre-Vatican II missal. All of them, however, habituate themselves to performance practices of the priest, the other ministers, and the assembly that are not so much inscribed in books as they are

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incorporated into memory through repetition. Pastors and liturgical scholars sometimes describe the ensemble of such practices as the *ars celebrandi*—the “art of celebrating.”\textsuperscript{15}

In the view of Latin Mass Catholics, the *ars celebrandi* at any Mass ought to include celebration *ad orientem*, kneeling to receive Communion on the tongue, a preference for particular styles of music, dress, art, and architecture, and the limitation of certain liturgical roles (beyond that of presiding) to ordained clerics, or at least to males.

This list, which is far from exhaustive, includes many practices criticized for contributing to “dead ritual,” in which the lay faithful are estranged from real participation in the liturgical celebration. Latin Mass Catholics, on the other hand, speak of preserving a “sense of the sacred” at Mass by adhering to these practices. As polemical positions, both tend to caricature the *ars celebrandi* of the opposition as “theatrical”—either in its “lifeless” repetition of old forms of worship or in its studied “irreverence” toward things that earlier generations of Catholics considered sacred. The following pages deconstruct both of these caricatures, though not, I hope, at the expense of denying any possibility of a modern subject capable of an authentic liturgical act. In finding ways to perform liturgy authentically and to form an authentic liturgist (in the broadest and fullest sense of the word),\textsuperscript{16} “active” participation in a living tradition of prayer and

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\textsuperscript{15}Recently, “*ars celebrandi*” has been used somewhat narrowly to refer mainly to the way in which the presiding priest or other minister celebrates a liturgy, and the term has been used more often by those (such as Pope Benedict XVI) who want to emphasize “faithful adherence to the liturgical norms” as essential to celebrating in the right way. See Benedict XVI, “Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Sacramentum Caritatis,” February 22, 2007, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20070222_sacramentum-caritatis_en.html#Ars_celebrandi, 38-42. For a take on *ars celebrandi* that emphasizes instead the need to foster “diversified forms of celebration,” see David Noel Power, “SC to GIRM and Beyond: The Ars Celebrandi,” Liturgical Ministry 20, no. 1 (December 1, 2011): 1–12.

“reverent” participation in a sacred tradition of prayer may identify different modes of authentication, but they are oriented toward the same object.

**Research Methods**

The fieldwork for this project was conducted between July 2010 and May 2013 in four Latin Mass communities. Chapter two describes each community in more detail, but here we might say a few words about why they were chosen for this study. Since the Latin Mass is often associated with “traditionalist” organizations that lack canonical status in Catholic Church, it should be emphasized that none of these communities fit that description. All four operate within the regular canonical structures of the Catholic Church, and all four have always had permission from the appropriate Roman Catholic hierarchs to celebrate the Tridentine Mass. Currently, this permission is granted by *Summorum Pontificum*, the 2007 *motu proprio* of Pope Benedict XVI, but the three communities that existed before 2007 had previously sought and received the permission of their local bishops to use the pre-Vatican II missal. As this missal is now recognized as an extraordinary form of the Mass of the Roman Rite, the Latin Mass communities involved in the present study could also be called “extraordinary form communities” to distinguish them from “traditionalist” Latin Mass communities. However, the largest of the four also offers the post-conciliar, ordinary form of the Mass in Latin (and in English), so the less restrictive and less novel term remains preferable.

The term “community” is deliberately vague, as the four churches chosen for this study differ greatly from one another in size and organization. The largest is a diocesan parish boasting some 2500 registered families. The smallest is a variable group, lacking any formal membership, of thirty to fifty university students, staff, and faculty who
gather in a dorm chapel for a weekly Tridentine Mass during the academic year. In between are two communities served by religious orders that celebrate the extraordinary form of the Mass exclusively. One of these has a building of its own: a former parish church in need of major structural repairs and artistic restoration. The other community has its own chaplain but must share a church with an ordinary form parish in its diocese. All four communities are located in the Midwestern United States, two in one of the region’s largest cities, and two in a smaller city of some three hundred thousand residents. The differences among these four communities suggest something of the diversity characterizing Latin Mass communities in America, which chapter one will detail.

In each of the four communities, I attended Mass as a participant observer, making notes, recording homilies for later transcription, collecting bulletins and other artifacts, and interacting with community members at over ninety Masses. In addition, I attended various public devotions, lectures on liturgical and spiritual topics, choir rehearsals, coffee hours, potluck breakfasts, and dinners. Often, a Mass was associated with these events in one way or another. The detailed accounts of particular Masses that appear in between chapters of this dissertation are each the product of fieldnotes taken at the time, comparison with notes taken at other Masses, and later reflection. They attempt nevertheless to preserve something of the discrete unity of particular celebrations of the Mass.

As the opening vignette suggests, I have relied heavily on the experiences, explanations, and insights of ethnographic consultants who attend Mass at one or more of the four communities involved in this study. Thirty-seven consultants who generously
participated in at least one interview are listed in the appendix. Thirty-four of them are lay Catholics, and I was introduced to almost all of them through other laypeople, though the priests at each of the four churches were helpful in making some initial contacts. I spoke informally with many more members of each community. In deciding whom I should ask to sit for an interview, my two main considerations, somewhat at odds with each other, were to include people with special knowledge of their communities (e.g. priests, catechists, choir directors, ushers, and “founding members”) and to increase the diversity of the sample whenever possible. With respect to the latter goal, I was most successful in gathering consultants who represent a variety of age groups and whose first exposure to the Latin Mass occurred at different points in their lives. Men are somewhat over-represented even among the laypeople in the sample. This is probably the combined result of finding it less awkward, as a male, to make connections with women through husbands or male acquaintances, and of a subtle tendency for both women and men to refer me to males who “know more” about the community or about the Latin Mass. All but three of my formal consultants are white and non-Hispanic. Statistically speaking, this probably under-represents the overwhelmingly white racial composition of these communities. All of my consultants are solidly middle-class, including the few without college degrees. The “formal” interviews were actually very loosely structured and conversational, lasting over two hours on average. We met for these interviews in church basements, homes, offices, coffee shops, and restaurants. In all but two cases, I recorded the interviews.

How does the researcher fit into this picture? I am a practicing Catholic and have been so my entire life. I was born about a week before Pope Paul VI’s death in 1978, was
baptized during the brief pontificate of John Paul I, grew up during John Paul II’s long reign, and began graduate studies in theology shortly after Benedict XVI became pope. Before beginning my research for this dissertation, I had never attended a Tridentine Mass. Consequently, my experience of the Mass has been shaped almost exclusively by the post-Vatican II Missal of Paul VI. More than that, as I often explain when my consultants ask about my religious background, I grew up singing in the “folk choir” with my parents. Wherever I have lived, in deciding what church and which Mass to attend, I have usually tried to find what most of my consultants refer to (usually with some derision) as a “guitar Mass.” During the time that I was attending the Latin Mass by myself, I would on most Sundays also go to an earlier or later Mass in English (often featuring guitars) with my wife and pre-school children. We will probably continue to seek out such Masses in the future.

It’s difficult to say how the account that follows would be different had I not maintained my adherence to the post-conciliar vernacular liturgy while investigating the attachment that other Catholics have to the Latin Mass. Is the account less authentic because I don’t feel that I have formed a lifelong attachment to the Latin Mass? I should note that I have formed several lasting friendships with Latin Mass Catholics, that I would not refuse to attend a Latin Mass to which one of them invited me, and that even now I continue to sing some Sundays in a chant schola that I was asked to join at one of the churches. None of this, perhaps, makes me a Latin Mass Catholic, but in that case I would say that I don’t take an ethnographer’s progression from “observer” to “adherent” to be an essential criterion of authentic ethnography.
Moreover, it’s not clear what such a progression would look like in relation to the Latin Mass. There is a great deal of variety in the degree to which the people that I have been generically calling “Latin Mass Catholics” *exclusively* and *permanently* adhere to the Tridentine Mass (or to the ordinary form Mass in Latin). A small number of my consultants have never and would never attend an ordinary form Mass offered in English. A large majority of them prefer the Latin Mass enough to invest significant amounts of time and effort in getting to one. Several have attended an ordinary form parish exclusively at some point in the past and might do so again in the future. A few currently attend Mass in English most of the time, but have attended the Latin Mass in the past and would do so now if present circumstances didn’t prevent it in some way. Considering the various paths that attachment to the Latin Mass may follow, we are not likely to get a good picture of it if we limit authentic “adherence” to just one of them in advance.

**Overview of the Chapters**

Extended narrative and biographical passages occupy a substantial portion of the pages that follow, but they do not present a precisely chronological account of my fieldwork. The basic organizing structures of the study are more theoretical. For some, this also calls into question the authenticity of the account. Can the categories used by scholars to describe and understand behavior be as “real” as those used by practitioners themselves? Do they not limit the ethnographer and, even more, the reader of ethnography to seeing only what they expect to find? “We need to stop reifying theory and intellectually based knowledge if we are to understand and portray religion as it is lived.” For this reason, Kristy Nabhan-Warren argues for a more “phenomenologically
oriented” approach to ethnographic research and writing in religious studies.\textsuperscript{17} In this dissertation, I let theory take something of a back seat in the four accounts of individual Masses that are sandwiched between chapters two through six. Additionally, chapters three through six each contain two profiles of my consultants in which I have tried to make it possible to hear them explain “religion as it is lived” in their own words.

On the other hand, the decision to “relax our dependence on the theories we bring with us to the field and let our hands, feet, eyes, and hearts lead the way” does not of itself guarantee “better, more epistemologically based ethnographies.”\textsuperscript{18} The important but limited purpose of resisting the urge to theorize is to prevent researchers from thinking that the intentions and experiences of social actors are identical to those predicted by their theories. It can be just as problematic to assume that authentic knowledge of what religious action “really” means is simply equivalent to what practitioners say it means—or to the ethnographer’s subjective experience of participating in the action. Martin Riesebrodt agrees that the “subjectively intended significance of religious action is indispensable for ethnographic study or for understanding and explaining personal religiousness,” but subjective meaning “is constituted in each case in the context of an institutionalized social and cultural meaning and can be deciphered only in relation to that meaning.”\textsuperscript{19}


\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 403.

In the case of Roman Catholics participating in the institutionally scripted and regulated liturgy of their church, it would be especially foolhardy to ignore structures of meaning that have been institutionalized through dogmatic or canonical pronouncements, theological exegesis, and historical research by individuals and groups with varying levels of official or practical authority. I have generally found that my ethnographic interlocutors are more conscious of these socially given horizons of meaning than I initially expected. But even if they were not, it would be mere arbitrariness to interpret their actions without any reference to these shared paradigms, which claim a normative status for the entire group that no individual account of “religion as it is lived” can. To privilege “religious experience” as the only true site of knowledge about religious practice and meaning “is in no way an ‘interpretive’ procedure as it claims to be but, rather, a dogmatic, deductive one, which ignores the intended meaning in each case in favor of an a priori understanding of ‘authentic’ religion.”

The Second Vatican Council, the liturgical reform that it set in motion, and the “traditionalist” reaction to the council in general and to the liturgical reform in particular are among the most important structures in which the contemporary experience of Latin Mass Catholics must be contextualized. Chapter one provides the parts of this background that are most relevant to the present study. In particular, it reviews the post-conciliar Catholic traditionalist movement in stages of differentiation and separation from conservative Catholics who remained within the canonically recognized structures of the Roman Catholic Church. As noted above, the four communities involved in the present study belong in the latter category, even though some of their members currently attend

\[20\] Ibid., 84.
or have at one time attended churches sponsored by traditionalist groups like the Society of St. Pius X (SSPX). Chapter two profiles the history, composition, and liturgical life of each of these four Latin Mass communities. While the rest of the chapters mainly highlight lay perspectives on the Latin Mass, this one gives more space to the observations and explanations of clerical leaders.

Chapter three responds to the claim that the Latin Mass preserves a “sense of the sacred” in the face of modern “desacralization.” A genealogical critique of “the sacred” as a central category in modern anthropology, sociology, and phenomenology of religion shows that the Latin Mass is not best understood as a tool for “re-sacralization.” Chapter four pivots from sacrality to authenticity through a theological consideration of how a sacred event in the past is experienced as a present reality in Christian liturgy. Since incarnational theology, rather than religious phenomenology, grounds Christian claims about the sacramentality of created matter, reverence for the sacred is not focused on separation from the profane or on an experience of transcendence, but specifically on a memory of the incarnate Word of God, transmitted by means of a tradition.

Chapter five examines continuity with tradition as a mode of evaluating the authenticity of ritual worship. The mnemonic importance of bodily practices combined with modern fragmentation of collective memory causes unwritten habits of ritual performance to profoundly influence the perception of continuity among modern religious adherents. This means that evaluations of continuity overlap significantly with evaluations of the sincerity of particular performances, distinguishing prayer that is part of a “living tradition” from that which is only “dead ritual.” Chapter six shows how distinctly modern developments in the understanding of the relationship between
“interior” dispositions and “exterior” behaviors made “theatrical” ritual into a category of insincere performance, with the Latin Mass serving as a primary exemplar. The relationship between interior and exterior is at the heart of the liturgical reform’s call to “full, conscious, and active participation,” which emphasizes the risk of ritual becoming “theatrical” and “dead” as it is increasingly performed by mere force of habit. Latin Mass Catholics, on the other hand, emphasize the ability of habitual performance to deepen the sincerity of participation as each worshipper acquires greater interior reverence with each repetition of the ritual.

The conclusion returns to Guardini’s question of whether modern people can perform an authentic “liturgical act” without being “theatrical.” I propose two different approaches to the formation of an authentic human subject of liturgical prayer that are frequently at odds with one another but which nevertheless contain complementary insights. In order for Latin Mass Catholics and their critics to recognize the potential complementarity of their respective approaches to authenticity, however, they will need to allow their habits to bend out of reverence for their fellow Christians.

A Preliminary Note on Terminology

The first time I met with the pastor at St. John Cantius Parish, he offered to print an announcement about my research in the bulletin. He suggested that I write it myself, describing the purpose of my study and the sorts of questions that I might be asking. “Just don’t use the word ‘liturgy,’” he said with a grin, “or they’ll think you’re a modernist.” Initially, this seemed like a severe handicap for a project in liturgical studies. How was I to ask people about their experiences of the liturgy without ever using that word? As it turns out, I was never shunned by anyone at any of the Latin Mass communities for using
the L-word. Nor was I criticized for using the “wrong” terminology to speak about either the pre-conciliar liturgy or the post-conciliar liturgy. In fact, I find only one instance in over eighty hours of interviews where my choice of words met with a minor correction.

This is not to say that these Latin Mass Catholics don’t care about terminology. Rick, who will be properly introduced in chapter three, put it colorfully in an email he sent me:

Herman Göring [sic] is famous for saying, “Whenever I hear the word ‘culture’ I reach for my revolver,” except, of course, that he didn’t say it. (It actually is a line from the play Schlageter, written by Hanns Johst.) But the concept is pretty clear, don’t you think?

There are some words that make us “reach for our revolvers,” and the Liberal/Conservative divide is fairly riven with these words. Of course, there is the controversy over so-called “inclusive language” but there are many more subtle shibboleths…

The misattributed line (variously altered in translation) grossly exaggerates the consequences of saying the wrong thing to a Latin Mass Catholic, but Rick makes a point. Fortunately, I haven’t been shot for uttering any of the “revolver words” that Rick lists as annoying to conservatives: “reconciliation” (instead of “confession”), “altar server” (instead of “altar boy”), and “community” (instead of “Church”), to name just a few.

It’s more important to acknowledge that after years of attending parishes that Rick would undoubtedly describe as “liberal,” and after substantial training in the academic study of liturgy, my trigger finger starts itching at many terms that Latin Mass Catholics use routinely—beginning with “the Latin Mass.” Before dealing with these terms individually, I want to explain why, in most cases, I have chosen to holster my authorial revolver and use words that my “native” consultants would use themselves. On the one
hand, scholars have a responsibility to avoid simply perpetuating terms that are imprecise, politically loaded, and potentially misleading. This is especially true when habitual use of the words in question has the effect of indemnifying a debatable position from rational critique.

On the other hand, it doesn’t serve clarity or accuracy to silently “correct” the language actually used by the real human subjects of an ethnographic study. Even when investigators are not directly quoting their consultants, they should strive to represent rather than conceal the ambiguities and value judgments that are conveyed in the ordinary speech of community “insiders.” This frequently means preserving terms that are ambiguous and value-laden instead of replacing them with “scholarly” terms that claim precision and neutrality. Faithfulness to “native” terminology is more, not less, imperative when its legitimacy is directly challenged by scholars, as is often the case when dealing with the Latin Mass.21

Take, for instance, a descriptive statement that would appear unremarkable to most Latin Mass Catholics: “Martha prefers the Tridentine Mass, but doesn’t mind attending a Novus Ordo Mass, so long as everything is done reverently.” Liturgical scholars could correctly object that “Tridentine” and “Novus Ordo” do not now and have never served as official ecclesiastical designations or accepted scholarly terms for any codification of the Mass of the Roman Rite. Since the Tridentine and Novus Ordo Masses “do not exist” as such, one might be tempted to say that what Martha really prefers is the “pre-conciliar liturgy” to the “post-conciliar liturgy.” I would argue that such an

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emendation of language adds nothing to the precision or accuracy of the description. On the contrary, it hinders a better understanding of Martha’s motivations. The problem isn’t simply that Martha would never use these scholarly replacement terms herself, but that these terms fail to convey the same value judgments, rhetorical strategies, and ways of interpreting history that are implied in Martha’s habitual use of the terms “Tridentine” and “Novus Ordo.” Even if these terms imply errors of historical fact, the enterprise here is not to evaluate the fairness or appropriateness of Martha’s choice of words, but to explain her attachment to the “Tridentine Mass” as a social fact. From an empirical perspective, it is unsatisfactory to short-circuit the investigation at the outset with the “explanation” that she “doesn’t know what she’s talking about.”

The following is a list of terms that may cause some readers of this study to exercise their pistol arms too frequently for comfort. The reaction that “revolver words” draw is usually the result of their covert incorporation of assumptions that may be unwarranted. By exposing problematic assumptions here, I mean to acknowledge that the task of deciding what the church or the academy should call the pre-conciliar liturgical forms is important. At the same time, I want to clearly distinguish this normative project from my own descriptive project, which cannot successfully dispense with the terms used by actual adherents of the Latin Mass.

**Latin Mass**

In theory, any Mass of the Roman Rite could be called a “Latin Mass,” since even a completely vernacular celebration of the Mass requires a translation of prayers and rubrics that are written in Latin. The original from which all approved vernacular translations are made—the *editio typica* of the *Missale Romanum*, reformed by decree of
the Second Vatican Council and promulgated by the authority of Pope Paul VI in 1970 (now in its third edition)—is a Latin text. It is of course possible to celebrate the rites prescribed therein entirely in the Latin language. A description of one such celebration at St. John Cantius follows chapter one. But as I document in chapter one, this Mass is a relative rarity in the United States, both by comparison with the total number of Masses celebrated in the Latin language, and especially by comparison with the total number of post-Vatican II Masses celebrated in any language. Therefore, unless there is a contextual reason to believe otherwise, I assume that when people say “the Latin Mass,” they are talking about a Mass celebrated according to the pre-conciliar Missal (see “traditional Latin Mass,” “Tridentine Mass,” and “extraordinary form” below). At a place like St. John Cantius, they might be saying something that applies to both “Latin Masses”—the pre-conciliar and the post-conciliar (see “Novus Ordo” and “ordinary form” below). In some of these cases, the speaker isn’t aware of any difference between the pre-conciliar Latin Mass and the post-conciliar Latin Mass.

When I say “the Latin Mass” with no other qualification, I’m usually referring to Masses celebrated using the texts and rubrics that are prescribed in the edition of the Missale Romanum that was approved for use in 1962—just prior to the liturgical reforms that followed Vatican II. There is a reason, however, for not committing to this usage unambiguously. It will become apparent that what defines a “Latin Mass” for many of my consultants is not only—or even primarily—use of the pre-conciliar Missal. The Latin language, certain genres of sacred music and art, and various elements that comprise a particular style of celebration all help to define “Latin Mass” as a category or set. This set includes all celebrations of the pre-conciliar Mass, of course, but also a few
celebrations of the post-conciliar Mass that share characteristics with the pre-conciliar Mass even while following a different Missal.

**Traditional Latin Mass (TLM)**

It’s not surprising that many liturgical scholars reach for their revolvers when they hear the adjective “traditional” used to clarify that someone is speaking about the pre-conciliar Latin Mass and *not* the post-conciliar Latin Mass. The seeming implication is that the Mass as reformed by decree of the Second Vatican Council is not “traditional” in the way that the pre-conciliar Mass is. It probably doesn’t calm the nerves of these scholars to see that in the printed version of this moniker, “Traditional” almost always appears with an exclusive-looking capital T. In fact, the degree to which traditional Latin Mass adherents reject the post-conciliar Mass as “not traditional” varies widely. In the communities that I observed, very few rejected the post-Vatican II Mass absolutely, despite using the phrase “traditional Latin Mass” occasionally or often to refer to the pre-Vatican II Mass. Thus, even when written with a capital T, “Traditional” does not necessarily imply that its opposite is unprecedented, unorthodox, or heretical. The primary contrast can be *stylistic* rather than *doctrinal*, so that the opposite of “traditional” is more innocuous (if not entirely harmless)—contemporary, fashionable, or trendy, for example. This ambiguity in the word “traditional” is related, as chapters three and four will argue, to the overlapping of two ways in which Latin Mass Catholics verify the authenticity of ritual performances. Since this ambiguity is central to my analysis here, I don’t avoid “traditional Latin Mass” as a way of referring to Mass celebrated according to the 1962 *Missale Romanum*. My lowercase t indicates that, appropriateness aside, “traditional” functions as a description in this formula, not as part of a proper name.
Tridentine Mass

“Tridentine” refers to the city of Trent, where an ecumenical council of the Catholic Church was held between the years 1545 and 1563. The adjective continues to be widely applied to the pre-Vatican II Mass even though both its adherents and its critics will say that the name is misleading. Those who dislike the attempt to identify faithfulness to the Council of Trent with adherence to the Tridentine Mass correctly point out that the Council itself didn’t produce the Tridentine Missal. During its final session in December 1563, the Council asked the pope to carry out a revision of the missal and breviary. A commission was appointed to this task by Popes Pius IV and Pius V. The latter pope promulgated their Missale Romanum in 1570 through his bull Quo primum. For this reason, the Tridentine Missal is also sometimes called the Missal of Pius V or the 1570 Missale Romanum (MR 1570). Supporters of the Tridentine Missal emphasize that its contents are generally much older than the 1570 date suggests, since the commission that produced it was charged not with creating new prayers or rubrics but with identifying and collating the most reliable texts from existing liturgical books. Although the name suggests anachronistic ideas about the Roman Rite’s development, it has the virtues of brevity, instant recognition, and widespread currency among adherents and critics alike.

Novus Ordo

In both the pre-conciliar and post-conciliar editions of the Missale Romanum, the title “Ordo Missae” or “Order of Mass” is given to the section containing the “ordinary” texts and rubrics that are followed at every celebration of the Mass. After Vatican II, the

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revised *Ordo Missae* was promulgated first, in April 1969, almost one year before publication of the full Missal with all of the proper texts for the different feasts and seasons of the liturgical year. Annibale Bugnini—who at the time was secretary of the *Consilium* created to implement the Council’s Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy—reports that a critique of the *Ordo Missae* endorsed by two retired members of the Roman Curia appeared in the intervening months. “On September 25, 1969, Cardinals Alfredo Ottaviani and Antonio Bacci sent the Holy Father a letter and a *Breve esame critico del ‘Novus Ordo Missae’*; this critique was, they said, ‘the work of a select group of theologians, liturgists, and pastors of souls.’” It’s difficult to say why the authors of this *Short Critical Study* chose to make “new” (*novus*) appear less like a simple (vernacular) adjective than part of the proper Latin name of the recently issued *Ordo Missae*, which, officially, did not include any such prefix.

In any case, the phrase “*Novus Ordo***” is used consistently throughout the document to refer to the “new” *Ordo Missae*. This study—subsequently published in multiple editions and translated into several languages—would appear to be the origin of referring to the post-conciliar Mass as the *Novus Ordo Mass*. Obviously, this is not the terminology of most Catholics, who simply call it “the Mass.” In the lore of the Society of Saint Pius X (SSPX), the *Short Critical Study* and its cover letter are referred to as “the

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24 DOL 213.


Ottaviani intervention.” By all accounts, however, the retired head of the Holy Office (renamed the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith during his tenure) didn’t participate personally in drafting the Short Critical Study. Instead, a large role is claimed for Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre (founder of the SSPX) by his biographer, Bernard Tissier de Mallerais.  

While the exact authorship of the document remains somewhat obscure, its contents are roundly critical of the 1969 Ordo Missae, so it’s not surprising that its characteristic term of reference for the new Ordo came to have negative connotations among those who agreed with its analysis. Among “traditionalists”—those who joined Lefebvre (and lesser-known leaders) in refusing to accept the “new” Mass and various teachings of Vatican II—the phrase “Novus Ordo” was applied not only to the Mass, but to the whole “conciliar church.” Its imposing, bureaucratic sound evoked the secret machinations of Communists, Freemasons, and other “modernist” forces determined to replace traditional Catholic civilization with a brave new world of secular atheism. On the other hand, the obviousness of referring to the newly promulgated Ordo Missae as “the new Ordo Missae” meant that even Pope Paul VI used the phrase “Novus Ordo” as late as 1976, albeit as a description rather than a proper name.

Does insistence on calling “new” a Mass that is now over forty years old—to say nothing of the antiquity of its texts—imply pejorative intent today? Against the assumption that this is always the case stands the existence of people who actually prefer


the Missal of Paul VI yet habitually refer to a Latin-language celebration of the post-
conciliar Mass as “Novus Ordo Mass.” Even among Latin Mass adherents who prefer
the Tridentine, it’s not unusual to hear them describe certain aspects of the “Novus Ordo”
that they like. Some of the younger members of the Latin Mass communities involved in
this study have used the phrase for years without any awareness of its “traditionalist”
connotations. (Surprising though it may seem, some aren’t even familiar with the SSPX
and other traditionalist groups.) Allowing, however, that an unfavorable comparison is
sometimes intended, this doesn’t change the fact that “Novus Ordo” is the ordinary and
usual term that Latin Mass Catholics use to distinguish the post-conciliar Mass from the
“Tridentine Mass.” This remains the case despite the increasing frequency with which the
terms “ordinary form” and “extraordinary form” are being used in bulletins, websites, and
other materials produced by Latin Mass communities.

Ordinary Form (OF) and Extraordinary Form (EF)

These terms, which only began to be used as a result of their definition in Pope
Benedict XVI’s 2007 motu proprio, Summorum Pontificum, are discussed at some length
in chapter one. Here I only wish to emphasize two points. First, insofar as Summorum
Pontificum authoritatively grants these terms some “official” status that “Novus Ordo”
and “Tridentine” lack, it is as official descriptions, not as proper names. This much
should be clear from the way in which Summorum Pontificum refers to the pre-conciliar
(1962) Missal of John XXIII variously as an “extraordinary expression,” “extraordinary
usage,” or “extraordinary form” of the Roman Rite—all within the motu proprio’s first
Although the Vatican’s more recent instruction on the implementation of *Summorum Pontificum* uses “forma extraordinaria” more consistently than other designations, it doesn’t suggest that the *Missale Romanum* promulgated by John XXIII has been renamed. Neither, of course, has the *Missale Romanum* promulgated by Paul VI been renamed “forma ordinaria.” Again, this is the reason why I don’t capitalize “extraordinary form” or “ordinary form,” except when quoting a printed source that does capitalize them.

My second point is that whatever *Summorum Pontificum* and subsequent ecclesiastical documents do to make “extraordinary form” and “ordinary form” into authoritative designations, it cannot make them commonly used, obviously appropriate, or “neutral.” It’s possible that scholars will come to prefer these designations, though initial responses have emphasized their “novelty” and consequent potential for “confusion.” It’s also possible that these terms will become part of the native lexicon of Latin Mass adherents, especially among those who are accustomed to working within official ecclesiastical structures and definitions in order to obtain access to the Latin Mass. But there is no reason to assume that these terms are unproblematic. Scholarly designations and ecclesial definitions, like “native” expressions, favor the articulation of some agendas and the suppression of others. “Extraordinary form” and “ordinary form”

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are not unbiased alternatives to “Tridentine” and “Novus Ordo,” but differently biased alternatives. I don’t avoid using the two newer terms, but as I have argued, I also don’t believe that an ethnographic researcher reporting on the habits (and biases) of Latin Mass Catholics should avoid their more established terms of reference either.
CHAPTER 1
REFORM AND RESISTANCE

Even as the curtain opens on present-day Latin Mass Catholics, the stage remains shrouded in the mists of history. However, it is not billows of incense from medieval Europe that obscure our vision, but battle smoke from the “liturgy wars” that raged most fiercely in the decade or so following the 1969 promulgation of the new Order for Mass (Ordo Missae) and the 1970 publication of the revised Missale Romanum. The missal was by no means the only liturgical book to be revised by the special commission (Consilium) charged with the implementation of the Second Vatican Council’s Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (Sacrosanctum Concilium).¹ However, the missal attracted the most attention since it contains the texts and rubrics for the central liturgical celebration of the Catholic Church. At the time, discussion of the reception of the “new Mass” by the Catholic faithful produced more debate than data. This was especially true in the United States, where the Catholic Church was simultaneously seeing a sharp decline in Mass attendance. In 1975, when William McCready of the University of Chicago’s National Opinion Research Center (NORC) offered a report to the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissioners, he devoted his first chapter to debunking the idea that the changes to the liturgy were causing Catholics to stay away from church. Then,

using the “the best data available on Catholics in this country,” he offered his assessment of the reception of liturgical changes.

Most people are in favor of most of the changes. There were interesting variations depending upon the innovation. Those that drew the most disapproval were those that touched upon elimination of particular devotions and those which posited a change in the ministerial role [i.e. “Lay People Distributing the Eucharist”]. When asked for their overall evaluation of the changes in the Church, two-thirds of the respondents said they were for the better. However when asked whether or not there ought to be any more changes made, slightly over one-half replied “no.” It appears as if they are saying, “So far so good, but let’s not go too far too fast.”

As for those who disapproved of “innovations,” not all preferred a return to the pre-conciliar Missal of 1962, which was little changed from the “Missal of Pius V” issued in 1570 following the Council of Trent. To this day, as John Baldovin rightly notes, much of the critique leveled against the liturgical reform is directed not against the principles enunciated in Sacrosanctum Concilium, but against their subsequent implementation by the Consilium and by pastors at every level, from the bishops’ conferences down to individual parishes. Of those who did desire a complete return to the Tridentine Mass, most nevertheless accepted the authority of the pope and bishops at Vatican II to decree changes to the church’s liturgy. Still, for those clerics and laypersons who denied not only the authority of Sacrosanctum Concilium, but of the Council as a whole, preservation of the “Mass of the Ages” in the face of its apparent prohibition by the Catholic hierarchy became the most visible point around which the movement known

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as “Catholic traditionalism” rallied. As a consequence, the Tridentine Latin Mass became strongly associated with the traditionalist movement. Even today, Catholics who favor the Latin Mass but oppose the traditionalist movement on other grounds (including many people involved in the present study) find it necessary to explicitly distance themselves from the traditionalist camp. It is important, then, to describe Catholic traditionalism in order to identify the continuities and discontinuities between the historical traditionalist movement and Catholics who currently avail themselves of expanded official permission from the Roman Catholic hierarchy to use the pre-conciliar rites for Mass and the other sacraments.

**Conservatives, Traditionalists, and the Tridentine**

Although Catholic traditionalism is usually associated with French Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre and his Society of St. Pius X (SSPX), William Dinges has carefully documented the origins of several “homegrown” traditionalist organizations in the United States, including some that pre-date by nearly a decade the expansion of the SSPX into North America.\(^4\) In describing the traditionalist movement in America, he helpfully divides its development into three “phases” punctuated by significant changes in the

juridical status accorded to the Tridentine Mass by the Vatican. Each phase involves an evolution in the traditionalists’ stance toward the authority of the church’s hierarchy, which they see as implicated in an unjustified attack on the Latin liturgy and on traditional Catholic doctrine. These phases also mark the developing rift between “traditionalists” and their erstwhile “conservative” allies, who share many of the traditionalists’ concerns but avoid public dissent from Vatican II and criticize those who stubbornly defy the authority of the church’s official institutions. It is important to keep in mind that this distinction has never been perfectly complete in either an ideological sense or in an official ecclesiastical sense.

Dinges identifies the first phase of traditionalist dissent as beginning in 1962 with the opening of the Second Vatican Council, though the conservative roots of traditionalism reach back as far as the struggles over “Americanism” and “modernism” that roiled American Catholicism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the period during and immediately following Vatican II—prior to the mandatory implementation of the liturgical reform—conservative disapproval of the direction that the church seemed to be taking in response to Pope John XXIII’s call for aggiornamento was difficult to distinguish from traditionalist dissent. Dinges summarizes the common content of their critiques:

Conservative and Traditionalist Catholics share many of the same anxieties over change associated with aggiornamento. Both have assailed “neo-modernist” Catholics for wrecking the Church in a

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5 Dinges, “We Are What You Were,” 242–47.
6 Ibid., 242-43.
misguided effort to make Her relevant to the modern age. Both bemoan the weakening of Church discipline and doctrine, the abandonment of traditional expressions of piety, and the diminished spiritual virtuosity associated with the clerical life.\(^8\)

Because of these shared concerns, well-established conservative voices initially endorsed the loosely organized efforts of Catholics who insisted on their right and duty to maintain the pre-conciliar liturgy along with other traditional practices. The earliest such effort was made by Fr. Gommar De Pauw, a Belgian-born professor of canon law at Mount Saint Mary’s Seminary in Maryland, who established the Catholic Traditionalist Movement, Inc. (CTM) in 1965 and promptly received censure from his local archbishop as well as support from the conservative Catholic weekly, *The Wanderer*.

By 1967, De Pauw had escalated his rhetoric to the point of demanding that Pope Paul VI repudiate Vatican II or else face the refusal of “traditionalists” to recognize the authority of the “conciliar Church.” *The Wanderer* quickly withdrew its editorial support at the specter of schism raised by such direct disobedience of the church’s hierarchy.\(^9\)

While traditionalist groups like De Pauw’s struggled to find a national platform, they also shifted their critique of the “Novus Ordo,” claiming that it foisted upon faithful Catholics not only poor pastoral judgment but actual doctrinal error that “invalidated” the sacramental efficacy of the Mass. In the United States, the most serious traditionalist charge involved the alleged mistranslation of the “words of consecration” (i.e., the words of Christ contained in the eucharistic prayer’s institution narrative). The 1967 decision of the International Commission on English in the Liturgy to render the Latin phrase “*pro multis*” as “for all men” instead of “for many” would be reversed by the same

\(^8\) Dinges, “Catholic Traditionalism in America,” 13.

commission some forty years later, sparking renewed controversy. The role of the original quarrel “in galvanizing the traditionalist movement and further distancing traditionalist from conservative Catholics and the establishment Church,” Dinges argues, “should not be underestimated.” ¹⁰ Whether or not a Catholic would admit the validity of the new “English Mass” became the test for distinguishing a dissenting traditionalist from a disappointed but “loyal” conservative.

Traditionalist dissent entered a new phase in 1971 with the mandatory implementation of the new *Ordo Missae*. ¹¹ Although the First Sunday of Advent in 1969 was initially set as the date for its worldwide implementation, ¹² a Vatican instruction approved by Paul VI in October of that year allowed the bishops’ conferences to “appoint a date on which the new Order of Mass will become obligatory,” provided that the date was no later than the First Sunday of Advent in 1971. Exception to the obligation required the consent of a priest’s local bishop and was explicitly limited to “elderly priests who celebrate Mass without a congregation and who might encounter serious difficulty in taking up the new Order of Mass.” ¹³ Although formal ecclesiastical penalties for simply attending a Tridentine Mass were not enunciated, the practical exclusion of public celebrations to a small number of chapels operated by “renegade” priests meant that only those who felt that the post-conciliar liturgy represented an absolutely intolerable break with Catholic tradition would seek out such “illicit” Masses. The consequence, Dinges says, was “further radicalization of those Catholics alienated by

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¹⁰ Ibid., 28–29.
¹¹ Dinges, “We Are What You Were,” 244.
¹² DOL 202, 203.
¹³ DOL 209.
Vatican II reforms and the transformation of a symbol of corporate unity and mystery into a sign of dissent and resistance to both Vatican II and to the Church’s own authority structure.”

Although it remained common for traditionalist chapels to operate in practical independence and isolation from any wider organization, the 1970s saw the emergence of nationwide and international traditionalist networks. The Orthodox Roman Catholic Movement, founded by Fr. Francis Fenton in 1973, had some early success in establishing traditionalist chapels across the United States, though its network fractured within a decade due to internal struggles over Fenton’s leadership and his involvement in the anti-communist John Birch Society. Other traditionalist organizations experienced similar challenges to their stability arising as much from internal tensions as from any pressure applied by the institutional church. The Tridentine Latin Rite Church, headquartered at Mount Saint Michael in Spokane, attracted unwanted notoriety when it ousted its charismatic founder, Francis Schuckhardt, amid allegations of sexual misconduct, embezzlement, and drug addiction. Former members of the community described “cult-like” incidents of physical and emotional abuse perpetrated by members of the religious order that Schuckhardt founded. Even the SSPX, which established a North American foothold in 1973, could not avoid a significant split in its membership. Disagreement over the relative tolerability of the Novus Ordo precipitated the break. Those who wanted Marcel Lefebvre to unequivocally declare the “new Mass” invalid left

14 Dinges, “Ritual Conflict as Social Conflict,” 142.
to form the Society of St. Pius V (SSPV) when the French archbishop balked. Still, the SSPX proved more resilient than the other traditionalist organizations, rapidly expanding to have the largest network of Mass chapels in the United States, with nearly eighty locations by decade’s end.

If Vatican officials viewed organized traditionalist dissent as a growing threat to ecclesial unity during this phase of the movement, they gave no dramatic evidence of concern until 1984. In 1983, Lefebvre began to publicly suggest that he would consecrate a bishop without papal approval if it became necessary to ensure that he would have a successor who could continue to ordain priests for the SSPX. Discerning that some Catholics who remained attached to the pre-conciliar liturgy wanted no part of such an open break with the pope, the Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments, with the approval of John Paul II, sent a letter to the presidents of the bishops’ conferences on October 3, 1984 that came to be known as the “Mass Indult.” The premise of Quattuor Abhinc Annos was that while “the problem of priests and faithful holding to the so-called ‘Tridentine’ rite was almost completely solved,” it nevertheless persisted as a potential obstacle to “faithful observance of the liturgical reform.” Yet the Holy Father, in his “solicitude for all his children,” chose to handle the “problem” with the velvet glove of an “indult”—or special permission—granted to those who wished to use the Missal of 1962. The major condition for use of the indult was “that it be made publicly clear beyond all ambiguity that such priests and their respective faithful [using the 1962 Missal] in no way share the positions of those who call in

17 Dinges, “We Are What You Were,” 250.

18 Dinges, “Catholic Traditionalism in America,” 162.

19 Dinges, “We Are What You Were,” 244–45.
question the legitimacy and doctrinal exactitude of the Roman Missal promulgated by Pope Paul VI in 1970.” Henceforth, this condition would establish the line between “problematic” resistance to the liturgical reform and outright disobedience. It appeared to leave no room for traditionalists like Lefebvre, who still stopped short of calling the new Mass sacramentally “invalid,” to persist in attacking it as a travesty of doctrinal error illicitly foisted upon the church. If they wished to remain obedient to the pope, who was willing to grant an exception to the mandatory use of the Missal of Paul VI, they had to make peace with that missal in principle, if not in practice.

The Mass Indult marked the beginning of a third phase in traditionalist dissent. Paradoxically, while prohibition of the Tridentine Mass had galvanized the traditionalist movement into assuming organizational forms that asserted their independence from the institutional church, the granting of limited permission to use the pre-conciliar missal tended to further radicalize these groups in their separatism. Despite the negotiating efforts of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, Lefebvre was unwilling to accept the conditions attached to the indult and retract his public opposition to the Missal of Paul VI and to the mandates of Vatican II. Other traditionalist organizations and independent churches were similarly skeptical about the overture from Rome, and in any case were by now too estranged from diocesan structures and from other conservative Catholics to successfully petition local bishops for the required permission to organize authorized celebrations of the “Indult Mass.” As a rule, American bishops were also not eager to facilitate regular

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21 Dinges, “Roman Catholic Traditionalism,” 76.
use of the pre-conciliar liturgy at parishes or other official diocesan locations.  

Nevertheless, those who desired this liturgy began to have more options beyond SSPX chapels and “independent” priests.  

The possibility of adhering to the pre-conciliar liturgy while remaining within the official structures of the institutional church received a further boost in 1988, when Pope John Paul II instructed the bishops to make a “wide and generous application” of the indult granted four years earlier. *Ecclesia Dei*, the *motu proprio* containing this directive, was issued two days after Archbishop Lefebvre carried out his threat to consecrate four bishops without permission from Rome. While the *motu proprio* confirmed that Lefebvre had committed a “schismatic act” and incurred the penalty of excommunication, it reached out to members of the SSPX, inviting both clerics and laypersons to “remain united to the Successor of Peter in the Catholic Church.”  

Just two months earlier, Ratzinger and Lefebvre had signed a protocol normalizing the status of the SSPX within the church, requiring its clerics to “recognize the validity” of the *Novus Ordo* and to “have a positive attitude of study” with respect to Vatican II in exchange for autonomy from local bishops and permission to use the preconciliar liturgical books. Lefebvre withdrew his assent to the protocol one day later, but *Ecclesia Dei* offered the same conditions to anyone prepared to break with the archbishop, setting up an eponymous eponymous

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22 Dinges, “We Are What You Were,” 258.


commission to work out further details of their reunion with Rome. Almost immediately, the commission approved the foundation of the Priestly Fraternity of Saint Peter (FSSP) by thirteen former SSPX priests and seminarians, granting them full permission to use “the liturgical books in force in 1962” in all of their own churches and in any diocesan parishes where the local bishop gave his consent. Few American bishops welcomed the FSSP when they began to make inroads in the early 1990s, but they would eventually become the largest single supplier of priests for hierarchically “approved” Latin Mass communities in the United States.

By recasting attachment to the Latin Mass as the expression of a “rightful aspiration” instead of a “problem” to be solved, Ecclesia Dei also spurred the growth of lay associations of conservative Catholics who desired to have the traditional Latin Mass while remaining obedient to Rome. Lay initiative had been an important feature of “loyal” opposition to the liturgical reform since the 1960s. It was fundamental in the 1965 establishment of the International Una Voce Federation, which coordinated the work of local lay associations and presented their views to Vatican officials willing to listen. With the advent of the Indult Mass, new organizations were formed that were less concerned with lobbying than with providing the practical support required to make the Latin Mass available not only in principle but in fact. In Chicago, the Coalition in Support of Ecclesia Dei was founded in November 1988 to support Catholics who

26 John Paul II, Ecclesia Dei, 6.
29 John Paul II, Ecclesia Dei, 6.
wanted to petition their local bishops for permission to organize celebrations of the traditional Latin Mass. The Coalition became the de facto directory service for Indult Masses in the United States as well as the publisher of the most widely used Latin-English booklet missal in the country.\textsuperscript{30} In other locations, new Una Voce chapters were established, typically in order to support a regular Latin Mass in a parish of the diocese. Such groups found a natural ally in the Latin Liturgy Association, another lay-led organization, which since 1975 had been reminding whoever would listen that the “new” Mass could still be celebrated in Latin.

While Catholics desiring the pre-conciliar liturgy benefited from the pastoral “solicitude” of John Paul II, they regarded Cardinal Ratzinger as their most important supporter inside the Vatican. Ratzinger’s leadership of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith since 1981 made him a powerful voice, and his extensive writing on the church’s liturgy—often critical of its contemporary celebration if not of the post-conciliar reform itself—seemed to suggest a sympathetic ear. In 1998, Ratzinger addressed a gathering of pilgrims who were in Rome to celebrate the tenth anniversary of Ecclesia Dei. Far from criticizing the pilgrims’ aspirations as a “problem” or grudgingly acknowledging them to be “rightful,” Ratzinger praised their attachment to the former liturgy as evidence that their liturgical spirituality was actually in greater harmony with the objectives of Vatican II than that of many “average” Christians as well as that of “a number of modern liturgists.” He speculated that they—rather than the vast majority of Catholics who quickly embraced the new Missal celebrated in the vernacular—had truly

learned the lessons of the pre-conciliar liturgical movement that supporters of the reform so often claimed as their inspiration.

In those places where the liturgical Movement had created a certain love for the liturgy—in those places where this movement anticipated the essential ideas of the Council, as for example the praying participation of all in the liturgical action—in those places there was greater suffering in the face of a liturgical reform undertaken in too much haste and limiting itself often to the exterior aspect. Where the liturgical Movement never existed, the reform did not at first pose any problem. The problems arose only in a sporadic way in those places where a wild creativity caused the disappearance of the sacred mystery.  

By this time, then, one of the Vatican’s top cardinals was publicly asserting that the “problem” which was causing division over the liturgical reform lay not in stubborn attachment to the pre-conciliar forms—as Quattuor Abhinc Annos said only fourteen years earlier—but in the “haste” and shallowness of the reform itself. Nevertheless, Ratzinger insisted on complete commitment to the “fundamental rules” on which the reform was based. He argued that the “essential criteria” of Sacrosanctum Concilium should be applied to celebrations of the “old” liturgy as well as the “new” so that “in the two forms of celebration the unity of the faith and the unicity of the mystery should appear clearly.” Ratzinger would return to this idea of “two forms” of the liturgy as a path to ecclesial “unity,” giving it official status in less than a decade.

With Ratzinger’s election as Pope Benedict XVI in 2005, many observers expected that permission to use the 1962 Missal would be further “liberalized” (to use a word that “conservative” supporters of the pre-conciliar liturgy seem to enjoy


32 Ibid.
pronouncing with irony). In late 2006, a group of French intellectuals led by René Girard published a manifesto expressing their support for a *motu proprio*, rumored to be in the works, that would eliminate the requirement of obtaining an indult to offer the Tridentine Mass. Italian, Polish, and English-speaking intellectuals quickly added their voices to this “chorus.” After thirty-five years of restriction, those who desired the pre-conciliar Latin Mass had to wait only six more months for the new pontiff to remove most of the official obstacles (if not the practical ones) to more widespread availability.

*Summorum Pontificum*

With the promulgation of Benedict XVI’s *motu proprio*, *Summorum Pontificum*, in July 2007, it may be said that “traditionalist” reaction to the post-conciliar liturgical reform has entered a new phase. While the *motu proprio* most directly affects Latin Mass communities that have maintained their canonical affiliation with the institutional church, it also appears to have paved the way for important shifts in the hierarchy’s relationship with the Society of St. Pius X. On this front, Pope Benedict made a decision in 2009 to quietly lift the sentence of excommunication from the four SSPX bishops that Lefebvre had illicitly consecrated. To the pope’s dismay, the move immediately grabbed headlines in the secular press with the “revelation” that one of the bishops, Richard Williamson, had made public statements denying the full magnitude of the Holocaust on multiple occasions.

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occasions. The pope, whose work as a theologian had included efforts to improve Jewish-
Christian relations, nevertheless defended the remission of the excommunications as a
“gesture of reconciliation” appropriate for the universal pastor, whose first duty is to
ensure the unity of the church.  

36 Negotiations to fully reconcile the SSPX with the Vatican continued over the next
three years even though Williamson refused to retract his statements about the Holocaust.
In June 2012, the Vatican announced that it was prepared to offer the SSPX recognition
as a “personal prelature” within the church but autonomous from any local diocese. At
present, the religious superior of the SSPX, Bernard Fellay, seems to favor this approach,
but he has not yet endorsed Rome’s proposed “doctrinal preamble” defining the precise
affirmations of Vatican II and of the Missal of Paul VI that the SSPX would be required
to make. In their statements about the negotiations, the SSPX bishops continue to insist
that the question is not whether the Society will reconcile itself to the “ecclesiastical
authorities,” but whether those authorities will “return” to the “constant Tradition of the
Church” by repudiating “all the novelties of the Second Vatican Council which remain
tainted with errors.” The Society’s leadership appears to prefer the language of
purification to that of reconciliation, and they conclude a recent statement with a prayer
to Mary, asking her to “chase the enemies out from inside the Church who are trying to
destroy it more radically than its enemies from outside.”  

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36 Benedict XVI, Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church Concerning the Remission of the
Excommunication of the Four Bishops Consecrated by Archbishop Lefebvre, March 10, 2009,
http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/letters/2009/documents/hf_ben-
xvi_let_20090310_remissione-scomunica_en.html.

In any case, “reconciliation” is the intended goal of *Summorum Pontificum*, as Benedikt explains in the cover letter to bishops accompanying his *motu proprio*:

I now come to the positive reason which motivated my decision to issue this *motu proprio* updating that of 1988 [i.e. Ecclesia Dei]. It is a matter of coming to an interior reconciliation in the heart of the Church. Looking back over the past, to the divisions which in the course of the centuries have rent the Body of Christ, one continually has the impression that, at critical moments when divisions were coming about, not enough was done by the Church’s leaders to maintain or regain reconciliation and unity. One has the impression that omissions on the part of the Church have had their share of blame for the fact that these divisions were able to harden. This glance at the past imposes an obligation on us today: to make every effort to enable all those who truly desire unity to remain in that unity or to attain it anew. I think of a sentence in the Second Letter to the Corinthians, where Paul writes: “Our mouth is open to you, Corinthians; our heart is wide. You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections. In return, widen your hearts also!” (2 Cor 6:11-13). Paul was certainly speaking in another context, but his exhortation can and must touch us too, precisely on this subject. Let us generously open our hearts and make room for everything that the faith itself allows.\(^{38}\)

Elsewhere in his cover letter, Benedict acknowledges that the original motivation for the 1984 indult and the 1988 *motu proprio* was the reconciliation of traditionalists who had separated themselves from the church, specifically the members of the SSPX. While this goal remains unachieved, a beneficial side effect has been that “a number of communities have gratefully made use of the possibilities provided by the *motu proprio [Ecclesia Dei]*” to establish and maintain licit celebrations of the Mass according to the 1962 Missal.

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Without referring to specific evidence, Benedict observes that these approved traditional Latin Mass communities are not on the way to disappearance as many church officials expected. On the contrary, in what is probably the most interesting sociological claim of the entire letter, Benedict insists (again without citing specific evidence) that the pre-conciliar Mass is attracting new adherents among Catholics born after the Council. “Immediately after the Second Vatican Council it was presumed that requests for the use of the 1962 Missal would be limited to the older generation which had grown up with it, but in the meantime it has clearly been demonstrated that young 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.”

According to this picture of the present situation, the institutional church needs to update its official regulations in order to catch up in with a popular trend in contemporary Catholic piety. Thus the purpose of *Summorum Pontificum* becomes the provision of “precise juridical norms” for an alternative liturgical form that exists *de facto* alongside the form that officially replaced it.

Ironically—given the desire to present *Summorum Pontificum* as legislation motivated by pastoral concern for reconciliation—the juridical resolution of this awkward situation involves two decisions that have elicited new controversy: the pope’s declaration that the 1962 Missal was “never abrogated,” and his definition of the pre- and post-conciliar Missals as “two usages of the one Roman rite.” Both decisions are contained in the first legislative article of *Summorum Pontificum*:

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39 SP cover letter.

40 For reviews of various reactions to *Summorum Pontificum*, see Bovens, “Chronique inachevée des publications autour de la Lettre apostolique en forme de Motu proprio ‘Summorum Pontificum’ de
The Roman Missal promulgated by Paul VI is the ordinary expression of the ‘Lex orandi’ (Law of prayer) of the Catholic Church of the Latin rite. Nonetheless, the Roman Missal promulgated by St. Pius V and reissued by Bl. John XXIII is to be considered as an extraordinary expression of that same ‘Lex orandi,’ and must be given due honour for its venerable and ancient usage. These two expressions of the Church’s Lex orandi will in no any way lead to a division in the Church’s ‘Lex credendi’ (Law of belief). They are, in fact, two usages of the one Roman rite.

It is, therefore, permissible to celebrate the Sacrifice of the Mass following the typical edition of the Roman Missal promulgated by Bl. John XXIII in 1962 and never abrogated, as an extraordinary form of the Liturgy of the Church.  

Benedict pointedly denies any fundamental innovation in his regulation of the church’s liturgical discipline. Instead of simply granting permission for any priest to use the pre-conciliar Missal, the pope prefers to “draw attention to the fact that this Missal was never juridically abrogated and, consequently, in principle, was always permitted.” In order to deny that permission to use the 1962 Missal is an innovation, the pope is necessarily innovative in his use of the word “abrogated,” as canonist John Huels explains:

If the freedom to use the 1962 Missal had not been abrogated, there would have been no need for the individual privileges (variously called a permission, faculty, or indult) permitting its use by those requesting it; any priest could have lawfully used it all along. There would also have been no need for this motu proprio [Summorum Pontificum]. Thus, Pope Benedict must have something unique in mind when he says that the 1962 Missal was never abrogated. Either he means it was not explicitly abrogated by name; or perhaps he is saying that the 1962 Missal has continuously been used by those who were exceptionally so.

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41 SP 1

42 SP cover letter.
permitted and, in this sense, was never completely abrogated in practice. However, this is not the technical meaning of the term “abrogated” in canon law.\footnote{Huels, “Reconciling the Old with the New,” 295.}

While it is true that elderly and infirm priests could receive permission to celebrate the pre-conciliar Mass without a congregation after the mandatory implementation of the new missal in 1971, the strict limits on this permission were clearly stated and clearly understood at the time. Resistance to the \textit{Novus Ordo} could hardly have been what it was had use of the 1962 Missal been “always permitted” to any group of the faithful that wished to retain the older liturgical forms. Some liturgical scholars feel that Benedict’s elliptical affirmation of the 1962 Missal as “never abrogated” obscures the historical fact that the church—with the full knowledge and approval of Pope Paul VI—mandated the replacement of that Missal by the 1970 Missal, making carefully defined exceptions in only a few cases. In attempting to make his new legislation appear less innovative than it really is, Pope Benedict seems to be revising the history of the liturgical reform’s implementation.\footnote{Nathan Mitchell, “\textit{Summorum Pontificum},” \textit{Worship} 81, no. 6 (November 2007): 555–58; Baldovin, “Reflections on \textit{Summorum Pontificum}, 104-105”}

It is not innovative to insist on the unity of the church’s \textit{lex orandi} in spite of diversity in its expression. The most obvious contemporary examples of such unity in diversity are the Eastern churches in full communion with Rome that celebrate the liturgy according to one of the Eastern rites: the Greek Catholics (Melkites), the Maronites, and the Chaldean Catholics, for instance. Even within the Latin or Roman Rite, one historically finds a variety of “uses” that arose from local idiosyncrasies in the celebration of the “standard” rite—such as the Sarum Use of Salisbury Cathedral, which
heavily influenced Thomas Cranmer’s composition of the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer*. Nevertheless, it is unprecedented for a missal or another liturgical book to be designated as an “extraordinary expression,” “usage,” or “form” of the Roman Rite, different from its “ordinary expression” yet available for use anywhere that the Roman Rite is celebrated. Benedict’s decree is even more unusual in that the missal designated for “extraordinary” use is simply the previous “ordinary” missal of the church—the same missal that an ecumenical council of the church decided to revise. No such “extraordinary” preservation of any previous Roman Missal was thought necessary in 1570 when—fulfilling a decree of the Council of Trent—Pope Pius V promulgated a new missal prepared by experts charged with preserving the best material from earlier books in the new missal itself. Ironically, Pius V’s apostolic letter, *Quo primum*—which traditionalists often cite to show that the Tridentine Mass may never be licitly changed—illustrates the precedent of discontinuing all use of an old Roman Missal once a new Roman Missal has been duly promulgated.

Whatever one concludes about the novelty of the pre-conciliar missal’s “extraordinary” status, the practical point of this designation is to remove the necessity of obtaining “extraordinary” permission to offer the Tridentine Mass. Priests no longer need to ask their local bishops for permission to use the 1962 Missal when offering the Mass in

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46 SC 25.

Religious communities (monastic as well as “secular” communities like the FSSP) may decide to use the older missal on occasion or “permanently” in their “oratories” (i.e. monastery/convent chapels or other non-parish churches belonging to a community). Most significantly:

In parishes, where there is a stable group of faithful who adhere to the earlier liturgical tradition, the pastor should willingly accept their requests to celebrate the Mass according to the rite of the Roman Missal published in 1962, and ensure that the welfare of these faithful harmonises with the ordinary pastoral care of the parish, under the guidance of the bishop in accordance with canon 392, avoiding discord and favouring the unity of the whole Church...

In churches that are not parish or conventual churches, it is the duty of the Rector of the church to grant the above permission.

Although Benedict insists that “nothing is taken away from the authority of the bishop,” the local ordinary’s explicit permission is no longer required in order to celebrate Mass using the old missal. Moreover, parishes—which in principle were not supposed to host the Indult Mass “unless the bishop permits it in extraordinary cases”—are now viewed as the ordinary location for these celebrations, and their pastors (or rectors in the case of non-parish churches) have the authority and responsibility to satisfy requests for the Tridentine Mass. Almost as an afterthought, the same degree of autonomy is granted to parish priests to allow the sacraments of baptism, marriage, penance, and anointing of the

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48 SP 2. As SP 4 makes clear, it is (and has always been) permissible for members of the lay faithful to attend a “private” Mass (Missa sine populo) if they ask to, acting on their own initiative.

49 SP 3.

50 SP 5.

51 SP cover letter.

52 Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments, Quattuor Abhine Annos.
sick to be celebrated according to the pre-conciliar Rituale Romanum. The motu proprio even allows the possibility of canonical parishes that exclusively offer “celebrations following the ancient form of the Roman rite,” though these would have to be established as personal (non-territorial) parishes by the local bishop.53

These provisions replace the “Indult Mass” with “Mass in the Extraordinary Form,” or the “EF Mass,” as it is sometimes abbreviated. There is no doubt that leaders of Latin Mass communities prefer this new official designation, especially in the United States, where “extraordinary” is a common synonym for “wonderful,” and “ordinary” ordinarily means “dull.” Of course, the contrast between forma extraordinaria and forma ordinaria is ostensibly neutral with respect to quality, and could even suggest a certain priority for the regularly used form over one used only exceptionally. But this has not stopped those who support the extraordinary form from enthusiastically advertising their Christmas or Holy Week services as “extraordinary.”

The EF Mass and the other pre-conciliar rites are also extraordinary in the way that they are regulated by the Vatican, where authority over the liturgy is ordinarily exercised through the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments (CDWDS). Summorum Pontificum grants authority to supervise implementation of the motu proprio’s decrees to the commission that John Paul II originally established to facilitate communion with former SSPX members, the Pontifical Commission Ecclesia Dei.54 In April 2011, the Ecclesia Dei Commission issued an instruction called Universae Ecclesiae that establishes norms for the extraordinary form

53 SP 5, 9-10.
54 SP 11.
and notes that the Commission, “having received the approval from the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments,” will henceforth be responsible for “looking after future editions of liturgical texts pertaining to the forma extraordinaria of the Roman Rite.” For now, no changes to the text of the 1962 missal—or to the other liturgical books “in effect in 1962”—are foreseen, with two exceptions. In the letter to bishops accompanying Summorum Pontificum, Pope Benedict mentions that “new Saints and some of the new Prefaces can and should be inserted in the old Missal.” In the context of the cover letter, this statement primarily serves as an example of one way in which “the two Forms of the usage of the Roman Rite can be mutually enriching,” but Universae Ecclesiae emphasizes its status as a papal directive that must be implemented “according to provisions which will be indicated subsequently.”

The International Una Voce Federation admits that supporters of the old missal will have to accept insertions from the much larger collection of post-conciliar eucharistic prefaces and from the post-conciliar Mass propers for saints’ feasts. In all other respects, however, they “will respectfully and vigorously challenge any proposal that strays beyond these clearly defined limits and seeks to adulterate the integrity of that

55 Pontifical Commission Ecclesia Dei, Universae Ecclesiae, 11.
56 SP cover letter.
57 Pontifical Commission Ecclesia Dei, Universae Ecclesiae, 25.
58 For a full discussion of the post-conciliar revision of the eucharistic prefaces and some suggestions about why they may have been singled out by Pope Benedict as an example of something from the “new” missal that ought to be incorporated into the extraordinary form, see Nathaniel Marx, “The Revision of the Prefaces in the Missal of Paul VI,” in Issues in Eucharistic Praying East and West: Essays in Liturgical and Theological Analysis, ed. Maxwell E. Johnson (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010), 349–82.
Missal.” To this end, they have published a series of “position papers” defending things seen as essential to the extraordinary form (though not, in their view, particular to it): the Latin language, celebration *ad orientem*, communion received on the tongue, and exclusion of women and girls from service at the altar, among other items. Most provocative, perhaps, is a paper that discusses the “value” of “liturgical pluralism” as a reason to shield the extraordinary form from “undue influence” by the ordinary form. Without irony, the anonymous authors repeatedly cite Vatican II’s renunciation of the centuries-old effort to impose the Latin (i.e. Tridentine) liturgy on the Eastern Catholic churches as precedent for allowing the extraordinary form to remain “true to itself, its spirit and its traditions.” The logic, basically, is that since it “can now be seen as regrettable” that Rome “approved changes” to the liturgical traditions of the Eastern rites (in order to make them conform more closely to the pre-conciliar Roman Rite), it would be equally unfortunate if changes to the extraordinary form were now approved in order to align it more closely with the ordinary form.

Even more eyebrow-raising is that the authors do not hesitate to quote from article 37 of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*: “In the liturgy, the Church has no wish to impose a rigid uniformity in matters which do not implicate the faith or the good of the whole community.” To supporters of the liturgical reform—and in official Vatican documents—

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this article and the three following it provide a mandate for “inculturation” of the liturgy through local “variations and adaptations” of the Roman Rite. Given their concerns about “adulteration” of the 1962 Missal, it goes without saying that the authors of the Una Voce document are not suggesting that the extraordinary form should be similarly open to local variations and adaptations. On the contrary, what is fascinating about the current situation is that a principle typically used to affirm linguistic, artistic, and even textual variations in the ordinary form of the Roman liturgy—the principle of liturgical diversity as a sign of ecclesial unity—is also being used to repudiate any such variety in the extraordinary form. Supporters of the traditional Latin Mass might be inclined to argue that the liturgy of the Roman Rite throughout the world ought be uniform with respect to such things as language, ministerial roles, and the text of the Missal. But in the wake of Summorum Pontificum, we find some of them arguing that “liturgical pluralism” is not only valuable for the church as a whole, but that the extraordinary form contributes to this diversity precisely by maintaining its own internal uniformity at points where the ordinary form admits variety. Critics might see this as a tactical maneuver by people who are just biding their time until they can impose the pre-conciliar liturgy on the entire church. Still, when the relatively small size of this population is soberly taken into account, it is hard to deny that preservation rather than imposition must be foremost in the minds of Latin Mass adherents.

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“No Small Numbers”?  

How can current adherence to the traditional Latin Mass be quantified? Few disinterested attempts have been made. The efforts of interested parties to count the number of Latin Mass-goers are nevertheless presented with an air of unassailable—if not dispassionate—reliance on “data” and “statistics.” The waters are further muddied because both supporters and critics seem to prefer the shortcut of polling self-identified Catholics for their opinions about “bringing back” the Tridentine Mass. This polling data has very little analytical value, but it is cited repeatedly—often to support quite opposite conclusions—in the popular press as well as in scholarly publications. A couple examples of this approach to gauging interest in the Latin Mass should be sufficient to demonstrate why estimates based on counting the number of publicly advertised Latin Masses are more useful and reliable.

In 1985—the year after the Vatican issued the Mass Indult—St. Athanasius Roman Catholic Church, an independent traditionalist parish in Vienna, Virginia, commissioned the Gallup organization to conduct a poll of American Catholics. The results of the poll were reported by the pastor, Fr. Ronald Ringrose, to news outlets including the Associated Press and United Press International, and stories appeared in major newspapers including the New York Times, the Chicago Tribune, and the Los Angeles Times. According to Ringrose, the parish received support from about a dozen other traditionalist groups in order to pay Gallup $3000 to conduct a telephone poll.

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Gallup contacted a random sample of 1500 people, and 400 of these identified themselves as Catholic. These 400 Catholics were asked two questions:

1. As you may be aware, Pope John Paul II has authorized the use of the older Latin (Tridentine) mass, as celebrated just before the Second Vatican Council in the mid-1960s. The local bishop’s permission is required and certain conditions must be met. Do you favor bringing back as an alternative to the newer mass the older Latin (Tridentine) mass, without restrictions such as these, and celebrating it as it had been prior to the Second Vatican Council?

2. If the older Latin (Tridentine) mass were made readily available at convenient times and locations, and you were able to attend, would you do so or not?

Ringrose reported that 40% of the Catholics surveyed favored “brining back” the Latin Mass while 35% were opposed and 15% had no opinion. In the same group, 53% said that they would attend a “convenient” Latin Mass while 37% would not and 10% were undecided. Ringrose, after “translating the percentages into actual numbers,” was “elated” to learn from this poll that “nearly 21 million Catholics” favored restoring the traditional Latin Mass.64 Apparently alone among national newspapers, the Washington Post went to the trouble of directly contacting Gallup, which admitted that “the size of the sample was limited by the amount of money made available by the client.” William McCready—the scholar at NORC who was responsible for preparing the 1975 report about the reception of the liturgical reform—pointed out the inadequacy of the sample size and the problematic wording of questions that proposed the Latin Mass as an “alternative.” “Typically, if you give Catholics an option, they’ll go for it,” he said65.

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64 Furlow, “Latin Mass Favored.”

65 Hyer, “Many Catholics Want Latin Mass.”
presumably referring to their habits in answering polls rather than their behavior in choosing a Mass.

The “Gallup” name apparently goes far in establishing the credibility of this and similar polls. According to Roger McCaffrey, founding publisher of *The Latin Mass* magazine, “it is fair to say, if George Gallup can be taken seriously, that one-fifth of our fellow Catholics would patronize the old Mass if they knew it were available.”66 This is how McCaffrey interprets the results of another Gallup poll presented under a bold headline—“DATA”—in the table of contents to his edited collection, *Latin Mass Revival*. The “St. Augustine Center Assn.” is listed as sponsor of this poll conducted in October 1990; no details about sample size or polling methods are offered. The results show that only 29% of Catholics “are aware they can petition their bishop for regular Traditional Latin Masses.” However, “if it were available,” only 23% of them would “never” attend the Latin Mass while 51% would do so “occasionally,” 17% “frequently,” and 8% “always.”67 The precise meaning of an “available” Latin Mass is not defined. These results appear to be the source of claims rather more extravagant than McCaffrey’s, such as this one in a 2003 newsletter of the Cedar Rapids, Iowa chapter of *Una Voce*: “A 1990 Gallup poll commissioned by the St. Augustine Center Association showed that 76% of Catholics in America would attend the Traditional Latin Mass if it were readily available in their parishes.”68


67 Ibid., 5.

Despite their questionable value, the results of these polls have an astonishingly long shelf life, increased by their frequent repetition on websites and blogs devoted to the traditional Latin Mass. When I met with a member of the Coalition in Support of *Ecclesia Dei*, intending to interview him about his personal attachment to the Latin Mass, he began by plunking down a thick packet of newsletters, clippings from *The Wanderer*, and copies of *Ecclesia Dei* and *Summorum Pontificum*. Topping it all was a report compiled by a group of traditionalist Catholics on opinion polls commissioned by other traditionalist groups but ostensibly conducted with impartiality by Gallup—including the 1985 poll for St. Athanasius Church and the 1990 poll for the St. Augustine Center Association. It cites Ringrose’s 20.8 million figure as the number of people in the United States who “want the Traditional Latin Mass restored.” Then it cites the 1990 poll as evidence that “MORE THAN $\frac{3}{4}$ OF U.S. CATHOLICS WOULD ATTEND THE TRADITIONAL LATIN MASS AT LEAST OCCASIONALLY.” The report goes on to suggest that figures based on such surveys are probably “low” since “the polling was only of Novus Ordo Catholics” and not of those who are “already attending the Traditional Latin Mass.” The number of the latter group, who attend “in spite of persecution by the Novus Ordo apparatus…is estimated to be approximately 1,000,000 each Sunday.” This is “under highly adverse conditions in which there are only about 500 Traditional Latin Masses celebrated on Sundays across the United States.” Understandably, perhaps, the compilers of these statistics do not spell out the necessary implication of their estimate, which is that the average size of the congregations at these five hundred Latin Masses is two thousand worshippers. I have yet to encounter one of these mega-church Latin

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Masses, though I have often counted over two *hundred* people on Sunday at one the best-known urban locations for the Latin Mass in the United States.

Lest we think that questionable use of “data” is limited to traditionalist groups with obvious agendas, we may note that the same old 1985 Gallup poll is cited by Georgetown University’s Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) in order to demonstrate that “opinions about the Latin Mass, either positive or negative, have appeared to weaken as time has passed.”

This story, based on comparison of the Gallup results with a new poll conducted by CARA in 2008, was picked up by news agencies and printed in publications including *USA Today*, *The National Catholic Reporter*, and the professional journal *Ministry & Liturgy*. The CARA poll asked 1007 adult Catholics whether they favored or opposed “bringing back the older Latin Tridentine Mass for those who would prefer this option.” 63% of the respondents expressed “no opinion,” while 25% “favored” and 12% “opposed” the Tridentine Mass “as an alternative to the newer Mass.” CARA then asked the 88% who expressed no opposition, “If the Latin Tridentine Mass were made readily available at convenient times and locations, and you were able to attend, would you?” Again, “no opinion” topped the responses to this question at 46%, with “yes” and “no” nearly equal at 29% and 25%,

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respectively. CARA concludes—presumably after accounting for non-responses—that “about one in ten adult Catholics (11 percent overall) or approximately 5.7 million individuals” would at least claim “interest in attending a Latin Mass.”\textsuperscript{74} If true, and if the number of Latin Masses available tells us anything about the number of people attending (see below), only one in a hundred of these “interested” Catholics has ever done anything about it. At least CARA’s claim is not as outlandish as that of the 1990 Gallup poll that envisions 76\% of Catholics as potential Latin Mass attendees. Still it is the latter “statistic” that finds its way into an essay by M. Francis Mannion—a widely respected and moderate liturgical scholar—who cites it to suggest the enormous size of “an indeterminate body of Catholics who have learned to live with the Mass of 1969, but whose preference would be for the Tridentine Mass.”\textsuperscript{75}

Simply put, opinion polls are not very helpful in gauging interest in the Latin Mass, and they are totally inappropriate measures of “adherence” or “attachment” to the pre-conciliar liturgy. And adherence—not “interest,” “favorability,” or “preference”—is the singular disposition found among “no small numbers” of the Catholic faithful that Summorum Pontificum cites to support preservation of the pre-conciliar liturgy.\textsuperscript{76} A census of all Latin Mass communities would seem to provide the most meaningful way to quantify adherence to the Latin Mass, but several factors make its accomplishment appear next to impossible. Leaving aside the question of whether or not to count traditionalist communities that are not officially recognized by the Catholic hierarchy,

\textsuperscript{74} Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, “Opinions About the Latin Mass.”


\textsuperscript{76} SP, Introduction.
one is nonetheless confronted with enormous differences in the size, structure, and jurisdictional status of Latin Mass communities. In most parishes where a Latin Mass is offered, those who attend it represent only a fraction of registered parishioners—if they are registered parishioners at all. The communities that form around these Masses tend to be organized loosely, and are unlikely to keep records of membership. Parishes entirely dedicated to the extraordinary form—usually administered by the FSSP—are rare exceptions. Somewhat more common are non-parish churches (shrines, oratories, chapels, etc.) that offer the Latin Mass either exclusively or on occasion. Often administered by monastics, the FSSP, or the Institute of Christ the King Sovereign Priest (ICRSS), these churches usually cannot officially register attendees as parishioners, and their leaders may or may not be interested in keeping count.

In the absence of a census, the next best way to quantify current adherence to the Latin Mass is to count the number of regularly scheduled Masses and attempt to estimate attendance. In this task, we can rely more confidently on information provided by groups that promote the availability of the Latin Mass, including those that are openly hostile to the Novus Ordo. The Official Traditional Catholic Directory (successor to Radko Jansky’s Catholic Traditionalist Directory)\textsuperscript{77} is not subtle in offering evaluation alongside information: a smiley face appears next to “independent” Tridentine Masses while a masked bandit accompanies Masses offered with diocesan approval or by the SSPX, which “since 2005…has been moving toward affiliation with the invalid New Order.”\textsuperscript{78} Nevertheless, the publishers clearly have no interest in listing Mass times that

\textsuperscript{77} See Dinges, “Catholic Traditionalism in America,” 169–71.

\textsuperscript{78} Morrison, Official Traditional Catholic Directory, 30-33.
do not exist. The same can be said for groups that only list Masses “approved” by the
hierarchy: the Coalition in Support of Ecclesia Dei in the case of extraordinary
form/Tridentine Masses, and the Latin Liturgy Association in the case of ordinary
form/Novus Ordo Masses in Latin.

In preparing the following tables of extraordinary form Masses, I began with the
Mass listings provided by the Coalition in Support of Ecclesia Dei on their public
website. Each listing indicates the city and name of the church and the time(s) of each
Mass on Sundays, weekdays, and Holy Days of Obligation. Aside from occasional notes,
no other information is given. In order to determine what kind of church hosts each Mass,
it was necessary to search the Internet for websites belonging to the churches or related to
them. In almost all cases, these were not difficult to find, though the quality and currency
of the content varied greatly. Following these procedures, we arrive at a total of 433
locations in the United States where a Mass in the extraordinary form is celebrated at
least occasionally. To put this figure in context, we may note that the 2011 Official
Catholic Directory lists 18,201 parishes in the United States. The overwhelming majority
of these locations are regular diocesan parishes where the ordinary form of the Mass is
usually celebrated. In some cases (like that of St. John Cantius), the extraordinary form is
celebrated by the parish’s own priests, but this appears to be more the exception than the
rule. More often (as at St. Patrick’s), the Latin Mass community has its own priest and
more or less separate organizations and programs. The juridical independence of these
Latin Mass communities occasionally extends to their establishment as separate parishes
that share a church building with an ordinary form parish. I have counted these along

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79 “Traditional Mass Directory,” Coalition Ecclesia Dei, accessed April 19, 2012,
with extraordinary form parishes that are in possession of their own church building. The
distinction between an extraordinary form parish and a non-parish church that exclusively
celebrates the extraordinary form (such as the Shrine of Christ the King) can also be
fuzzy. I count these in separate categories mainly to indicate the variety of juridical
structures under which different dioceses have chosen to accommodate Latin Mass
communities.

TABLE 1.1
LOCATIONS OF EXTRAORDINARY FORM MASSES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Mass Location</th>
<th>Number of Locations</th>
<th>Percentage of Locations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ordinary Form Parish</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-parish Church</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extraordinary Form Parish</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monastery or Convent</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>433</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 433 locations where the traditional Latin Mass is celebrated with official
approval from the hierarchy, 309 (71%) are able to offer Mass every Sunday, but only 76
(18%) offer the Latin Mass every day of the week. As the following table shows, the
most common situation for Latin Mass communities is to have one Sunday Mass per
week. A distant second and third are locations that have one EF Sunday Mass per month
and locations that have no Sunday Masses at all. A smaller number of relatively large
communities that offer two or more Sunday Masses each week account for an outsized
portion of the total number of Masses offered in the extraordinary form on any given
Sunday.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sunday Masses</th>
<th>Number of Locations</th>
<th>Percentage of Locations</th>
<th>Contribution to Weekly Average</th>
<th>Percentage of Weekly Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 weekly</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 weekly</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 weekly</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 or 2 weekly</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 weekly</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>60.3%</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>66.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 monthly</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3 monthly</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 monthly</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 monthly</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 quarterly</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>&lt;0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>433</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td><strong>391</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Following this method of counting publicly listed Masses, we can expect to find just under four hundred officially “approved” traditional Latin Masses celebrated in the United States each Sunday. This is similar to the latest figure for “Masses Every Sunday” that the Coalition in Support of Ecclesia Dei gives on their website.\(^{80}\) Systematic head counts are not available for most of these Masses. Obviously, attendance may vary greatly from one location to another and from one time of day to another. I have observed Sunday Low Masses with as few as thirty congregants and High Masses with as many as three hundred. It seems reasonable to suppose that a Latin Mass community may have difficulty sustaining a regular Sunday Mass with fewer than twenty-five congregants and may be likely to add an additional Mass when regular attendance exceeds two hundred.

fifty. A range of 75 to 125 congregants is probably a generous estimate of average attendance at the approximately four hundred EF Latin Masses each Sunday. Even if some of these attendees would be better described as visitors, it appears that supporters of the Latin Mass in the U.S. can convincingly claim between 30,000 and 50,000 “adherents” in the sense of people who regularly attend an “approved” EF Mass. This figure probably includes at least some people who are current or former attendees of traditionalist chapels. By comparison, a CARA survey of 846 out of 17,784 U.S. Catholic parishes conducted in 2010 found that the total attendance for all Sunday (and Saturday vigil) Masses in an average parish is 1,110.\textsuperscript{81} This means that a total weekend attendance of 50,000 for all EF Masses would represent about 0.25\% of total attendance at all Catholic Masses in the U.S. While all of these figures are rough, they are unlikely to be off by a whole order of magnitude.

Of course the designation, “Latin Mass Catholic,” could reasonably be understood to include, on the one hand, Catholics who regularly attend Latin-only celebrations of the post-Vatican II Mass, and on the other hand, Catholic traditionalists who attend the Tridentine Mass at chapels that operate without official ecclesiastical approval. The number added by the former group is unlikely to exceed a few thousand people. The Latin Liturgy Association provides an online directory that lists 66 locations where the \textit{Novus Ordo} is celebrated entirely in Latin.\textsuperscript{82} Only 43 of these locations have an ordinary

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\textsuperscript{82} This includes Latin \textit{Novus Ordo} Masses in which the readings and homily are given in the vernacular. The Latin Liturgy Association also lists 25 locations where a “hybrid” Latin-vernacular Mass is celebrated. In most cases, this seems to indicate a Mass at which the choir or schola sings in Latin but the priest says all of his prayers in the vernacular.
form Latin Mass every Sunday, however, and only ten have it daily. One would expect to find slightly fewer than fifty Latin Novus Ordo Masses in the U.S. on any given Sunday. Thus, despite the relative rarity of the EF Latin Mass, it is still celebrated about eight times more frequently than the OF Latin Mass.

The United States District of the SSPX lists 102 chapels on its website, giving times for an average of 124 Masses on any given Sunday. Despite its open hostility to the SSPX and the “New Order sect” (i.e. the post-conciliar Catholic Church), the Official Catholic Traditional Directory similarly lists 102 SSPX Mass locations—as well as 312 “diocesan” locations where one can find the “invalid and uncatholic” extraordinary form Mass, which “uses the Vatican II ‘Motu’ service of 1962+, deriving from the Motu Proprio Summorum Pontificum of 2007, modernized to the present day.” The Directory’s “recommended” traditional Latin Mass locations include 44 affiliated with the CMRI, 24 with the SSPV, and 150 “independent” traditionalist chapels.83 The figures for the CMRI and the SSPV approximate the number of sites listed on the websites of these organizations. The independent sites are much more difficult to confirm. In any case, adding the SSPX figure to those for the SSPV, the CMRI, and the independent chapels yields a total of 320 “traditionalist” Mass sites in the United States. It stands to reason that the total number of traditionalist Latin Mass adherents is probably somewhat lower than the number of extraordinary form “adherents.” Dinges estimated a traditionalist population of ten to fifteen thousand in the mid-1980s and fifteen to twenty thousand in

the mid-1990s, though his figures—like those presented here for extraordinary form adherents—are by no means based on a systematic census.  

All told, these sources identify just over seven hundred fifty locations in the United States where the Tridentine Mass is offered, whether frequently, occasionally, or rarely. Before dismissing this as “small numbers,” we should note that only sixty out of 236 religious bodies claimed more congregations than this in the 2010 U.S. Religious Congregations and Membership Study. The largest number of congregations claimed by an “Eastern liturgical” denomination, for example, was 571, belonging to the Orthodox Church in America. More importantly, William Dinges’s comments from thirty years ago regarding the “small” size and fragmentary organization of the traditionalist movement remain true today—even more so when applied to the phenomenon of Latin Mass adherence as a whole. In this phenomenon we find an emblematic part of the “crisis of adaptation” to social change that the Catholic Church and other traditional religious institutions have been facing for much of the 20th century. If nothing else, Summorum Pontificum and the commentary it provoked demonstrate that questions about the meaning and effects of liturgical change in the context of modernity are far from settled. By now, it should be apparent that “small numbers” will not, of itself, remove the voices of Latin Mass Catholics from scholarly and ecclesiastical debates about these questions.


Ideology and Identity

Most previous efforts to describe and explain attachment to the traditional Latin Mass are ancillary to accounts of Catholic traditionalism as a sectarian movement at odds with the institutional church. These accounts have yielded a number of important insights that I will briefly review here. A limitation is that Catholics who attend only hierarchically “approved” celebrations of the Tridentine Mass are generally excluded from these studies by the particular interest that scholars have in the phenomenon of dissent, which is seen as essential to the definition of Catholic traditionalism.87 Observations about traditionalists that apply imperfectly (or not at all) to other Catholics who attend the Latin Mass are nevertheless worth keeping in mind. For one thing, there are undoubtedly instances of partial or full agreement with traditionalists in ideology as well as practice among “non-traditionalist” Latin Mass adherents. Moreover, the history of traditionalist dissent is sufficiently familiar (at least in broad outline) to all but the most recent generation of Catholics that attachment to the Tridentine Mass provokes questions in many quarters about loyalty to the institutional church, acceptance of Vatican II, and recognition of the Novus Ordo’s validity. Consequently, Latin Mass adherents will sometimes find it necessary to define and explain themselves in terms of their divergence from stereotypically “traditionalist” positions.

In addition to providing the most complete history of Catholic traditionalism in the United States, William Dinges offers thorough analysis of the ideology, objectives, and tactics of traditionalism as a “social movement of clergy and laity who are striving to

87 Dinges explains that Catholics who attend chapels that “operate under the provisions of the 1984 Indult” are “not necessarily ‘traditionalists’ as the term is used here.” “We Are What You Were,” 242. Cuneo distinguishes between those who “have separated from both Rome and the American Catholic hierarchy” and those who have not by calling the former group “Catholic separatists,” though he recognizes that this is not a name by which they would refer to themselves. Smoke of Satan, 87.
reverse social change in the church and preserve the religious, ideological, organizational and ritual patterns that have lost much of their legitimacy in the postconciliar church.”

While Dinges describes liturgical change as a key “precipitating factor” in coalescence of discontent into a “social movement,” he tends to emphasize Catholic traditionalists’ “ideological” attachments as the underlying explanation for their ritual preferences.

“Catholic traditionalism is an antimodernist worldview rooted in adherence to religious and epistemological categories that have lost much of their plausibility and privileged status in the wake of institutional and intellectual change and adaptation. Traditionalism shares with Protestant fundamentalism tendencies toward a highly cognitive doctrinal religiosity marked by an objectivistic, dogmatic, legalistic, and dichotomous cognitive style.” Of course, Catholic traditionalism can only be called “fundamentalist” in its opposition to “ideas once linked with ‘Protestant’ thinking on the priesthood of the baptized, the nature of the Church, and the primacy of the Bible” that “found, with some modification, official endorsement and legitimation in postconciliar theology.” Dinges’s point in comparing Catholic traditionalism to Protestant fundamentalism is to disabuse us of the idea that traditionalism is an “emotional” movement “motivated by nostalgia for bygone ritualism.” Rather, it is a “strongly rationalistic” and “highly cognitive religious orientation” that prioritizes “doctrinal truth and uniformity” to such a degree that “adherence to correct doctrine—under the code name ‘tradition’—defines who is and who is not a ‘true Catholic.’”

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88 Dinges, “Catholic Traditionalism in America,” 137.
89 Dinges, In Defense of Truth and Tradition, 23.
91 Ibid., 81–82.
One of Dinges’s main pieces of evidence for the primacy of “doctrinal” issues over “ritual” concerns among traditionalist Catholics is the “controversy on the Catholic right over liturgical reform following the Council,” which saw traditionalists go beyond conservative opposition to the new Mass’s “alleged ‘horizontalizing’ and ‘desacralizing’ tendencies” to raise “the more serious matter of the possibility of doctrinal error” inscribed in the *Novus Ordo*.92 According to Dinges, traditionalists view the Mass primarily as a repository of “objective” truths given in “a liturgical rite essentially devoid of any subjective and/or culturally determinative elements.”

This objectivist view of ritual among traditionalist Catholics has obvious parallels with the fundamentalist view of Scripture: as the Bible is “timeless and eternal,” the Tridentine rite is the “Mass of all time”; as God’s perfection is revealed in the Bible, so it is revealed in the “spiritually perfect” Tridentine liturgy; as an inerrant scripture propounds Christian life, theology, faith, and morality in uniform manner, a “perfect” and universal Tridentine liturgy promotes Catholic doctrinal and disciplinary uniformity; as an inerrant scripture promotes a sense of security and enduring permanence, so does the unchanging Holy Sacrifice; as the Bible cannot change, neither can the Tridentine rite.93

This “objectivist view of ritual” seems to be of limited use, however, in explaining attachment to the Tridentine Mass among conservative Catholics who do not accuse the *Novus Ordo* of doctrinal error, especially if “concern with doctrinal deviation came increasingly to characterize and define the traditionalist position” as distinguished from other conservative positions.94 Since the “ideological” attachments of Catholic traditionalists are central to Dinges’s definition of the “movement,” he tends not to

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92 Ibid., 84.
93 Ibid., 85–86.
94 Ibid., 84.
explore the degree to which conservatives who reject the traditionalist “position” may share elements of this ideology. In the end, Dinges is unsure of how to classify Catholics who attend “indult Masses”—he includes their chapels in a count of “traditionalist Mass sites,” but notes that these Latin Mass Catholics “are not necessarily ‘traditionalists.’”

In his study of several strains of “conservative and traditionalist dissent in contemporary American Catholicism,” Michael Cuneo makes an even stronger distinction between conservatives and traditionalists, often calling the latter “separatists” and asserting that “Catholic conservatives and traditionalists inhabit vastly different religious worlds.” Although “for traditionalists everywhere, the marquee issue is the Mass,” Cuneo emphasizes more than anything else the traditionalist predilection for conspiracy theories. He relates stories he has heard about the falsified elections of John XXIII and Paul VI, the takeover of the Vatican by communists, and a Jewish-Masonic alliance bent on destroying the Catholic Church. Cuneo views the traditionalists’ “conspiracy culture” as a telltale symptom of their deliberate introversion and estrangement from the modern world, comparing them to Mennonite Amish and Hasidic Jews in the present, and to Shakers and Mormon pioneers in the past. Cuneo’s perspective is undoubtedly shaped by the particular traditionalist groups that he examines most closely. While he chronicles the rise of the SSPX (mostly following Dinges) and makes some general observations about its relative stability, his personal interviews and

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96 Cuneo, Smoke of Satan, 116.
97 Ibid., 118.
98 Ibid., 86, 117, 180.
99 Ibid., 90–93.
visits seem to be concentrated in smaller organizations and independent chapels. His close scrutiny of the SSPV (the SSPX splinter group) and the Mount Saint Michael group (the CMRI) makes for fascinating if somewhat lurid reading.\textsuperscript{100} Cuneo’s emphasis on the extremity of opinions found in these groups serves to distinguish “separatism/traditionalism” as a unique category in his typology of the Catholic right in America, but it also prevents us from inferring much about the attachment of non-separatist Catholics to the Tridentine Mass.

The Latin Mass figures prominently in scholarship on Catholic traditionalism for good reason. In the United States, at least, it is hard to imagine what a post-conciliar traditionalist movement could have rallied around if not the Tridentine Mass.

Scholars of American Catholicism have consistently observed that prior to Vatican II, the religious identity of the vast majority of American Catholics rested primarily on cultic observances and devotional practices: private confession, Friday abstinence, Marian devotions, the cult of the saints, and, above all, “the Mass”—attendance at which functioned as both the minimum external criterion of Catholicism and as the most meaningful institutional requirement of the religion.\textsuperscript{101}

It seems obvious that the Mass would have to occupy a prominent place in traditionalist discourse about preserving “Catholic identity.” But should this discourse, coming from the fiercest critics of the post-conciliar reform, be taken as evidence that the vast majority of American Catholics found the “new Mass” incapable of sustaining their identification with the Catholic tradition? Dinges does not contest the view that “Catholics were

\textsuperscript{100} Ibíd., 93–116.

discarding a core element of their religious identity—the Latin Tridentine liturgy—at precisely the time when social change in the American culture was reaffirming of symbols of group distinctiveness.” If true, this would make explaining adherence to the Latin Mass a relatively easy matter. Dissenting traditionalists and disgruntled conservatives would be joining a contemporary trend toward confident assertion of a distinctive group identity and worldview. The only question would be why more American Catholics are not similarly inclined to resist the dissolution of Catholic identity.

In the next chapter, we will explore the idea that adherence to the Latin Mass is part of a “popular” movement to protect Catholic religious identity from a self-defeating reform that “called into question many aspects of the Catholic sacred cosmos.” While this is a central motif in traditionalist and conservative of criticism of the post-conciliar reform, it struggles to persuasively explain why the many Catholics whose identity and worldview were anchored by the Tridentine Mass yielded a comparatively tiny minority of active resistors to the liturgical reform. One way of solving this problem is to portray traditionalists (and less extreme partisans of the Latin Mass) as a faithful few that voice the unspoken preferences of a silent majority of Catholics. As we have seen, the “statistics” that are sometimes used to make this case offer no evidence that any such silent majority exists. Equally unsupportable is the attempt to establish a causal link between post-conciliar changes to the liturgy and decreases in the percentage of American Catholics who report weekly attendance at Mass. Unavoidably, the claim that

102 Dinges, “Ritual Conflict as Social Conflict,” 147.

103 Ibid., 153.
Catholic identity has been destabilized by the loss of a “sacred cosmos” that depended on the Tridentine Mass for ritual affirmation comes up against “no small numbers” of Catholics who continue to identify themselves as Catholic despite having little or no experience of pre-conciliar liturgical forms.

Meanwhile, more than forty years have passed since the implementation of the liturgical reform, and an entire generation of Catholics has grown up without the Latin Mass at the center of their religious identity. One may argue, of course, that these Catholics do not identify with the true Catholic tradition, or that they identify less sincerely than Latin Mass Catholics do, but in either case the question of identity turns on a question of authenticity. Consequently, it is insufficient to say that adherence to the Latin Mass emerges out of strong attachment to an identity and worldview anchored in a sacred cosmos that was taken for granted by most Catholics prior to Vatican II. Even if we grant that Latin Mass Catholics are not alone in regarding a clearly defined identity as valuable in itself, we still need to ask about the modes of authentication by which contemporary adherence to the Latin Mass is verified as sincere identification with an already existing tradition of ritual prayer. Before this can be done, however, we need to show that this inquiry is not rendered superfluous by the claim that authenticity is simply given in an experience of “the sacred.” In the profiles of four “officially recognized” Latin Mass communities that follow in the next chapter, it will become apparent that “sacrality” forms a central and ubiquitous part of the way in which adherents explain the distinct attractiveness of the Latin Mass.
As the charts in the previous chapter illustrate, the term “Latin Mass community” lumps together groups whose size, longevity, organizational complexity, and juridical status in the Roman Catholic Church are extraordinarily diverse. The only thing that two Latin Mass communities will certainly have in common is their liturgical use of the Latin language, and they may be using that language to offer Mass according to two different forms of the Roman Missal. Still, we have also seen that the overwhelming majority of Latin Mass communities—even when we restrict ourselves to those officially recognized by the institutional church—are “extraordinary form” communities in which the Tridentine Mass is celebrated exclusively or (less commonly) is available along with the ordinary form of the Mass. Moreover, these extraordinary form communities fall into a few basic types, some of which are much more common than others. Insofar as the four communities examined in this study each represent a type, they might be usefully described as follows. St. John Cantius is a diocesan parish that offers the Latin Mass in both the ordinary and extraordinary forms. The Shrine of Christ the King Sovereign Priest is a non-parish community with its own church that offers only the extraordinary form. The Mother Theodore Guerin Latin Mass Community at St. Patrick’s Church is a distinct extraordinary form community contained within an ordinary form parish. Alumni Hall Chapel at the University of Notre Dame hosts a non-parish community that attends
an extraordinary form Mass offered in a chapel more often used for ordinary form celebrations.

The categories into which I have placed these four Latin Mass communities should not be mistaken for the precise definitions that Roman Catholic canon law would apply to each. Additionally, the term “community” should not be taken to imply anything beyond a more or less “stable group of faithful who adhere to the earlier liturgical tradition,” as mentioned in Summorum Pontificum.¹ Taken together, a group of such adherents might constitute an official parish, a quasi-parish, a recognized group within a parish, or merely a collection of individuals who regularly show up at a non-parish Mass. There is nothing to be gained in assuming from the outset that a more “communal” celebration of the Mass—whatever that may mean—is associated with either a more or less formally organized “community.” By profiling the four communities in the same order in which I was introduced to them, I don’t mean to suggest a hierarchy based on size, institutional resources, or longevity. It’s true, though, that most of the people who attend Mass at the three smaller communities have at least heard of St. John Cantius, and if they don’t always think that the parish sets the standard for how the Latin Mass ought to be offered, it nevertheless supplies the smaller communities with an example of how their own celebrations could be improved if they had more resources at their disposal.

¹ SP 5.
St. John Cantius Parish

St. John Cantius Parish is the largest center for the “traditional Latin liturgy” in its archdiocese, and it is probably one of the best known in the United States. The church is located in a part of Chicago that was home to a large Polish Catholic population in the early part of the twentieth century. Today this “Polish cathedral” is surrounded by commercial properties and old vacant warehouses, but also by many recently converted loft condominiums. By all accounts, this neighborhood is rapidly gentrifying. The pastor, Fr. Frank Phillips of the Congregation of the Resurrection, counts “maybe four people” who live in the vicinity of the church and come to Mass. Yet some 2,500 individuals and families are registered members of the parish.

Fr. Phillips compares this to about two hundred registrations when he took over as pastor in 1988—the same year that John Paul II’s motu proprio, Ecclesia Dei, called on bishops to be generous in allowing the “Indult Tridentine Mass.” Almost immediately, Fr. Phillips began offering the Novus Ordo Mass in Latin, and within a year or so, Cardinal Joseph Bernardin chose the parish as the official archdiocesan location for celebration of the Tridentine Mass. To this day, one of the most unique aspects of this parish is its use of both forms of the Roman Missal. Fr. Phillips unhesitatingly attributes the extraordinary growth of this inner-city parish to the care with which these liturgies have been celebrated. Donations from parishioners support large investments in a program of sacred music and rehabilitation of the church’s physical structure and

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2 The Church Music Association of America’s Journal, Sacred Music, says that “no other parish in America” has taken the model of celebrating both the ordinary and the extraordinary forms of the Mass side-by-side as far as St. John Cantius has. This claim appears in the introduction to a very informative interview with a priest from St. John Cantius who currently directs the seminary training of the Canons Regular of St. John Cantius. See “One Rite, Two Forms: The Liturgical Life of St. John Cantius: Interview with Fr. Dennis Kolinski, S.J.C.,” Sacred Music 134, no. 3 (2007): 16–21.
artwork. They also support the Canons Regular of St. John Cantius. This society of religious priests and brothers was founded by Fr. Phillips and officially erected by Cardinal Francis George in 1999. Currently, there are twenty-five members, including priests, professed brothers, novices, juniors, and seminarians. Their motto and mission is to “Restore the Sacred” (*Instaurare Sacra*) through devotion to the church’s liturgical, intellectual, and artistic heritage. Those who are not away studying mostly serve at St. John’s, though the Canons Regular were given responsibility for a second archdiocesan parish in 2007. Further expansion is “on the horizon,” according to Fr. Phillips, who says he has been contacted by several bishops who need priests to administer parishes. For now, many parishioners appeal to the abundance of priests at St. John’s as evidence that a more “traditional” Catholicism would solve the “priest shortage” problem in the American church.

Of course, it’s hard to prove that St. John’s produces more vocations than the “average” parish when the men entering the Canons Regular come from all over the United States and Canada. Similarly, the parish’s impressive growth could be a sign of vitality or simply the result of consolidating a small but widely distributed population in a single location. For all practical purposes, St. John Cantius is a non-territorial, “commuter” parish. Fr. Philips likens it to the monasteries of Christian East, where permanent communities of monks rather than neighborhood parishes still anchor the spiritual and social lives of most Christians, though they are greatly reduced in numbers. From distant points, parishioners and visitors converge upon St. John’s, not only for Mass, but also for concerts, lectures, meetings, and classes. At the same time, it is not unusual for members who are very active in the parish to attend Mass closer to home.
from time to time, especially if they are daily Mass-goers. A Tridentine low Mass is nevertheless offered every weekday morning, followed by an ordinary form Mass in English. The Canons Regular pray the Divine Office (Liturgy of the Hours) every day. Parishioners are encouraged to join them for morning, mid-day, evening, and night prayer, though the Canons are typically on their own during the week. Vespers is always preceded by the Rosary, which can bring in more parishioners, especially on Sunday, when it follows closely upon the conclusion of the Tridentine high Mass. Sunday afternoon is also the regular time for Eucharistic Adoration and Benediction, though these also play a part in other traditional devotions hosted by the parish. For instance, an additional Tridentine Mass followed by prayers to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Benediction is offered on First Friday evenings. One of the longest-running devotions at the parish is the St. Monica Novena, which is followed by the Rosary and a special Tridentine Mass every Wednesday night. Members of the Sodality of St. Monica—frequently mothers—pray especially for family members who have “fallen away” from the Catholic faith.

Sunday Mass, however, draws by far the greatest number of people to the church. Four Masses are offered every Sunday: a Tridentine low Mass at seven thirty in the morning, an ordinary form Mass in English at nine o’clock, another Novus Ordo Mass in Latin at eleven o’clock, and finally a Tridentine high Mass at twelve-thirty. An additional English Mass on Saturday evening is available to fulfill one’s Sunday obligation. This schedule has been in place since the early 1990s. Attendance is greatest at the eleven o’clock Latin Novus Ordo Mass and at the twelve-thirty Tridentine high Mass, typically in the range of two hundred to three hundred people. This includes adults and children of
all ages at both Masses, though families with children enrolled in catechism classes often choose the nine o’clock English Mass. The English Mass draws somewhere between one hundred fifty and two hundred fifty parishioners, depending on whether classes are in session. The seven-thirty low Mass—*Missa sine cantu*, as the pastor jokingly calls it—is the shortest but also the earliest, so it tends to have the smallest attendance, around one hundred fifty congregants. As in many parishes, attendance swells around Christmas and Easter, though at St. John’s the occasions that draw non-regulars also include the feasts of Corpus Christi and Christ the King, as well as the annual Requiem Mass offered on All Souls’ Day.³

The church was built to accommodate two thousand worshippers,⁴ though it’s hard to see how more than a thousand could sit with any comfort, unless perhaps one includes the multiple balconies that are used by the choirs. The dark, wooden pews in the nave sit atop a polished floor featuring three aisles with inlaid wooden decorations. Eight slender columns in two rows support the vaulted ceilings overhead. The elaborate capitals have been re-gilded recently—one of the final steps in a restoration project that has spanned many years. The pastor routinely describes in the bulletin the “invisible” work that has been done to remedy the heating, electrical, and plumbing problems that one expects of a church built in the 1890s. During the time that I was attending Mass at St. John’s, some very visible work was also being done, with scaffolding moving from place to place as restoration artists worked with plaster, paint, and gold leaf on moldings and

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³ These attendance figures are based on my own observations.

murals. A large painting of the Resurrection above the main altar dominates the apse—not surprising for a parish that has always been administered by Resurrectionist priests. The parish’s Polish heritage is evoked by scenes featuring St. John Cantius (a 15th-century priest and theologian), by a replica of the 15th-century altarpiece of sculptor Wit Stwosz (the original is in St. Mary’s Basilica in Krakow), and by a bust of the “Polish Pope,” John Paul II. However, these are not especially large or prominent features in a church that contains hundreds of human and angelic figures in statues, paintings, and stained glass windows.

The music program for the three “sung” Masses makes use of three different adult choirs, a youth choir, three children’s choirs, and a Gregorian chant schola. Generally, the children’s choirs are restricted to the English Mass while the adult choirs take turns at all three Masses. The two sung Latin Masses always feature the schola in addition to one of the choirs, accompanied by an organ and occasionally by an orchestra composed of professional musicians. The singers are volunteers, though some also sing professionally. The choral repertoire usually includes only music composed before the second half of the twentieth century, though exceptions are made for works written by the parish’s own choir directors. Renaissance polyphony and Viennese Classical are probably the styles most frequently heard in addition to Gregorian chant. Naturally, the congregation does not join in singing any of this choral music. However, a single congregational hymn concludes each of the sung Masses, and the people also chant most of the responses to the priest. This does not include the ordinary chants of the Mass (Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, and Agnus Dei), which are usually sung by the choir in some polyphonic or orchestral setting instead of being chanted by the schola. Low Mass is largely silent, with
no music and with the altar servers saying all of the responses to the priest quietly by themselves. The congregation says nothing aloud until after Mass has ended, when they recite the usual prayers after low Mass in English: three Hail Marys, the Hail, Holy Queen, and a prayer to St. Michael the Archangel.

Although other professionally trained musicians now direct the music program’s various parts, it is hard to imagine it having developed to its present scale without the initial impetus from Fr. Phillips, who taught music at a Resurrectionist high school (his own alma mater) for eleven years before his appointment as pastor at St. John’s. As a young seminarian with a music education degree from St. Louis University, he found himself mesmerized by the way Mass was being celebrated at Holy Cross Church in Baden, Missouri during the last few years of Monsignor Martin Hellriegel’s pastorate.

The first time I ever attended Mass at his place was my first year in seminary. I got to the seminary in January of—I believe it was ’70. And the first time we went to his parish was on Palm Sunday, and I had never, ever in my life experienced Mass like that. I just thought heaven was opening up, it was so splendid. There was the chant; there was the children’s choir, the adult choir, the procession outside with the palms. And coming from an Irish church [in Chicago], there was nothing like that at all. It was very simple, straightforward: in and out.

So, I was able to work with Monsignor for seven, eight years in the seminary and then just kept in touch with them until he died in the 80s.

Fr. Phillips says that the most important thing he learned from Hellriegel was “how to conduct yourself at the altar.” He cites an aphorism that Hellriegel used to repeat:

“Sancta sancte: do holy things in a holy way.”

Advocates of quite different liturgical “agendas” continue to claim Hellriegel’s support for their positions, even though more than thirty years have passed since his death. All agree that prior to Vatican II, Hellriegel was considered a pioneer for such “pastoral” initiatives as teaching congregations Gregorian
Along with Hellriegel, Fr. Phillips mentions another priest who shaped his ideas about what he could accomplish at St. John’s. About thirty years younger than Hellriegel but thirty years older than Fr. Phillips, Monsignor Richard Schuler was for many years pastor of St. Agnes Church in St. Paul, Minnesota and president of the Church Music Association of America.

Monsignor was a great musician so he knew a full complement of chant, and he knew the directives of Vatican II, so he would do at his church the Viennese Masses with full orchestra and choir, thirty Sundays of the year. And so I got to meet him, talk with him, listen to him [about] things such as Mass ad orientem. He’d say, “Frank, show me in the documents where it says you have to have Mass facing the people.” And there is no directive. So that was interesting. And again he had the complement of servers, the chant, introducing the “dialog Mass,” training lay lectors to read at Mass, and involving the laity in offertory processions. See Noel H. Barrett, “The Contribution of Martin B. Hellriegel to the American Catholic Liturgical Movement” (Thesis, St. Louis University, 1976); Barrett, Martin B. Hellriegel: Pastoral Liturgist (St. Louis: Central Bureau of the Catholic Central Union of America, 1990). But those who claim him as an inspiration dispute what Hellriegel thought about post-conciliar developments in the liturgy. James Hitchcock, Alcuin Reid, Richard John Neuhaus, and others who favor a “reform of the reform” claim that Hellriegel was dissatisfied with the direction that liturgical reform took after Vatican II. See James Hitchcock, Recovery of the Sacred: Reforming a Reformed Liturgy, Revised Edition (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995), 9; Alcuin Reid, The Organic Development of the Liturgy: The Principles of Liturgical Reform and Their Relation to the Twentieth-Century Liturgical Movement Prior to the Second Vatican Council, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 116-19; Richard John Neuhaus, “The Best and the Brightest,” First Things no. 76 (1997): 80. Scholars who take a more favorable view of post-conciliar reforms describe no such regrets on the part of their longtime ally in the liturgical movement. See Godfrey Diekmann, “Martin Hellriegel,” Worship 55, no. 3 (1981): 260–261; Frederick R. McManus, “Liturgical Pioneers and Parish Worship,” in Parish: A Place for Worship (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1981), 181–192. It is difficult to settle the matter because Hellriegel’s prolific output of writing on the liturgy came to an end before Vatican II. He was 71 years old when the Council opened and 79 when the Missal of Paul VI was promulgated, so his silence in print is hardly surprising.

It is significant to Fr. Phillips that Hellriegel was a “diocesan priest” whose prominence in most accounts of twentieth-century efforts to renew the liturgical life of the Catholic Church matches that of several well-known monks. Among the latter, Fr. Phillips speaks favorably of Odo Casel and Pius Parsch (actually a Canon Regular of St. Augustine), but he is ambivalent about Virgil Michel and critical of later Benedictine leaders of the liturgical movement like Godfrey Diekmann. By his description, the Benedictines “went in a different direction” than Hellriegel, especially after Vatican II, because they didn’t have to worry about how their liturgical innovations would actually work in parishes. Fr. Phillips’ division of the liturgical movement into “monastic” and “parochial” strands is not absolute. For instance, he lumps Monsignor Reynold Hillenbrand, a longtime pastor in the Archdiocese of Chicago, together with Diekmann and the Benedictines. He speaks of Hillenbrand’s efforts to promote small Christian communities devoted to liturgical renewal and social action as an ill-begotten experiment with socialist overtones. I have been unable to find any evidence that Fr. Phillips’ opinion of Hillenbrand or Diekmann was shared by his mentor, Hellriegel, who collaborated closely with both men.
ceremonial. He didn’t do the Traditional Mass at his church, but he did the—now it’s called the ordinary form, but—the Novus Ordo in Latin using the high altar with the full complement of choir, orchestra, [and] all the Gregorian chant.

And I thought if I combined what I learned from Monsignor Schuler and the opening of the great treasury of all the traditions that I’ve learned from Hellriegel, it would be a win-win situation. That’s what I did here at St. John’s.

Fr. Phillips and the other priests at St. John Cantius imitate Schuler in offering Mass ad orientem, facing the imposing baroque altar situated against the wall of the apse. Some longtime parishioners remember a moveable altar that used to be rolled from the sacristy into the middle of the sanctuary for English Mass facing the people and then rolled away for the Tridentine and Latin Novus Ordo Masses. But for more than a decade, even the vernacular Mass has been celebrated ad orientem. The church has a serviceable public address system, so it is possible to hear the priest even when he is facing the high altar. It is not used, however, during most of low Mass, where the first time the congregation hears the priest is when he comes to the ambo to repeat the scripture readings in English and deliver his homily. Similarly at the Tridentine high Mass, the priest’s quiet recitation of the eucharistic prayer is not amplified for all to hear. Of course, audibility is not the only obstacle to understanding the words that the priest is saying at the various Masses in Latin. Hardly anyone claims to comprehend all of the Latin prayers simply from hearing them spoken or sung, though the parish hosts classes in Latin and Greek. This would seem to make a missal with a vernacular translation necessary for anyone who wants a precise understanding of each text. Many parishioners bring their own hand missals, and booklet missals in Latin and English (for both the ordinary and extraordinary forms) are available for those who do not. However, I have
never seen a majority of attendees looking at a translation during Mass, which suggests that many do not think it essential that they comprehend each word.

This does not mean that people attending Latin Mass at St. John’s have no idea what the priest is saying. Years of using a missal or attending Mass in English can make one thoroughly familiar with the ordinary parts of the Mass, if not the proper prayers. Additionally, the parish has for a long time offered lessons on “understanding the Mass” to laypeople. There are no records available to confirm it, but Fr. Phillips guesses that about two-thirds of the parishioners have attended a six- or eight-week series of classes at one point or another. To him, this commitment to teaching the lay faithful about the liturgy fulfills a principle of the twentieth-century liturgical movement. “All the way from Pius X on, it’s always expected that there is intelligent participation. So you have to know that this is the highest form of worship.” Since Summorum Pontificum in 2007, the Canons Regular have also offered workshops for priests and seminarians who want to learn how to celebrate Mass using the 1962 Missal. For priests unable to attend in person, the Canons Regular have made an “online tutorial” available along with electronic copies of pre-conciliar liturgical books and other resources. These supporters of the “old Mass” have embraced “new media” with enthusiasm and considerable skill, making their case for a “restoration of the sacred” through web pages, online galleries, and streaming video. More traditional modes of communication are handled by the parish bookstore and publisher, “Biretta Books,” which sells reprints of books about the Mass written by such figures as Dom Prosper Guéranger and Maria Montessori. There are always people browsing the books, holy cards, rosaries, and various sacred objects available for purchase after Mass in the vestibule.
A weekly “café” run by parishioners in the capacious hall beneath the church is another modest source of income, though it more obviously provides an opportunity for parishioners and visitors who don’t live anywhere near each other to meet and socialize. There is ample room for children to run around in a space that is also used for lectures, banquets, concerts, and even an occasional opera. A small library of old Catholic books serves as a classroom and meeting space. Throughout the year, various groups from outside the parish also set up exhibits downstairs on topics of interest. In the space of a few months, I saw an elaborate presentation of “evidence” relating to the Shroud of Turin, a poster history of medieval and modern eucharistic miracles prepared by the Real Presence Society, and an exhibition by the Mother Teresa Center. This display also emphasized the real presence of Jesus, quoting Mother Teresa’s injunction to “love Him, in His humble disguise in the Eucharist, and in His distressing disguise in the poorest of the poor.” I can’t identify another instance of an explicit connection being made between eucharistic piety and care for the poor—whether in a general exhortation or in the description of a specific program—during the time that I was at St. John’s. Parishioners are told about opportunities to give money to support the charitable work of religious orders like the Missionaries of Charity, who can often be seen attending Mass at St. John’s in their white and blue saris. I have also spoken with parishioners who are personally or professionally involved in “social ministry” of one kind or another. But it would be hard to argue that providing material relief to people in poverty is the focus of any major organizational effort on the part of this inner-city parish.

An exception to this might be the regular requests for baby items, money, and volunteer time that the parish’s Respect Life Committee makes on behalf of a “crisis
pregnancy center” that has three locations, all in close proximity to clinics that provide abortions.⁶ No other social issue receives as much attention at St. John’s as abortion does, whether in homilies, prayers, or organized activities. Joe Scheidler, whose Pro-Life Action League was one of the first groups to engage in “sidewalk counseling” and other “direct action” at abortion clinics in the 1980s,⁷ has been a guest speaker more than once, and several parishioners work closely with him. Fr. Phillips is particularly proud that anti-abortion protests figure prominently among parish-sponsored activities for youth and young adults. In fact, the youths’ involvement in the pro-life movement is the example that he uses to explain to me what “restoring the sacred” means.

Instaurare Sacra is active. So it’s not just preserving things or collecting things; it’s making the faith alive, day in and day out. And here’s how we’re going to do it: the sacred liturgy—ordinary form, extraordinary form—divine office, sacraments, sacramentals, liturgical year, families, everything.

What’s interesting is from our involvement in trying to restore the sacred of the family, you know, we went for this March for Life [in Washington, D.C.]; we sent 250 of our kids to March for Life. And if you’ve ever seen any of those marches recently, you see those big yellow balloons. That started here. Our kids have confronted the “choice” people in Daley Square, all those people dressed in red and black and really angry. And our kids appeared out of nowhere one time and stood opposite them… Well [the pro-choice activists] all started applauding, and then they pulled out all the life balloons—all their smiles went from smiles to curses at these kids.

⁶ The founder of this center, Conrad Wojnar, is described on the center’s website as a parishioner of both St. John Cantius and another parish. Wojnar became known in the early 1980s for opening “women’s centers” that were silent about their opposition to abortion while advertising their “abortion-related services” to pregnant women. See Cuneo, Smoke of Satan, 288. Currently, “The Women’s Center” runs two separate websites, one that openly discusses its commitment to “saving babies from death by abortion” and another that advertises “services related to family planning and pregnancy alternatives.” See “What We Do,” The Women’s Center, accessed May 29, 2013, http://www.womens-center.org/whatwedo; “Abortion In Chicago, Cook County,” The Women’s Center, accessed May 29, 2013, http://abortionchoices.com.

⁷ See Cuneo, Smoke of Satan, 57–79.
So what we’ve been able to do in restoration of the sacred is bring it to different aspects, not just within the confines of the church building. Wasn’t that the goal of “active participation”?

Fr. Phillips chuckles as he says this, aware that he’s pushing buttons. “Don’t tell anyone you’ve been here,” he says with a conspiratorial grin, “or you’ll get the cold shoulder. It’s all propaganda in here.” On the one hand, he mostly laughs off the hostility that is sometimes directed at his parish and at him personally, attributing it to a misinformed fear that he’s “turning the clock back” at St. John’s. “No one here has a time machine, so we can’t turn the clock back, nor can we jump ahead, but we have to be able to learn to provide what the Church asks us to provide at a given time in history.” On the other hand, he has a ready response for those who remain unconvinced that his parish is providing what the church is asking for at this time. Before Joseph Ratzinger was elected pope, and well before the promulgation of Summorum Pontificum, Fr. Phillips had a chance meeting with the cardinal during a visit to Rome. He mentioned that he was forming a new religious community trained to serve a parish that uses both the 1962 and 1970 Missals. According to Fr. Phillips, the future pontiff’s response was favorable. “I told him we do the old and the new. He said, ‘Finally, a community that does both together.’ So we’re on the right track.”

Shrine of Christ the King Sovereign Priest

Attending Mass at St. John Cantius might lead one to conclude that substantial material resources are required in order for a congregation to produce a liturgy that Latin Mass Catholics will recognize as “beautiful,” “reverent,” and “sacred.” Indeed, one common narrative of “desacralization” among people who attend the Latin Mass is that
after Vatican II, most Catholic parishes destroyed or discarded items possessing material value and beauty—from statues all the way up to entire church buildings—in a fit of “Protestant” iconoclasm. A St. John’s parishioner who used to make trips to “salvage” various artifacts from other Catholic churches, says, “You know, we had beautiful paintings and statues and tapestries and frescoes and all these things in these churches, and they covered them up in burlap that said, you know, ‘kum-ba-yah’ on them. I just made that up but, you know, ‘God loves you.’ Well, really? So I’m going to give him burlap instead of the gold thing you just took down that was exquisite?” Apparently, Fr. Phillips has not missed many opportunities to take what other churches were throwing away. Even the hallways at St. John’s are crammed with statues and paintings of every size, though not of every description. (Almost everything is done in the vaguely baroque style of nineteenth and early twentieth-century Catholic popular art.) More to the point, the physical restoration of the church, the music program, and the large corps of trained liturgical ministers—including six full-time priests—are supported by investments of financial resources that are completely outside the means of many ordinary form parishes and, it seems safe to say, the vast majority of Latin Mass communities.

With respect to such “externals,” as a Latin Mass Catholic might call them, the Shrine of Christ the King Sovereign Priest appears almost shockingly impoverished by comparison. The church building is fortunate to be standing at all. When I first came to Chicago in 2002, it had just been closed by the archdiocese. The small, African-American Catholic congregation at St. Gelasius (as it was called then) was more or less absorbed by the parish I attended in nearby Hyde Park, where the University of Chicago anchors one of the city’s few racially and economically diverse neighborhoods. Woodlawn, by
contrast, is overwhelmingly African-American and economically depressed, though in the twenties it was home to a substantial population of white Catholics descended from German immigrants.\(^8\) For them and for a community of Carmelite friars, the prolific Chicago church architect (and Notre Dame professor) Henry J. Schlacks designed a Renaissance-inspired edifice, originally dedicated to St. Clara.\(^9\) One year after St. Gelasius closed, the archdiocese found its plans to demolish the building blocked by a coalition of Woodlawn residents, Hyde Park activists, and architectural preservationists who sought to have the city declare it a historical landmark. Ironically, their argument that the archdiocese couldn’t do as it pleased with its property was strengthened by the fact that the church hadn’t been actively used as a “house of worship” for over a year, though a food pantry briefly continued to operate in the rectory and a women’s shelter in the former school. Still, the church seemed unfit to enclose any kind of activity, liturgical or otherwise. A fire in the seventies had gutted the interior of the church. The ceiling had never been replaced, the floor had been removed to rid the building of asbestos, a variety of structural and mechanical problems went unaddressed, and, as the Shrine’s website now opines, most of the interior decorations were “removed during a renovation in the eighties, not always a favorable time for ecclesiastical art.”\(^{10}\)

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\(^8\) Woodlawn occupies a prominent place in Chicago’s history of racial tension. Lorraine Hansberry based her landmark 1959 play, *A Raisin in the Sun*, on her family’s legal struggle in the late thirties to become the first African-American homeowners in a part of the neighborhood that had a restrictive covenant barring blacks.

\(^9\) Denis McNamara’s *Heavenly City* includes a photo of the Shrine’s facade and bell tower, but no interior photos or description. McNamara, *Heavenly City*, 76.

While the ward’s alderman promised to put her body between the bulldozers and the church, in the end a young religious order called the Institute of Christ the King Sovereign Priest stepped into the breach with the blessing of Cardinal George. They were given the property, including the church, the rectory, and the school, to use as their United States headquarters. In return, they committed themselves to raising over seven million dollars to complete a thorough restoration of the church, which would be renamed the Shrine of Christ the King Sovereign Priest. Although the opponents of the demolition knew hardly anything about the “Traditional Latin Mass” that the priests of the Institute promised to begin offering as soon as possible, they were glad to avoid the creation of another vacant lot in Woodlawn. They declared the church “saved,” and St. Clara/St. Gelasius’s new life as the Shrine of Christ the King began when members of the Institute took up residence in 2004 and invited anyone interested in the Latin Mass to join them for Sunday celebrations in the basement of the rectory. Enough people were attending by late 2007 to warrant moving into the church itself with rented heaters, temporary pews, and a makeshift main altar.

The Institute of Christ the King Sovereign Priest has an interesting history as a “society of apostolic life,” which is what canon law calls communities that do not take the religious vows of monks and nuns. The two founders, Gilles Wach and Philippe Mora, though French, completed their seminary training in Genoa, the archdiocese of Cardinal Giuseppe Siri, whose reputation as a leader among the more conservative bishops at Vatican II was well known. The other “great men of the church” that the

11 Alderman Arenda Troutman plead guilty to federal corruption charges in 2009 and is currently serving a four-year prison sentence. Canon Talarico, who will be introduced in a moment, says that her successor is “very supportive” of the Shrine.
founders befriended while working in Rome in the 1980s have become part of the Institute’s lore. However, in 1990, when the French priests sought the canonical establishment of a new community devoted to celebrating the pre-conciliar liturgy, they needed help from the bishop of Mouila in Gabon, who agreed to erect the Institute as a society of diocesan right provided that it would send priests to work as missionaries, which it does to this day. The Institute has since moved its mission headquarters to the capital, Libreville. Usually, two or three priests and a few seminarians are in the country to manage a parish of “over 1000 faithful” at Libreville, run a retreat house in Mouila, and visit rural mission chapels. Currently, the Institute is seeking some five hundred thousand euros to finish building a Renaissance-style church for the parish in Libreville.

I have heard former missionaries from the Institute claim that their African charges are more instinctively attracted to the material beauty and spiritual power of the traditional Latin Mass than “secularized” Westerners are. Yet the Institute’s efforts to expand its apostolates have obviously focused on Europe and the United States. Its seminary and motherhouse are located in Tuscany, and nearly all of its fifty priests and eighty seminarians hail from and serve in developed countries. They became a society of pontifical right in 2008, and they currently list twenty-four apostolates in France, thirteen in the United States, and a handful of locations in Italy, Spain, Germany, Belgium, Switzerland, Sweden, Ireland, England, and Japan. The Institute’s expansion in the United States seems to have been aided by its willingness to take on old church buildings requiring major restoration. The Institute also enjoys the patronage of an American Cardinal, Raymond Burke, who gave the Institute churches in both of his former dioceses, La Crosse and St. Louis, and who is now conveniently located, as Prefect of the
Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura in Rome, to ordain new priests in the
Institute. The importance that the Institute attaches to its North American apostolates can
be seen in the decision to have the Institute’s vicar general, Monsignor Michael Schmitz,
serve simultaneously as provincial superior for the United States and live at the Shrine, at
least during its initial years.

When I first attended the Shrine in 2010, Msgr. Schmitz had been called away to
Europe some months earlier. Regular attendees seemed to think that his prolonged
absence would followed by another period of extended residence at the Shrine, but this
never occurred, even though he visits several times a year. The vice-rector, Canon
Matthew Talarico, was effectively in charge of day-to-day operations, and since then his
responsibilities seem only to have increased. He now sports the unusual title, “Substitute
for Provincial,” and a recently ordained canon—this is what all the priests of the Institute
call themselves—has assumed the job of vice-rector. Despite his absence, Msgr. Schmitz
still gets top billing as “Rector” in the weekly bulletin and on the Shrine’s elegantly
designed and meticulously maintained website. When I first visited the Shrine, there was
only one priest in actual residence, but this soon increased to two and more recently to
three. There are also usually two or three clerical oblates, who receive only the “minor
orders” up to subdeacon and are consistently addressed as “Abbé.” When I was there, one
was the sacristan and another was the organist. The Institute also seems to like having
their English-speaking candidates for seminary spend a year or so at the Shrine. Having
room for three or four of them at a time is probably an inducement, but I suspect that the
superiors also see Canon Talarico as a particularly positive and attractive role model for
the prospective priests.
When I interviewed Canon Talarico in 2010, I was shocked to learn that he was only twenty-nine years old. His confident manner, sonorous speaking voice, and prematurely graying hair initially had me guessing a decade older. In fact, he was ordained in 2007 (by Archbishop Raymond Burke), though by that time he had already been with the Institute for eight years—two as a candidate at Institute houses in the U.S. and Germany, and six as a seminarian in Italy. In other words, he started down the path to ordination in the Institute immediately after completing his “classical” high school education, which included studies in Latin and Gregorian chant. He describes the journey toward his vocation as beginning even earlier than this. He was raised in a “very good Catholic family”: two of his uncles are priests, and his father attended minor seminary during the “difficult times” of the sixties. Initially, his family traveled an hour to attend a parish that had “regular devotions” and a “very priestly” priest. “It was the ordinary form of liturgy, of course, but very reverent.” Specifically, he “learned to receive communion kneeling at the communion rail with the paten,” became accustomed to “ringing the bells at the liturgy,” and eventually “served Mass in a cassock.” His first exposure to the “traditional Latin Mass” (his preferred term) came at the age of thirteen, when it became available at a similarly distant church. He learned to serve this Mass also, and he describes serving as “a very big part” of his vocation. He attended Catholic grade school at a parish closer to home, but for high school he went away to a boarding school run by the Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter. Although he joined the Institute rather than the FSSP, Canon Talarico has the distinction of being the first graduate of this boys’ school to be ordained to the priesthood.
After his ordination, Canon Talarico served in another oratory of the Institute for a year before receiving his present assignment. With the exception of two churches that it shares with ordinary form parishes, all of the Institute’s U.S. apostolates are non-parish churches (“oratories” or “shrines”) where the extraordinary form is celebrated exclusively. Although the Shrine does not, properly speaking, have a “pastor” and “parishioners,” the priests of the Institute offer “the faithful” the same kinds of pastoral care that a parish priest would, even traveling all over the archdiocese to bring the sacraments to sick members. Canon Talarico says that he doesn’t have “any kind of numbers” regarding the total number of the faithful who would consider the Shrine their “parish,” and he figures that some of the attendees at Mass and other events are only occasional visitors. Pressed for an estimate of Sunday attendance, he hazards a guess of one hundred fifty for “normal attendance” and “sometimes” two hundred. “Those numbers swell for Holy Week,” he claims, “because people want to attend the special liturgy in the extraordinary form for that special time of the year.” His estimates seem a little high to me, even if they include both Sunday Masses, but not impossibly so. The 10:00 AM high Mass that I have usually attended typically draws between seventy-five and one hundred people.

12 In canon law, “oratory” and “shrine” refer quite narrowly to church buildings designated for “sacred use.” The Code of Canon Law: Latin-English Edition (Washington, DC: Canon Law Society of America, 1983), cc. 1223–1234 (hereafter cited as CIC). “Parish,” on the other hand, refers to a church community entrusted to a “pastor.” CIC, c. 515. While a parish usually “includes all the Christian faithful of a given territory,” a bishop may establish a parish “by reason of the rite, language, or nationality of the Christian faithful of some territory, or even for some other reason.” CIC, c. 518. Such a community is called a “personal parish” (in contrast to a “territorial parish”), and its place of worship is properly called a parish church. Priests of the Institute have charge of some personal parishes in other countries, and a number of FSSP churches in the U.S. are (personal) parish churches while others are oratories. Practically speaking, an oratory that receives permission to maintain the sacramental records of the faithful who worship there—as the Shrine of Christ the King has—is very similar to a personal parish.
Low Mass is also offered daily at 8:00 AM, except on Tuesday, when it is celebrated at 6:30 PM and followed by Eucharistic Benediction and a novena prayer to St. Thérèse of Lisieux. A special high Mass with Renaissance music on the twenty-fifth of each month concludes a novena to the Infant King. A priest is available to hear confessions before every Mass and usually after Mass as well. About every other Sunday, a “coffee hour” in the basement of the rectory follows high Mass. It is usually well attended, and it is always well supplied with food prepared and served potluck-style by the women, mostly. Sometimes a lecture by one of the priests takes place instead—a “twenty-minute lesson in liturgy” explaining some aspect of the Tridentine Mass, or a “young adult theology class” on such topics as “How can we know that God exists?” and “Who wrote the Bible?”

Beyond the weekly and monthly activities, the schedule at the Shrine revolves around “events” that get advertised in the bulletin and in email messages sent out to everyone who has supplied an address. Many of these are essentially lectures by one of the priests, though they go by various names such as “spiritual conference,” “history of spirituality class,” or “course in Catholic doctrine.” The lectures are usually sandwiched between Mass and a meal. Social outings to the lakefront, the skating rink, the bowling alley, and the baseball stadium provide recreation for the clerics and seminarians as much as for the faithful. The priests sometimes note the approval of the Institute’s patron, St. Francis de Sales, of such wholesome entertainments enjoyed in moderation. A somewhat

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13 St. Clara served as the first national shrine to Thérèse of Lisieux during the years that it was under the care of the Carmelites.

14 Through an unnamed benefactor, the Shrine acquired a statue of the Infant King to serve as the centerpiece of the future high altar. Its origin is not known precisely, though it appears to be an early Spanish Baroque sculpture.
sporadic series of classical music concerts held in the bare but reverberant interior of the Shrine brings what Canon Talarico calls “the beauty of culture” to the neighborhood. It seems a stretch to suggest, as he does, that the Shrine could become “almost like a community cultural center” in Woodlawn by supplementing such offerings with “things like classical Latin classes.” Still, it’s even harder to imagine the Shrine providing resources that address the neighborhood’s serious material needs. “Some issues with cleanliness and being up to code” brought the food pantry to an end shortly after the Institute moved in, and the women’s shelter did not survive the death of the nun who ran it.¹⁵

For the foreseeable future, the community that the Shrine primarily serves will be an assembly of people who travel from more or less distant locations. It will probably remain overwhelmingly white, though one can’t deny Canon Talarico’s claim that African-Americans, Asian-Americans, and Latinos are all represented, if only by one or two individuals at most Masses. The goal, as Canon Talarico describes it, is to immerse this community in “Catholic culture,” beginning with the liturgy but extending into every aspect of life.

At the same time that we want the liturgical life to be the center of our life, that also should lead to a restoration of culture. There’s a Catholic way to do everything: the way we live, the way we act, the way we speak with others, the way we sit down to dinner, the way our house looks. It’s not about money or about anything like that, but it’s that there be a Catholic way of living and a Catholic order to our life. And the liturgy, by putting that at the center, it has to also develop in the human spheres, in the family life as well. Otherwise people aren’t going to be able to live in the spirit of the liturgy, and they’ll just be Sunday Catholics. The liturgy has to carry over to our daily life.

¹⁵ Sister Connie Driscoll, the nun who ran the shelter, died in 2005 at the age of seventy-one.
While people are attracted to the Shrine for different reasons, Canon Talarico believes they’re all looking for the same thing: an “authentic spirituality” in which they can find a “home.”

I think everyone’s hungry for the spiritual. They’re looking for the divine; they’re looking for the sacred. I think they’re looking for a spiritual home. A lot of the families are looking for a spiritual home to raise their children, and they want a place where they are fed, where they feel secure. They want a warm, family spirit. People, anytime you give them authentic spirituality, they will come. They’re thirsty for that; they don’t find that in the world. People are looking sometimes for a place of silence. They’re looking for spiritual direction because they’re hurting. They have a lot of burdens; they have difficulties. It’s hard to find confessions, and people know they need that spiritual healing. People are looking for a spiritual home, really. They’re looking for stability. I think that’s what they’re looking for. Some people like music; they like to come because they like Gregorian chant. On Sundays people can actually sing the ordinary of the Mass along with the choir, and some people like that. So people are looking for authentic spirituality.

How do people know that what they find at the Shrine is real, true, “authentic” spirituality? Though his church is in a severe state of disrepair and is surrounded by all the evidence of urban poverty, Canon Talarico refers to the “beauty” of the Mass he offers there.

The extraordinary form is very conscious of the fact that man is a creature of body and soul, and through visible realities we come to understand better the invisible realities which transcend us. St. Francis de Sales is very much for trying to show people how the truth is something that’s beautiful and attractive. So I think that there’s a way with Salesian spirituality and the tradition of the extraordinary form that they go hand-in-hand, both by making the supernatural beautiful and attractive to our eyes, and [by] drawing us up.
Mother Theodore Guérin Latin Mass Community at St. Patrick Church

By most accounts, the last two bishops of Fort Wayne-South Bend have been solicitous in their care for Latin Mass Catholics. Within a year of John Paul II issuing *Ecclesia Dei*, a Tridentine Mass was being celebrated in each city of the bicephalous diocese, and despite changes of venue, organization, and pastoral leadership, both have survived. Two years before his retirement in 2010, Bishop John D’Arcy noted this fact with pride and saluted the small cadre of “senior priests” who had made it possible to offer the Mass that he had celebrated for the first ten years of his priesthood.\(^{16}\) In South Bend, the priest most responsible for keeping the Latin Mass available for most of these years was Fr. James Seculoff, a diocesan pastor whose name is still mentioned with great reverence by the Latin Mass faithful. In 2007, they experienced the sad irony of having Fr. Seculoff reassigned to a parish at the opposite end of the diocese just a few weeks before Benedict XVI promulgated *Summorum Pontificum*.\(^{17}\)

Although Fr. Seculoff’s Latin Mass had to be offered at seven o’clock on Sunday morning in order to fit the parish’s Mass schedule, there were fifty or sixty families who attended regularly. Sam, a layperson who had been attending for a few years, drew up a “very polite” petition asking the bishop to find another priest to offer the Latin Mass in South Bend, and all of the adults signed it. Two girls in the community organized a children’s petition, and Sam sent all of the signatures to the bishop along with a big group photo. As it turned out, Bishop D’Arcy was already seeking an arrangement that would make the Latin Mass more sustainable in both Fort Wayne and South Bend. The Priestly

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Fraternity of Saint Peter provided the solution in the person of Fr. George Gabet, who was willing to hand off his duties as religious superior for the FSSP’s North American district in order to serve the Fort Wayne Latin Mass community in which he had grown up. The bishop appointed Fr. Gabet the chaplain of a combined Latin Mass community with one location in Fort Wayne and another in South Bend. The community took as its patron Mother Theodore Guérin, who became Indiana’s first canonized saint in 2006.

At first, the new chaplain simply covered the early Mass at Fr. Seculoff’s old parish. But as the Latin Mass community was for all practical purposes separate from the parish, the bishop and his presbyteral council agreed that moving the Mass to another location would be good if it could thereby start at a later hour. One of the priests on the council mentioned St. Patrick’s Church near downtown South Bend, which had only a ten o’clock Mass on Sunday morning. The pastor at St. Pat’s was open to the suggestion, especially since the addition of the Latin Mass community would help the financial stability of the parish. Moreover, the church building was already suitably arranged for ad orientem celebrations of the Tridentine Mass. It has a marble high altar, a long nave leading to an elevated sanctuary, and other architectural and artistic features typical of neo-Gothic Catholic churches built, as St. Pat’s was, in the late nineteenth century. The only thing missing is a communion rail, and the only thing “in the way” is the freestanding altar added to the sanctuary after Vatican II.

Consequently, the full name of the South Bend community when I first visited it in 2011 was “The Saint Mother Theodore Guérin Latin Mass Community at St. Patrick’s Church.” No one uses this name in ordinary conversation, of course, though Fr. Gabet

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always uses it to welcome everyone to Mass before delivering his homily. From time to time, he makes a point of reminding the members of the Latin Mass community that they are also members of St. Patrick’s Parish. I’m not sure how many of them are actually registered as parishioners, but they do contribute to the parish’s finances through their regular Sunday collection. The Latin Mass community has had a representative on the parish council, and it seems that its members participate in some social events at the parish despite doing catechesis and sacramental preparation separately. The “original” parishioners don’t seem to attend the Latin Mass often, and although they would be welcome at the weekly potluck breakfast after Mass, I would be surprised if any have ever visited. Breakfast for the Latin Mass crowd usually coincides with the main parish Mass at ten o’clock. For their part, most of the Latin Mass adherents feel welcome enough at the parish, even if they don’t interact much with the other parishioners. The long-term goal of the Latin Mass community at St. Pat’s, however, is to become a parish in their own right. At present, they could count on having just over a hundred parishioners, which is probably not enough to maintain a church like St. Pat’s without help from some ordinary form parishioners.

Initially, the Latin Mass at St. Pat’s was scheduled to begin at seven forty-five in the morning. This fit the parish’s existing schedule and allowed Fr. Gabet time to make the two-hour trip back to Fort Wayne for the eleven-thirty Mass at Sacred Heart Parish. Not long after the installation of the diocese’s current bishop, Kevin Rhoades, Fr. Gabet began speaking to the community in South Bend about the possibility that the bishop would turn Sacred Heart into a personal parish dedicated to the extraordinary form, which would in turn increase the likelihood that the FSSP would assign a second priest to help
in the two cities. The bishop went ahead with the change in October 2011, elevating Fr. Gabet to the responsibilities of pastor in his boyhood parish while he continued to serve as chaplain for the Latin Mass community at St. Patrick. As anticipated, the FSSP sent a newly ordained Canadian priest to serve as assistant pastor in Fort Wayne and take turns traveling to South Bend. An issue with his visa forced him to leave after just a few months, but the Fraternity sent a temporary replacement—another young priest who grew up in Indiana but studied for the priesthood at the FSSP seminary in Lincoln, Nebraska. With two priests, it became possible to offer High Mass every Sunday in South Bend and to start the Mass fifteen minutes later, at eight o’clock.

Fr. Gabet possesses a more exuberant personality than other Latin Mass priests I’ve encountered. He celebrates Mass “by the book,” of course, but his gestures are larger, his voice is louder, and his homilies are usually longer. His new associate has actually eclipsed him in this last category by preparing meticulously detailed and documented treatments of theological topics that sometimes take half an hour to read. Fr. Gabet’s homiletic style is less dense, but he wanders and repeats himself more. Both priests are friendly, but it’s hard to get a lengthy conversation with them in South Bend. The extra time they gain by no longer having to rush back to Fort Wayne is invested in hearing confessions, preparing children for first communion, training altar servers, or administering the occasional baptism. On the infrequent occasions when Fr. Gabet is able to join everyone in the parish hall for breakfast after Mass, he makes a point of announcing his availability to bless any holy objects that people happen to have with them. “That’s what a priest is here for,” he says.

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Laypeople necessarily perform a number of important functions in the community, more by default than by explicit delegation. Ellen, the choir director, is the matriarch of one of the families that started the Latin Mass with Fr. Seculoff back in the early nineties. For many years, her nine children—in various combinations and eventually with children of their own—have formed the backbone of the choir. Currently, one of her daughters is the organist. There is a sacristan who has volunteered to care for the vestments, vessels, and furniture used at the Latin Mass. Two other men take up the collection at the beginning of the offertory prayers every week, and this is usually the extent of their duties as “ushers.” Now that every Sunday Mass makes use of four altar servers, one usually sees the same four every week. Three are boys in middle school or high school, while the usual master of ceremonies is a college student. After Mass, someone gets a large pot of coffee going in the basement of the “parish center”—actually a parochial school that closed in the seventies—and the Latin Mass families put out an impressive assortment of hot breakfast foods and baked goods. People line up quickly and fill their plates, for they generally hold that a eucharistic fast beginning at midnight is “commendable” if no longer required.

If Sunday Mass is the main event for St. John Cantius and the Shrine of Christ the King, it’s almost the only event for a Latin Mass community like the one at St. Patrick’s. There are evening Masses on holy days of obligation, and occasionally a First Friday or Saturday Mass is possible, but otherwise there are no gatherings at the church. There is no “program” for faith formation run by a director of religious education and staffed by lay catechists. The priests teach sacramental preparation classes, but “general catechesis” of children is “the prerogative of the parents,” as Sam explains.
When you’re in a traditional community like this, you have to depend on the parents to pass on the faith. And so the parents really have to be empowered to do that… Thankfully, the diocese has been very good about allowing us to homeschool our children with religious education. Even the parents who send their kids to school outside of the home, they still are allowed to give that. There’s never been a requirement from the diocese that we join CCD. And I think there would probably be a lot of resistance to that if we were asked to put our kids in CCD. On the other side of the coin, there’ve been families that have left our community because they didn’t have CCD here. So I mean, that works both ways.

Still, the families in the community form friendships with one another and spend time together outside of Sunday, especially if they have young children, which many do.

It’s difficult to say whether the Latin Mass community at St. Pat’s is growing in size, though the people who have been members the longest think that it is. As Sam’s comment indicates, some families leave to join other parishes and others simply move out of the area. His prescription for a strong, growing community is simple, if difficult to implement so long as the community’s priests continue to reside in a different city.

It used to be we only had one Mass a week and we didn’t have holy days of obligation, we didn’t have any of this stuff. Now we have holy days of obligation we have every Sunday. We have the Mass on Fridays, on Saturdays. Before long, we’re going to have the Mass on every Friday and every Saturday. And the more Masses that you offer, the more graces that come with that, and the greater things happen. Somebody just asked me what has to be done to grow communities… I think somebody was trying to make the argument that you have to get people more involved in singing or something. And I’m like, “Well, yes and no.” I mean, that’s a big thing for me. And there was another argument where we have to do more community activities. I was like, “No, no, no, it really comes down to the Mass. It comes down to how many times the Mass is offered in that church.” That’s how strong the community’s going to be because that’s how the Spirit moves. That’s how the Holy Ghost works. That’s how He grows His church—through the sacraments of the church.
Alumni Hall Chapel at the University of Notre Dame

The University of Notre Dame has a reputation among Latin Mass Catholics. It’s fair to say that most of them don’t perceive the institution, on the whole, as a bastion of Catholic orthodoxy. At the same time, few deny (though some lament) its academic prestige and prominent status as a representative of Roman Catholicism in the United States. For many, the university is an important barometer of American Catholic culture. More than one of my consultants, upon learning that I was a theology student at Notre Dame, wanted to know whether the university was “still Catholic.” Instead of answering this question with a direct “yes” or “no,” I usually pointed out that the diversity of religious practice on campus is sufficiently broad to include students, staff, and faculty who attend the traditional Latin Mass every Sunday. This was news to some of my consultants, but not all. Given its visibility, Notre Dame was bound to attract some attention—at least on the Catholic blogosphere—when its Office of Campus Ministry decided to serve these members of its community by sponsoring a weekly Tridentine Mass on campus.

According to Brett Perkins, the campus minister who took initial responsibility for organizing the Mass, Notre Dame was the first Catholic university in the country to begin regularly offering the extraordinary form Mass after the promulgation of Summorum Pontificum.20 The process by which this came about seems to have been perfectly irenic. Students conveyed their interest by, among other things, forming a Facebook group and

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20 In fact, Notre Dame seems to have preceded even the conservative “alternative Catholic colleges” in offering the Tridentine Mass. Most of them—including Thomas Aquinas College in California, Christendom College in Virginia, and Magdalen College in New Hampshire—offered the Novus Ordo in Latin prior to Summorum Pontificum, but not a regular “indult” Tridentine Mass. See Mary Jo Weaver, “Self-Consciously Countercultural: Alternative Catholic Colleges,” in Being Right: Conservative Catholics in America, ed. Mary Jo Weaver and R. Scott Appleby (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 300–324.
asking their classmates to join.\textsuperscript{21} Even before the \textit{motu proprio} went into effect in September 2007, the Campus Ministry staff was figuring out what it would take to have a Tridentine Mass on campus. Evidence of student interest having been established, the most important consideration was finding a priest who knew the 1962 Missal well enough to celebrate it. Although many priests belonging to the Congregation of Holy Cross live and work at Notre Dame, few who are old enough to have presided at Mass prior to the revision of the Missal remain in active ministry. Initially, a handful of younger priests expressed some interest in learning to celebrate the extraordinary form, but as Brett points out, most of them “already have four jobs,” leaving little time to study Latin and rubrics. With well over a hundred ordinary form Masses each week that need presiders, the combination of pastoral necessity and personal interest that would result in a new priest learning the old Mass may not be forthcoming.

Students who desired to have the Latin Mass celebrated on campus were fortunate, then, that two Holy Cross priests, ordained in 1959 and in 1960, were willing to re-acquaint themselves with a Mass that they had not celebrated in forty years. The two of them took turns offering the Tridentine Mass for its first two years on campus until one had to drop out in order to devote more time to other ministries. The remaining priest, Fr. Thomas Blantz, CSC, is an emeritus professor of American history who studied theology in Rome as a seminarian and young priest. Instruction and oral exams were still conducted in Latin at the time, so Fr. Blantz is “pretty familiar” with the language, according to his own demure assessment. The campus ministry staff could hardly believe

that he hadn’t been celebrating the Tridentine Mass his entire life when the saw him perform a dry run for the other interested priests.

Fr. Blantz would undoubtedly speak in more measured terms about his facility with the old rubrics. But his self-effacing manner couldn’t fail to endear him to Latin Mass Catholics, who are quick to criticize a priest who draws too much attention to himself or puts too much of his own “personality” into the celebration of Mass. It’s a little ironic that Fr. Blantz would meet the requirements of extraordinary form adherents so well, for he has no strong personal preference for the old Missal or for Latin. He responded to Campus Ministry’s inquiry because he wanted to have “permission” to celebrate the Tridentine Mass “in case the occasion came up that needed somebody to say it.” He didn’t expect to be saying it every week, but he’s not unhappy about it.

When I asked for permission to say the Mass, I really had no intention of ever really saying it. I didn’t know whether I ever would say it. You know, it’s like knowing how to give artificial respiration, the Heimlich maneuver, or something. You never expect to, but you know how to do it in case you’re at a restaurant and somebody’s choking. And so I just wanted permission to say the Mass in case they ever needed me to do it. I got assigned to do it, so I’m still doing it… If it’s good for some of the people, if they feel more comfortable at that Mass for whatever reason, I’m willing to say the Mass for them. They’re the people of God, and I guess the pope suggested in the motu proprio if there’s a request or demand for it, it should be available to them, and so I’m willing to do it. And it’s not a great obligation because now the Latin is just about as familiar to me as English… It’s not a distraction for me or anything like that; it’s very prayerful saying Mass in Latin.

With priests available to say the Mass, the next requirement was a chapel that would be suitable. In addition to the Basilica of the Sacred Heart, Notre Dame has almost fifty small-to-medium-sized chapels in residence halls, academic buildings, and other locations all over campus. All of them, however, have been built, renovated, or furnished
to accommodate Masses that are celebrated with the priest facing the congregation across a freestanding altar. No chapel has a communion rail, and many lack kneelers. None of these obstacles would make a celebration of the Tridentine Mass impossible, but the ideal chapel would have a high altar against the wall and pews with kneelers. Campus Ministry settled on the chapel of St. Charles Borromeo in Alumni Hall, a men’s dormitory built in 1931 and, as it happens, the one in which I lived as an undergraduate. In addition to a high altar and pews, the chapel has the advantage of a door that opens directly onto the quad, so non-residents can enter without having to pass through the hallways of the dorm. The chapel was not in use on Sunday mornings, as the residents of the hall have their regular Mass late on Sunday night. Initially, Campus Ministry scheduled the extraordinary form Mass at eight o’clock in the morning, thinking that those attending might be keeping a eucharistic fast from midnight. This was later changed to a slightly more college-student-friendly time of nine o’clock.

Most dorm Masses make minimal or no use of altar servers, but the extraordinary form needs at least one well-trained server to make the responses and assist the priest, even at Low Mass. A sophomore who had served the Tridentine Mass before coming to Notre Dame volunteered to serve in Alumni Hall and train other young men who were interested. He remained at the university through law school, providing some continuity.

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22 For photographs, see Lawrence Cunningham, *The Chapels of Notre Dame* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012), 90–93.

23 The campus ministers did wonder whether young women could also serve the extraordinary form Mass, but in fact no women at Notre Dame have asked to be trained. Almost all U.S. bishops have permitted females to serve at the altar since (at least) 1994, when the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments informed the episcopal conferences that canon 230, section 2 of the 1983 Code of Canon Law allows it. The *Ecclesia Dei* Commission’s 2011 instruction, *Universae Ecclesiae*, states that “Summorum Pontificum derogates from those provisions of law, connected with the Sacred Rites, promulgated from 1962 onwards and incompatible with the rubrics of the liturgical books in effect in 1962.”
for the servers and for the small chant schola, which he eventually switched to directing. The sacristy was already stocked with most items necessary for celebrating the Tridentine Mass, but Campus Ministry did have to order altar cards for the priest and booklet missals from the Coalition in Support of *Ecclesia Dei* for the congregation.

Finally, when everything was ready for the first Mass in October 2007, Campus Ministry wanted to prepare interested students with some catechesis, so they asked two theology professors and the rector of the basilica to speak on “The Theology of the Eucharist,” “The Formation of the Tridentine Missal,” and “The Liturgical Reforms of the Second Vatican Council.” Turnout for the evening lectures was good, and the Alumni Hall chapel was filled on the following Sunday with around one hundred people, including faculty and staff members as well as students. Attendance quickly tapered off to between thirty and forty-five weekly congregants. Typically, undergraduates account for about half of this number. Graduate and professional students often bring their spouses and children. In theory, attendees should have some connection to the university, but no real effort is made to discourage visitors.

The weekly celebrations during the academic year alternate between a recited Low Mass and a *Missa cantata* that involves either a cantor or a very small schola. They sing all of the ordinary and proper chants with varying levels of proficiency; sometimes the congregation helps with the ordinary. Fr. Blantz rarely preaches for more than five minutes, and Mass never lasts more than an hour. He’ll stay after Mass to hear confessions if anyone wishes. Although he’s eminently approachable, Fr. Blantz admits that he doesn’t know the people who attend the Latin Mass in Alumni Hall especially well. And although it’s a small crowd, it’s not clear how well the regular attendees know
each other, especially across age groups. Some of the college students have breakfast together after Mass, and many belong to Catholic clubs on campus, including the Children of Mary and the Militia Immaculata. But like other Notre Dame students, they all move in multiple circles of social, intellectual, and spiritual interaction with their peers and teachers.

On the whole, then, the Tridentine Mass at Notre Dame is not a self-contained alternative to the university’s spiritual life, but very much a part of it. The students who attend participate alongside their classmates in campus-wide liturgical celebrations, take the same theology courses, and often engage in the same kinds of volunteer service. Whatever they may think about the state of the university’s Catholic identity, they uniformly speak of studying at Notre Dame as a great privilege, and more than that, as God’s will for their lives.

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24 Members of the Children of Mary are sufficiently involved in advertising the Tridentine Mass and in finding altar servers and choir members that their president told me that the Mass is “officially organized” by the club, which might come as a surprise to Campus Ministry. The club does sponsor an ordinary form Mass in the same chapel on Saturday mornings that is offered in Latin when they are able to find a priest who is comfortable with the language.
The bells inside St. John Cantius’s 129-foot tower are ringing as I step onto the sidewalk after parking on the street by the rectory. The eleven o’clock Mass won’t begin for another five minutes, but both parking lots are full, and I feel fortunate to get a spot in the block around the corner from the church’s main entrance. As I walk around the corner to the steps of the church, I see more than one couple unloading their kids from a minivan. The winter coats of the past few months are absent on this unusually temperate day in early April. I approach the steps that ascend from the sidewalk to three large doors at the back of the church. Looking up, my eyes are drawn to the gilded inscription above the stained glass windows: “AD MAJOREM DEI GLORIAM” (For the greater glory of God). This always makes me think of the Jesuits for a moment, even though I know of no connection that the parish has ever had with that order.

There are no “greeters” in the vestibule to welcome me or hand me a “worship aid” of any kind. I am carrying my own 1962 missal for use at the twelve-thirty Mass, which I plan to stick around for today. This, however, is the post-Vatican II Mass, the ordinary form in Latin, which is usually the best attended of the four Sunday Masses, though not by a large margin. Although I’ve been coming here for several months, I don’t expect to be recognized by anyone as I enter the church, and indeed I am not. I dip my fingers into an ornate, freestanding bowl of holy water, make the sign of the cross, and
walk into the main church. Immediately there is the smell of incense, not unfamiliar to a
“Novus Ordo Catholic” like myself, but which nevertheless brings this place to mind at
least as much as any other. There is still a surplus of empty pews available, including
some in my preferred location, the back. I wouldn’t feel uncomfortable up front, but back
here I can actually see my fellow congregants (if mainly from behind), and I can scribble
notes without attracting attention—or so I tell myself. Behind the back pew are tables
with numerous flyers, brochures, holy cards, and other literature, which I leave alone for
now. I do pick up the bulletin, which generally has the recessional hymn printed on its
last page. This is the only congregational hymn at this Mass. As usual, it is also sung at
the nine o’clock English Mass and at the Tridentine Mass. Instead of the red booklet
missals from the Coalition in Support of Ecclesia Dei, which are put out for the twelve-
thirty Mass, there is a white booklet with a painting of the crucifixion on its cover. This
“Ordo Missae cum Populo” is prepared by the parish. It contains parallel Latin and
English texts for the ordinary parts of the ordinary form Mass, along with chant notation
for the Missa de Angelis, which frequently goes unused since one of the choirs has
usually prepared a polyphonic or orchestral setting of the Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus,
and Agnus Dei. Since the scripture readings will be given in English, I don’t think to look
for a separate flyer with a translation of the proper prayers and chants for today’s Mass. I
take a few steps up the center aisle, genuflect, and slide into an unoccupied pew, kneeling
for a few moments before having a seat.

Today is the Fourth Sunday of Lent, Laetare Sunday, so the name of this day in
the liturgical calendar of the ordinary form, which is printed in the upper left corner of
the bulletin, matches the extraordinary form name printed opposite. Next week they will
not match, because the Fifth Sunday of Lent (the Sunday before Palm Sunday) is called the First Sunday of the Lord’s Passion (or simply “Passion Sunday”) in the 1962 books. I am expecting to see some pink—or “rose”—on this Sunday in the middle of Lent, which gets its Latin nickname from the first word of the introit for today’s Mass, “laetare” (rejoice). I am not disappointed; there is a pink cloth embroidered with gold covering the tabernacle in the middle of the high altar, which is decorated with two large arrangements of lilies and six lit candles. Upon this altar, the priest will offer the “Holy Sacrifice of the Mass” ad orientem, facing the same direction as the congregation, which will see only his back for a large part of the time. There are also lilies on the Marian altar to the left, and a wreath at the base of the St. Joseph altar to the right.

An organ and violin have been playing a prelude, but presently the music ends and the head usher rings a harsh-sounding bell. The congregation stands—at least those who have arrived so far. People continue to stream in over the next ten minutes or so. By the time the gospel is read, only a few stragglers will be arriving, and I will count about two hundred fifty people in the pews. This does not include the ministers or the musicians. There are two choirs at this Mass: a chant schola composed entirely of men’s voices, and the St. Cecelia Choir, a choir of mixed voices that usually sings Renaissance polyphony. Today they are accompanied by the largest of the church’s three pipe organs.

The organ is silent during the entrance procession, while the schola leads the congregation in a chanted litany of the saints, which is being done at all of the sung Masses during Lent. The litany is in Latin, and the congregation responds, “ora pro nobis,” to each of the invocations—though we have to listen carefully for the plural invocations that require “orate pro nobis.” The altar servers and the priest enter the
church from a side door near the front and proceed down the side aisle to the back of the church. I see now that the priest is Fr. Juncer, whose thinning dark hair is covered by a black biretta. He is also wearing a pink chasuble. He is preceded by eight altar boys, the youngest of whom appears to be in grade school, while the oldest could be in college. There is a thurifer carrying a thurible of burning incense. He is followed by six candle bearers and a crucifix bearer. They walk slowly, reaching the back of the church and then turning to come back up the center aisle, entering the sanctuary by way of a gate in the communion rail. Before bowing to kiss the altar, the priest removes his biretta and hands it to one of the servers. The litany ends and the schola chants the entrance antiphon—the introit—while the priest censes the altar.

After incensing the altar, the priest stands in front of his chair, which is located to the right of the altar, and which faces across the sanctuary rather than toward the congregation. From here, he chants the initial rites, beginning with the sign of the cross. “In nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti.” The congregation, supported by the choir, responds, “Amen.” Then the exchange that I have most come to associate with the Latin Mass: “Dominus vobiscum.” “Et cum spiritu tuo.” Were I at almost any other parish, I would expect the priest to speak at least a few words of welcome and introduction at this point. Here, however, the rubric stating that the priest “may very briefly introduce the faithful to the Mass of the day” is taken to mean that the priest may choose instead to proceed directly to the penitential rite, which he does. Only one of the three possible forms of this rite is printed in the booklet missal, the one that begins, “Miserere nostri, Domine.” It is the form that I hear least frequently at other parishes, and its English responses are hardly more automatic for me than the Latin ones. But this congregation
seems thoroughly familiar with both the Latin text and the chant. At its end, the choir sings the *Kyrie*, accompanied by the organ. According to the schedule of sacred music, which is published every six months, this is the first movement of the *Messe in D* by Johann Georg Albrechtsberger, a Viennese contemporary of Haydn and teacher of Beethoven. Fr. Juncer sits down, replacing the biretta atop his head, which he wears throughout the Mass whenever he is seated. Once they see the priest sitting, the rest of the congregation follows suit. Some parents attend to their children, but for the most part, people simply sit still while they listen to the choir.

This affords me a few minutes to visually survey the congregation. The age distribution is broad. There are undoubtedly some people here who were adults when Vatican II opened almost fifty years ago. But the bulk of the congregation is younger, and there are probably more children than retirees. It appears that families with children predominate, though individuals and pairs are scattered here and there throughout the church. Women and men are present in about equal numbers, at least on this side of the communion rail. There are no females of any age inside the sanctuary during any of the Masses here. The congregation is overwhelmingly but not exclusively white. I see a few attendees who are likely African Americans, but no black families. I have encountered Latino and Asian American families on occasion, but I don’t see any near me at the moment.

The lay faithful who come to this Mass tend to dress neatly, but not to a person. A few men wear jeans, though many more wear coats and ties. I scrupulously chose the latter option when I first began coming here, but I have since relaxed into an open-collared dress shirt and slacks. Even a polo shirt would not look out of place; it seems to
be the preferred choice of most parents for their younger boys. Young girls, on the other hand, are usually in dresses or skirts with blouses and sweaters. This is true for most of the women as well, though slacks are not unusual, particularly among the older women. I count only five women at this Mass who cover their heads with a mantilla (chapel veil), though a few others do so with a hat.

Although the Mass has begun, there are still a few people waiting to have their confessions heard by one of the priests who have been occupying the four open-air confessionals located in the back corners and on either side of the church in the transept. The lines are usually longest before Mass begins, but the priests will continue to hear confessions for as long as it takes to get through everyone who wants to receive absolution before receiving communion. Eventually, each priest will emerge from his curtained booth, remove his purple stole, and hang it over the waist-high door before exiting to the sacristy or vestibule. The penitents have no curtain to conceal them while they kneel to whisper their confessions to the unseen priest. There are confession times on Saturday for those willing to trade convenience for some more privacy.

The congregation rises with the priest at the end of the *Kyrie*. Since this is Lent, no *Gloria* will be sung. Ordinarily, we would be sitting back down after the priest intoned the *Gloria*—unless the choral setting was particularly short. As it is, the priest goes straight to the collect of the day, which he chants in Latin. A few people with missals look at the English translation, but most of the congregation does not. At least the end of the collect is always recognizable: “*per omnia saecula saeculorum.*” The congregation responds in chant, “*Amen.*” Then we sit down to listen to the readings.
One of the Canons Regular, dressed in a black cassock and Roman collar, serves as the lector. This is typical for both ordinary form Masses, though I have seen a lay lector once at the English Mass. He does not occupy the large elevated pulpit perched above the first row of pews but stands instead at a smaller ambo located just inside the communion rail, to the left of the altar. The Old Testament reading is from the First Book of Samuel; in it God sends Samuel to anoint one of Jesse’s sons as the future king of Israel. Somewhat stiffly, avoiding much modulation in his tone, the lector reads the beginning of David’s story in English. He concludes, though, with the Latin words, “Verbum Domini,” to which the congregation responds, “Deo gratias.” The lector returns to his seat in the sanctuary, but no cantor comes to take his place. Instead, the schola immediately begins chanting in Latin. The English Mass at nine o’clock normally has a responsorial psalm at this point, but here it is replaced by the Gregorian gradual, which the schola sings unaccompanied and without the vocal participation of the congregation. I don’t see anyone looking at a translation while they listen to this highly melismatic chant. As soon as the psalm ends, the same lector returns to read from Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, exhorting us to live as “children of light” and to have no part of the “works of darkness.” Again, the reading is in English, but the concluding acclamation is in Latin. Immediately after the second reading, the schola begins another chant while the priest and congregation remain seated. As with the responsorial psalm, the gospel acclamation from the post-Vatican II lectionary is replaced by the Gregorian tract, which is as melismatic as the gradual. The schola at St. John’s makes every chant sound easy to execute without mistakes, though I have learned just how demanding a piece like this one actually is. When the schola is a little more than halfway through the chant, an altar
server brings the thurible to the priest, who puts some incense inside it. Then, flanked by two altar boys bearing candles and followed by the thurifer, Fr. Juncer rises and walks to the same ambo used by the lector. The congregation still remains seated until the schola finishes and they hear the priest chant, “Dominus vobiscum.” The people stand while responding, “Et cum spiritu tuo.” Most of them also respond to “Lectio sancti Evangelii secundum Joannem” with “Gloria tibi, Domine.” After incensing the book, Fr. Juncer reads the gospel in English, telling the story of the man born blind who is healed by Jesus but cast out by the Pharisees. The gospel ends with the same proclamation as the other readings, “Verbum Domini,” but now the people respond, “Laus tibi, Christe” before sitting down for Fr. Juncer’s homily. First, he has several announcements to make.

- The first announcement begins with an unexpected reference. “Shylock in Shakespeare’s Merchant of Venice demanded money for a pound of flesh. We are asking you to pledge a dollar for each pound lost by our Titans.” The “Titans” include the pastor and several other parishioners who are raising funds for the parish while trying to lose weight.

- As part of the spring “Forty Days for Life” campaign, which has “already saved over 200 babies,” parishioners will be helping to keep continuous vigil in front of a Planned Parenthood clinic in the city.

- A wreath has been placed at the base of the St. Joseph altar to commemorate the victims of the devastating earthquake and tsunami that struck Japan last month. People are encouraged to offer prayers there after Mass for the Japanese and for victims of wars in the Middle East.

- There is an exhibit on the Shroud of Turin downstairs in the church hall today, as well as hot lunch in the café.

- Tickets for the Holy Thursday bus pilgrimage to churches in the city are available after Mass. The schedule for Holy Week is printed in the bulletin, and the final Stations of the Cross in Latin will take place this Friday.
• Finally, Fr. Juncer notes that there is no special intention listed in the bulletin for which this Mass is being offered. “So you’ve got a loan, ‘cause I’m offering this Mass for all your intentions,” he concludes.

Fr. Juncer makes the sign of the cross (in English) before beginning his homily, as is the custom at every Mass here. To me, his Chicago accent and no-nonsense tone resemble nothing so much as the voice of this city’s mayor, Richard M. Daley. Referring to the Pharisees in today’s gospel, he begins, “I pity these people who waited centuries for the Messiah, and when he comes they miss him.” He quickly moves from the Pharisees’ hardness of heart to our own.

We miss so many opportunities for grace because we’re too caught up in the things of the world: our routines, our schedules, our jobs, our duties. And I’m not saying these things don’t need to get done. But we get so bogged down, and I hear people say this so often: ‘I’m so busy, I can’t pray. I can’t focus on God.’ God is right under your noses. He’s under my nose.

Fr. Juncer tells us where we ought to be looking for grace: in the love and respect given to our spouses, in the patience extended to our children, in our refusal to demean our co-workers through gossip and backbiting. “How about doing business affairs justly, with integrity, with truthfulness, with honesty?” Apparently as an example of how not to behave in business, Fr. Juncer again mentions Shakespeare’s Shylock, and he quotes (approximately) the rebuke Portia gives to the famously merciless moneylender: “The quality of mercy is never strained.” Of course, the duplicitous character in that scene is not the Jew, Shylock, but the disguised Christian, Portia. In any case, I am relieved that the reference does not seem to be a commentary on the business integrity of Jews, but rather an awkward transition to the homily’s next point, which is that “God tempers justice with mercy, and in that way, He sees unlike men.” As he enters the homestretch,
Fr. Juncer associates “blindness” with a narrow focus on human standards of justice and right behavior, which makes us too churlish to give alms or even mind our manners in our own homes. Ultimately, the target of his critique is the lazy self-righteousness that is ever the hallmark of hypocrisy.

The Pharisees condemned themselves because they refused to open their eyes and let the Messiah in. If you were blind, no one could blame you; it’s not your fault. But you claim to see, you claim to know everything about God’s law, you claim to be doctors of the church, so your sin remains because in all your wisdom, you missed the Messiah!

Let the Messiah sever our hearts, as he did last week with the woman of Samaria: “Get your husband.” “Well, sir I have no husband.” “Right, you’ve had five. And the one you’re living with now is not your husband.” Did she argue with the Messiah? No, she accepted his examination of her conscience, and she was saved. The man born blind today: “I don’t know why I’m blind; I want to see!” And he let the Messiah put spit in his eyes, and that holy salve saved him.

We’re at a crossroads every day. I can nitpick according to my standards and miss the Messiah. Or: “Lord, open my eyes that I may see you: in my home, in my marriage, in my children, in my co-workers, in an inconsiderate individual who cuts me off on the highway, in the bum asking for a quarter in a cup, who very well may be a veteran; in every opportunity to be just to one another, to be fair to one another, to be merciful beyond the demands of justice; to be a sign of Christ, so that when others see me, their eyes too may be opened.”

Without pausing, Fr. Juncer concludes his homily by making the sign of the cross again:

“In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

There are a few moments of near silence while the priest returns to his seat. Some noisy children—babies mostly—have been escorted to the back of the church by their mothers (and a couple fathers), and the sounds of the city are never completely shut out. In short order, the Fr. Juncer stands, and the whole congregation rises to hear him intone
the Nicene Creed: “Credo in unum Deum.” We do not sing the rest of the creed ourselves, however, but sit back down with the priest and listen to the choir sing the Credo from the Albrechtsberger Mass. I half expect to kneel when the choir reaches the lines in the creed referring to the Incarnation, since this always occurs at the Tridentine Mass, but it is not done here. When the creed is over, all rise for the Prayer of the Faithful, which is led by the priest in English. Fr. Juncer offers the first petition for the catechumens preparing for baptism at Easter, “that God will free his elect from the false values that can blind us.” Then he prays that civic leaders “will use their authority to protect the dignity and well-being of the poor, the oppressed, the marginalized, and the unborn.” He prays that families will “grow in faith, hope, and love through more intensive prayer and spiritual sacrifices during the rest of this Lent.” Finally, echoing his homily, he prays for “the grace to see all things as God sees them, and not according to our rash judgments or preconceptions.” To each petition, the congregation responds, “Lord, hear our prayer.”

The concluding collect is also in English. “Loving Father, heal our blindness; give us eyes to see your presence at work everywhere. May we radiate Jesus who is the light of the world, through Christ our Lord.” The congregation responds, “Amen,” and sits down.

The schola sings the Gregorian offertory chant while the ushers take up the first of two collections. All of the ushers here are men dressed in dark suits. Each one carries a velvet bag on the end of a long pole from pew to pew, into which congregants deposit envelopes and cash. One of the ushers carries all of the collected money directly to the sacristy. The process is repeated for the monthly “Cantian collection,” which supports the Canons Regular. Meanwhile, the schola has finished, and the choir begins a motet by the Baroque composer Alessandro Scarlatti. The Latin text is the same as that of the gradual
sung earlier by the schola, but the music is unaccompanied polyphony. This does not
cover an offertory procession with gifts of bread and wine brought forward by the
faithful, for there is no such procession at this Mass. Instead, the bread and wine have
been placed upon the altar by the servers who have been preparing it. While the choir
continues to sing, the priest goes to the altar to recite the offertory prayers and incense the
gifts. He then gives the thurible to one of the older altar boys, who censes the priest and
the other servers once. Coming to the communion rail, he gestures for the congregation to
stand, then bows and waves the thurible toward each side of the congregation before
bowing again. Most people in the congregation bow in response. The priest waits until
the choir has finished singing and the congregation has been censed to say, “Orate,
fratres… (Pray, brothers…).” The rest of this invitation and the congregational response
are printed in the booklet missal, but it seems that at least some in the congregation have
memorized the reply. It is the longest bit of Latin spoken by the congregation—not
counting the Lord’s Prayer that will be chanted shortly. I don’t notice many people
looking in a missal while the priest recites the prayer over the gifts, which, like the other
collects, is proper to the day.

We remain standing for the dialogue that begins the eucharistic prayer, or “Prex
Eucharistica,” as it is printed in the booklet missal. (The booklet has its only full-color
interior illustration at this point: a crucifixion scene with Mary and the beloved disciple,
with a T-shaped cross that strongly suggests that the picture has been clipped from the Te
igitur of some illuminated medieval missal.) “Dominus vobiscum,” the priest chants, to
which the congregation responds, also in chant, “Et cum spiritu tuo.” Their voices remain
loud throughout the rest of the exchange, which, as usual on a Sunday, is chanted according to the “solemn tone” rather than the “simple tone.”

- Sursum corda.
- Habemus ad Dominum.
- Gratias agamus Domino Deo nostro.
- Dignum et justum est.

After the last response, Fr. Juncer launches into the preface, which is proper to this Fourth Sunday of Lent. This is probably the most challenging bit of chant that the priest has to sing alone in the entire Mass, and Fr. Juncer’s Chicago accent comes through a bit in the Latin. When he reaches the end of the preface—“…sine fine dicentes…”—several things happen at once. An altar server rings the altar bells three times, which the congregation takes as the signal to kneel. Six candle bearers converge from either side of the altar, where they have been standing, and position themselves, kneeling, between the communion rail and the altar. The choir sings the Albrechtsberger Sanctus—without the congregation, of course. It is not much longer than one minute, but the choir stops singing before the Benedictus, even though the latter is not actually a separate musical movement from the Sanctus as it is in many classical Mass settings.

Here I notice three of the more obvious differences between this ordinary form Latin Mass and the extraordinary form Mass that will follow later. First, Fr. Juncer waits until the choir finishes singing the Sanctus before proceeding with the eucharistic prayer. Then, when he does begin speaking, it is in a voice that is loud enough for most of the congregation to hear. Finally, his first words are not, “Te igitur,” but, “Vere Sanctus,” for he is not using Eucharistic Prayer I—the “Roman Canon” to which there are no alternatives in the 1962 Missal—but the much shorter Eucharistic Prayer II. Anecdotally,
every eleven o’clock Mass that I have been to at St. John’s has used Eucharistic Prayer II, even though every nine o’clock Mass in English has used the Roman Canon. The major motive here, as in many other Catholic parishes, would seem to be brevity.

The short epiclesis is accompanied by a server ringing the altar bells again. Almost immediately, the priest is to the institution narrative—or the “consecration,” as most of the parishioners here would say. He continues to speak aloud the words of Christ at the Last Supper, which appear in bold capital letters in the booklet missal. “ACCIPITE ET MANDUCATE EX HOC OMNES: HOC EST ENIM CORPUS MEUM, QUOD PRO VOBIS TRADETUR.” After saying this, he genuflects before the consecrated host while the server rings the altar bells. Then the elevation of the host is performed in exactly the same manner as it is at the Tridentine Mass. The priest takes the host in both hands and lifts it high above his head while two servers slightly raise the corners of his chasuble. The server holding the right corner also rings the altar bells three times while the thurifer executes three double-waves of the censer. After lowering the host and replacing it on the paten, the priest genuflects again, accompanied by yet another bell. The whole process is repeated for the chalice, so that all told there are two elevations, four genuflections, ten bells, and twelve waves of the thurible during the institution narrative. For the most part, the comportment of the congregants varies little during all of this. A majority of them do not seem to be looking down at a missal to begin with, but those who are look up at the elevated host and chalice. A few people bow their heads along with the priest’s genuflections or, alternatively, during the elevations.

After his last genuflection, Fr. Juncer chants, “Mysterium fidei.” Only one of the three available responses is printed in the booklet missal: “Mortem tuam annuntiamus,
Domine, et tuam resurrectionem confitemur, donec venias.” Many in the congregation are able to chant this without looking. As soon as they finish, the choir sings the Benedictus, which is to say that they resume the Sanctus. It is only about two-and-a-half minutes long, but that is more than long enough to cover the remainder of the eucharistic prayer, which the priest says quietly while the choir is singing, much as if we had returned to the Tridentine way of saying the eucharistic prayer following the institution narrative. The words of the prayer are basically inaudible, though they are available to anyone following along in a missal. Fr. Juncer waits until the choir has finished singing the Benedictus to chant the full Doxology aloud: “Per ipsum, et cum ipso, et in ipso…” There is no special musical setting of the “Amen” that follows; the congregation simply chants the two syllables, rising a whole step in the middle of the second.

The greatest amount of congregational singing, however, takes place during the Lord’s Prayer, for which we now stand. The Latin text and plainchant melody are both well known to almost everyone here, it seems, and in contrast to the twelve-thirty Mass, at this Mass the people are encouraged to sing along with the priest. Although it has become ordinary in some parishes to pray the Our Father with arms extended or hands held, there is none of that here, even within families. Fewer people seem to know by heart the doxology that concludes the Lord’s Prayer in the ordinary form, which might have something to do with its absence in the extraordinary form. The priest says one more prayer facing the altar, then turns to face the congregation for the first time since the end of the homily, chanting, “Pax Domini sit semper vobiscum.” We respond in chant, “Et cum spiritu tuo.” In the extraordinary form, the priest does not face the people during this exchange of peace, nor does he give the command that comes next: “Offerte
vobis pacem.” The imperative is not much heeded here in any case, at least if it is taken to refer to a handshake or some other bodily gesture. There is some scattered shaking of hands. I’ve been lucky to get a nod from people in the same pew before, but not today. I’m not immediately next to anyone, and no one makes eye contact with me as I look around.

The choir does not wait to begin the Agnus Dei, which covers not only the fraction of the bread, but the priest’s communion and the beginning of the people’s communion as well. Ushers come to the front of the church, and altar servers prepare the communion rail with a white cloth that hangs down the top quarter of the rail, under which many communicants will tuck their folded hands. Before they come forward, though, the priest holds up the host and says, “Ecce Agnus Dei, ecce qui tollit peccata mundi.” He can’t be heard above the choir, but at least a few people quietly respond, “Domine, non sum dignus ut intres sub tectum meum, sed tantum dic verbo et sanabitur anima mea,” while gently beating their breasts. After turning back to the altar and consuming the host, Fr. Juncer takes the chalice and drinks the entirety of its contents, tipping it almost to inversion above his lips. Three additional priests vested in albs and stoles emerge from the sacristy to help administer communion to the people. Laypeople are never delegated to this task at any Mass at St. John’s. Each priest is accompanied by an altar server carrying a paten to hold under the chin of each communicant. The four priests divide the communion rail into four segments in which they move from left to right (from the congregation’s perspective), making the sign of the cross in front of each communicant while holding the host, saying only, “Corpus Christi,” instead of the lengthier Tridentine formula for administration.
The communicants come forward from their pews in orderly lines and, with minimal guidance from the ushers, take spots at the rail as soon as they are vacated by those who have just received communion. After several minutes, since I am near the back, it is my turn to join them. All of us kneel for communion, as the lay faithful do at all of the Latin Masses here. At the nine o’clock English Mass, those in the center aisle have the option of standing, though they still receive the host on their tongues, never touching the Precious Body with their hands. I have been trained since the second grade to receive the host in the palm of my hand and then place it in my own mouth. Still, I don’t find folding my hands and extending my tongue nearly so strange as being unable to make eye contact with the minister when I say, “Amen.” In fact, I barely say it aloud, and were this the Tridentine Mass, I would not say it at all, since it is not prescribed in the older missal. I don’t hear any other “Amens,” but like me, my neighbors make the sign of the cross after the priest has passed and return to their pews to kneel. A fair number of adults—at least one in ten—never left their pews in the first place. Typically, there are at least as many non-communicants at this Mass as there are at the twelve-thirty.

Meanwhile, the choir has been singing a motet, *Crux Fideles*, by Jean Roger-Ducasse, an early-twentieth-century protégé of Gabriel Fauré. It occurs to me that although everything the choir has sung is simply “classical music” to my ear, an aficionado might well find today’s selections, which span some four centuries of Western musical history, downright eclectic. The Gregorian chant, of course, expands the range even further, but by the time the last people have received communion, I can’t even remember whether I heard the schola sing the communion chant somewhere between the Agnus Dei and the motet.
After the people have received communion, it doesn’t take long for Fr. Juncer to return the remaining hosts to the tabernacle in the middle of the high altar and purify the communion vessels. The process is quicker, no doubt, than it would be if communion were administered under both kinds. He returns to his seat and replaces his biretta while the altar servers are still returning the vessels to the sacristy. The congregation does not sit when the priest does, but instead they remain kneeling. Less than a minute of silence follows the end of the choir’s motet. Then Fr. Juncer stands back up to recite the Prayer after Communion. The congregation stands when they hear him chant, “Oremus.” He does not pause, but proceeds immediately to the short collect prayer, which he chants aloud in Latin while standing in front of his chair, facing neither the altar nor the people, but across the sanctuary in the direction of the sacristy.

At many other parishes, I would expect to sit back down after chanting, “Amen,” since even the Roman Missal (in the ordinary form) acknowledges that this is the time to make announcements to the congregation, “if they are necessary.” But since the announcements at St. John’s precede the homily at every Mass, no such necessity exists. In the extraordinary form, the priest proceeds directly to the dismissal and then to the solemn blessing of the people, but here at the ordinary form Mass, the order of these two elements is reversed. Fr. Juncer faces the congregation and chants the blessing:

“Benedicat vos omnipotens Deus, Pater, Filius, et Spiritus Sanctus.” Most of the congregation remains standing while the priest makes the sign of the cross over them, but some people kneel, apparently keeping the Tridentine Mass custom. They stand again after chanting, “Amen.”
Finally, an hour and fifteen minutes after Mass began, Fr. Juncer chants the dismissal in a plain tone: “Ite, missa est.” The congregation responds, “Deo gratias,” and the organist launches into the recessional hymn, “Lift High the Cross.” This is the congregation’s one chance to sing in English, and if they don’t exactly belt out all four verses, most do sing along with the choir, and only a few people leave before the end of the final verse. The priest and the altar servers stand facing the altar until the end of the first verse; then they bow, turn, and walk to the back of the church in the same order as they did in the entrance procession. They do not stop when they reach the back of the center aisle, but turn and walk all the way back up the side aisle and into the sacristy. Fr. Juncer will not, therefore, be standing at the back of the church to greet people on their way out, though there are usually at least a couple of the younger Canons Regular chatting with parishioners outside on the steps.

As the eleven o’clock congregants begin leaving their pews, people start arriving to take their seats for the twelve-thirty Tridentine Mass. It’s fairly noisy in the back of the church as the eleven o’clock folks mingle, and the ushers make some effort to move them along to the vestibule, at least. Some people kneel at one of the side altars for a few moments before leaving. Those with the statues of Mary and Joseph are the most popular, but another with a bust of Pope John Paul II also receives some visitors. Already, there are about thirty people waiting in line for confessions, including many children, teens, and young adults. There are few obvious differences between the group that is on its way out of the church and the one that is just arriving. The number of babies and small children may be fewer, but not remarkably so. There are more women wearing mantillas, but they still appear to be in the minority. This congregation is no more punctual than the
earlier one, either. People continue to arrive as the organ and violin finish playing the same prelude that I heard an hour-and-a-half ago. A bell rings, the schola begins the litany of the saints again, and another Latin Mass is underway, this time in the extraordinary form.
Those who support wider availability of the traditional Latin Mass have seized with particular enthusiasm on a sentence in Benedict’s letter accompanying Summorum Pontificum: “What earlier generations held as sacred, remains sacred and great for us too, and it cannot be all of a sudden entirely forbidden or even considered harmful.”¹ The pope’s assertion inspires the title of a handbook introducing the Latin Mass to newcomers, Sacred Then and Sacred Now: The Return of the Old Latin Mass, by Thomas E. Woods, Jr., a prolific conservative author and an adult convert to Catholicism.² The sentence is further singled out in a favorable column on Summorum Pontificum written by Richard John Neuhaus, the late Lutheran-turned-Catholic editor of First Things³, in a more critical piece by Catholic theologian Richard Gaillardetz in Commonweal,⁴ and in the newsletter of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops announcing and explaining the motu proprio.⁵ Benedict’s claim about what was and still is “sacred” to Catholics is also

¹ SP cover letter.
the only full sentence—one of just four quotations from the pope’s letter—included in the
New York Times article reporting on the promulgation of the motu proprio and on the
negative reaction of Jewish groups to approval of a missal that includes a prayer for their
conversion to Christianity.⁶ This is telling evidence of the importance ascribed to claims
about what people hold as “sacred,” not only by Latin Mass Catholics, but also by the
broad public addressed by a major international newspaper.⁷ Finally, the claim about
“what earlier generations held as sacred”—though not part of Summorum Pontificum
itself—is singled out by the Ecclesia Dei Commission for repetition in their 2011
instruction on the implementation of the motu proprio.⁸

According to Benedict’s cover letter, appreciation of the “sacrality” of the pre-
conciliar Mass is not limited to “earlier generations.” Indeed, “sacrality” is precisely that
“which attracts many people to the former usage” today, including “young persons” who
“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.”⁹ On the basis
of this, the International Una Voce Federation claims that the pope considers
“sacrality”—the “evocation of awe”—to be a “a particular charism of the Extraordinary

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“anti-Jewish sentiment” contained in the 1962 Missal and other preconciliar liturgical books approved for
use by Summorum Pontificum, see Rita Ferrone, “Anti-Jewish Elements in the Extraordinary Form,”
Worship 84, no. 6 (N 2010): 498–513.

⁷ The New York Times is not alone in citing this sentence from Summorum Pontificum. A rapid
survey of news reports published July 7–8, 2007 reveals that this is by far the favorite pull-quote of
journalists worldwide.

⁸ Pontifical Commission Ecclesia Dei, Universae Ecclesiae, 7.

⁹ SP cover letter.
Form.” Whatever the pope’s views may be, Benedict’s emphasis on “sacrality” brings the concept of “the sacred” to the forefront of any further discussion of the newly dubbed “extraordinary form” of the Mass. In doing so, he sounds a consistent theme in his earlier writings on liturgy, raises a favorite topic for critics of the liturgical reform, and reopens a dispute that Nathan Mitchell cites as one of the more “neuralgic” issues in contemporary discussions of liturgy. From the descriptions presented in the last chapter, it should be clear that “sacredness” is also one of the fundamental categories with which both clerics and laypeople articulate their attachment to the Latin Mass and situate it in relation to their perception of the modern world. Although I will argue that the category of “authenticity” is ultimately more useful in analyzing this attachment, it is necessary to begin with an examination of “the sacred.”

In brief, I wish to show that one effect of modern efforts by social scientists, philosophers, and theologians to come to grips with secularization has been the invention of a peculiarly modern idea of “the sacred” as a category of human experience that is considered universal and well-defined by its ideal-typical manifestations in traditional Christian contexts, those of the liturgy above all. This translation takes place not only in phenomenological theories of “sacred experience” influenced by Rudolf Otto and Mircea Eliade, but also in cultural theories of “sacred order” that trace their origins to Emile Durkheim. Explicitly or implicitly, theologians, historians, and liturgical scholars who take an interest in the fate of Christian belief and practice in modernity also take a modern theory of the sacred as their starting point. What is articulated as a theory by a

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scholarly elite is part of a much broader “social imaginary”\textsuperscript{12} that attributes to modern society a diminished sensitivity to the sacred, at least insofar as earlier societies are thought to have collectively encountered the sacred in ritual acts of public worship while moderns frequently fail to do likewise. Depending on one’s point of view, “desacralization” may represent a challenge to traditional religious observance, an opportunity to change its parameters and deepen its meaning, or something of both. In any case, few question the assumption that desacralization is the fundamental crisis and/or opportunity confronting traditional belief and practice in the modern world.

The problem with this desacralization thesis is that it requires an analytical distinction—which proves unsustainable—between the universal power of the sacred to fascinate and the particular social processes that coordinate and legitimize the experience of the sacred. This separation of the numinous power of the sacred from its institutional management is partially the residue of an effort within the sociology of religion to assert its independence from the church’s authority while retaining the traditional Christian categories of “sacred” and “profane” in its definition of the subject matter for a secular study of religion.\textsuperscript{13} By forgetting the genealogy of modern theories of the sacred, sociologists of religion make an “essence” of an “intellectual instrument” whose reach is more limited and contextual than the notion of a universal sacred would suggest.\textsuperscript{14} At the same time, the existence of “natural sacredness,”\textsuperscript{15} confirmed by social scientific and

\textsuperscript{12} Taylor, \textit{A Secular Age}, 171–76.


\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 49.

phenomenological studies of religious experience, allows modern apologists for traditional religion to “argue for the irreducibly religious dimension of the human” without having to rely exclusively on the weakened dogmatic authority of religious institutions.\(^\text{16}\) Paradoxically, in an effort to respond to secularization’s effect on institutional authority, apologists strip the sacred of its Christian specificity by distinguishing it from the church’s traditional role in administering the sacred, offering instead what claims to be an independent, scientific account of a universal phenomenon that manifests itself under culturally specific forms.

Theologians and liturgical scholars, when they reincorporate this universalized notion of the sacred into their analysis of modern Christianity, are likely to attribute disaffection with traditional ritual to some kind of numbing effect that modern culture imposes on the “natural” human attraction to the sacred. Narcissism, consumerism, and scientism are variously proposed as the anesthetic agent, but the common theme is the mass desensitization of modern individuals to sacrality in all its forms, and especially to sacrality mediated by traditional religious ritual. Unfortunately, the effort to understand why modern people have lost their “sense of the sacred” distracts from the more pertinent issue of modernity’s effect on the ways in which the experience of the sacred is legitimized through social interactions and institutions. As we will see, the question of sacrality is inextricable from questions of authority and authenticity. Projects that aim to “re-sacralize” the liturgy, whether through ritual innovation or ritual conservatism, can be better understood and evaluated as multiple efforts to “authenticate” liturgical practice as both “continuous” with the past and “alive” in the present. These efforts are not directed

at the “senses” or the “emotions” in isolation, but in their relation to memory, both collective and individual. If there is a general malaise that impairs religious ritual in modernity, the proper diagnosis is not anesthesia, but amnesia.

Modern Theories of the Sacred

Several scholars have recently sought to trace a genealogy of “the sacred” as a central category in modern social science, religious studies, and theology. Jean-Yves Hameline notes that the question of how this term acquired its present meaning and widespread currency is helpfully marked out by the question of how the word “sacred” morphed—simultaneously in multiple languages—from adjective to noun. Hameline and others credit François-André Isambert with pioneering work in uncovering the origins of “the sacred” in late nineteenth and early twentieth century struggles over the role of religious institutions in modern Western European nation-states. Significantly, according to Jan Bremmer, the words “religion” and “ritual” acquired their present meaning for anthropologists, sociologists, and historians of religion around the same time. Here, Bremmer echoes Talal Asad in demonstrating that these analytical concepts,


which claim at least some degree of universal validity across different historical and cultural contexts, are themselves the products of “a particular history of knowledge and power (including a particular understanding of our legitimate past and future) out of which the modern world has been constructed.”

The point of “deconstructing” such concepts, as Martin Riesebrodt argues, should not be to deny their usefulness—indeed their necessity—for intellectual analysis of “religious” phenomena. Instead, we are advised to remain aware of the history of these concepts so that their “modern, Western shaping is not simply universalized.” Thus, while the sacred is an important category around which to analyze and debate attachment to the Latin Mass, it cannot stand on its own. The ways in which different discourses of the sacred are authorized—or better yet, authenticated—must be examined in conjunction with the concept.

A genealogical critique of modern theories of the sacred—and of their uncritical use in the sociology of religion and in liturgical theology—need not undermine what is rightly seen as an important accomplishment, namely the recovery for Christian theology of “sacred” and “holy” as indicators of alterity and power rather than moral descriptors. In looking for “a unique original feeling-response” that underlies “all those expressions (qādōsh, ἅγιος, sacer, &c.)” that articulate this experience in the Hebrew Scriptures, the New Testament, and in later developments of the Judeo-Christian tradition, Rudolf Otto sought to liberate these expressions from a Kantian paradigm of sanctity as conformity to the moral law. The widespread success of this project is evident in the almost taken-for-

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granted way in which contemporary biblical scholars, liturgical scholars, and even moral theologians understand the traditional injunction—“You shall be holy, for I am holy” (Lev 11:45)—as a call to be different, not just “good.”24 As Martin Marty recently commented, “Rudolf Otto helped us to see that the holy and holiness are grounded not in moral perfection but in the concept of the ‘separated,’ the ‘transcending,’ the ‘fascinating and terrifying,’ the ‘entirely other.’”25 Parts of this description of Otto’s contribution speak more to the influence of Durkheim and his followers. In any case, the reification of “the sacred” as an object of social scientific study coincided with and likely aided the freeing of Christian theology from a narrow-minded moralism that had come to dominate both Protestant and Catholic apologetics in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Christian life, which had been reduced in theology if not in popular practice to good behavior before the divine lawgiver, once again encompassed the powerful experience of

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24 See, for example, the beginning of the entry for קדשׁ in the widely-consulted Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament: “In the OT, qôdeš (holy) and hōl (secular) are mutually exclusive terms (cf. Lev. 10:10; Ezk. 44:23). Because they are based on universal human experience, their distinction or antithetical character has never really been in dispute in religious studies. M. Eliade suggests that every definition of the phenomenon ‘religion’ ‘has its own way of showing that the sacred and the religious life are the opposite of the profane and the secular life.’ G. van der Leeuw defines the ‘holy’ or ‘sacred’ as ‘what has been placed within boundaries (Latin sanctus)… Whoever is confronted with potency clearly realizes that he is in the presence of some quality which cannot be evoked from something else but which, sui generis and sui juris, can be designated only by religious terms such as “sacred” and numinous.’” According to K. Goldammer, people sense that the ‘holy’ is something totally different from themselves and implies a qualitative distinction between the divine on the one hand, and human beings and the world on the other.” G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, eds., קדשׁ, Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 522. Citing Mircea Eliade, Patterns in Comparative Religion (New York: World, 1963), 1; Gerardus Van der Leeuw, Religion in Essence and Manifestation, vol. 1, (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 47–48; Kurt Goldammer, Die Formenwelt des Religiösen (Stuttgart: A. Kröner, 1960), 53. Emphasis added.

encounter with a mysterious other. Gregory Alles describes this shift in terms of its impact on the modern theological lexicon. “Otto created a distinctive vocabulary—the numinous and the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*—so powerful that it gradually found its way into standard English, not an insignificant feat for a book written in German.” This is a useful vocabulary for naming and theorizing the many instances of divine “manifestation” that found and sustain Jewish, Christian, and other (though not all) religious traditions. Problems arise only when social scientists, theologians, and liturgical leaders insist upon an encounter with “the sacred” or “the numinous” as the *sine qua non* of any and all “authentically” religious experience.

It is possible to organize modern theories of the sacred into two broad approaches. Both emerged in the early twentieth century and are exemplified by two texts that remain

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26 To get an idea of the paradigm shift regarding “the sacred” in early 20th-century theology, we may compare the entry for “Holiness” from Philip Schaff’s 1885 Dictionary of the Bible with that from the 1936 Funk and Wagnalls New Standard Bible Dictionary. Note the reversal of priority given to moral and non-moral meanings, as well as the new emphasis given to an experience of the “numinous” in the later entry.

1885: “Holiness, or perfect freedom from sin, and immaculate purity are distinguishing attributes of the divine nature. These words in their primitive meaning imply a separation or setting apart from secular and profane uses to sacred and divine uses. They sometimes denote the purity of the angelic nature, the comparative freedom from sin which results from the sanctification of the human heart, as in the case of Christians, and the consecrated character of things, and places. The conception of God as holy was characteristic of the religion of the O.T. While the nations of antiquity were attributing to the divine Being human passions and human sins, the Hebrews alone held firmly to the idea of God as absolutely holy.” Philip Schaff, ed., “Holy, Holiness,” *A Dictionary of the Bible* (Philadelphia: American Sunday-School Union, 1885). Internal citations removed.

1936: “Among the ancient Oriental people, including the Semites, the idea of holiness appears to have been at first non-moral. At its root lies the notion of tabu, *i.e.*, the prohibition of contact with some things for fear of harm, because of a mysterious and supernatural force in them. Basically, ‘the holy’ and ‘the numinous’ are identical. In Hebrew thought the notion has assumed a uniquely dominant place, identifying the numinous with the personal God.” Melancthon W. Jacobus et al., eds., “Holiness,” *Funk and Wagnalls New Standard Bible Dictionary* (Philadelphia: Blakiston, 1936). Internal citations removed.


foundational for modern religious studies: Durkheim’s *Les Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse* (1912) and Otto’s *Das Heilige* (1917). George Lynch is at pains to insist that we are dealing with “two radically different approaches” here, in that the line of thinking associated with Durkheim “does not identify the sacred as a universal ontological structure within the human person or the cosmos” in the same way that the tradition associated with Otto does. Lynch’s project, however, is not to document the history of these two theories—whose mutual influence is hard to deny—but to “reread” Durkheim so as to free him from his own “belief in the social ontological roots of sacred forms.” Lynch’s distinction between “ontological” theories of the sacred associated with Otto and “cultural sociological” theories associated with Durkheim might therefore be more neutrally described as a distinction between “phenomenological” and “cultural” theories of the sacred.

Cultural theories of the sacred are, first and foremost, theories about the oppositional binary, “sacred vs. profane.” This way of dividing reality—rather than belief in divine beings or the existence of theurgic rituals—is famously central to Durkheim’s working definition of religion. “Whether simple or complex, all known religious beliefs display a common feature: They presuppose a classification of the real or ideal things that men conceive of into two classes—two opposite genera—that are widely designated by two distinct terms, which the words *profane* and *sacred* translate fairly well.”

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Durkheim, the sacred/profane distinction is not only the basis of “religious” beliefs and behaviors; it is the very foundation of social solidarity. Riesebrodt summarizes this well:

On the one hand, Durkheim argues that religion is an eminently social phenomenon; on the other, he argues that almost all mental categories and institutions developed out of religion. In other words, neither religion nor society has priority over the other; instead, they mutually reproduce each other. Likewise, Durkheim equates religion with the sacred. The social can develop only on the basis of the distinction between the sacred and the profane. Without distinguishing between the sacred and the profane, what is commanded and what is forbidden, what is sanctioned and what is not sanctioned, society cannot be formed. For Durkheim, religion is equivalent to the sacred insofar as it founds and maintains community.  

Recognition of the degree to which Durkheim conflates the sacred, religion, and society ought to correct the mistaken impression that Durkheim and his followers understand the sacred and the profane as two different realities that “confront each other like ‘two radically heterogeneous worlds.'” Rather, Durkheim’s “sacred” inhabits reality precisely as the “ideal” that ascribes collective meaning to “the real world of profane life.” Later Durkheimians might add the category of “mundane” here in order to distinguish everyday reality from specific threats to the sacred, but the point remains that “the ideal society is not outside the real one but is a part of it,” supplying society

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with its most basic sense of order. Here, as elsewhere, Durkheim’s functionalist model of society opposes nothing so much as the claim that the material basis of society is the only “reality” worthy of the name.

The distinction that Durkheim makes between sacred and profane more closely resembles “the specifically Christian opposition between the temporal and the spiritual, given particular emphasis at the time that Durkheim was writing by the opposition between the opponents and supporters of the Church.” Indeed, this is the upshot of Isambert’s genealogical critique of Durkheim’s theory of the sacred. In attempting to identify the “elementary forms” of all religion, Durkheim actually provides “an implicit sociology of Catholicism” that ascribes to a universal “sacred” the role of social integration that the Catholic Church was struggling to maintain for itself in Western Europe. While *The Elementary Forms* ostensibly takes aboriginal religion in Australia as its prototype, Durkheim’s theory of religion as “sacralized society” is more at home in post-Napoleonic France. It describes a model of social order, based on alliance between temporal and spiritual authorities, that republicans and monarchists were variously trying to exterminate, restore, or replace with a secularized version of the same model. Charles Taylor describes the “social imaginary” that informed both the


37 Isambert, *Sens du Sacré*, 267.

38 Riesebrodt, *Promise of Salvation*, 62.
Restoration Catholic Church and liberals like Durkheim, who desired a secular state but worried about “the moral crisis issuing from Catholicism’s loss of influence”: 39

Society is still seen as organic, and one’s place in this organic whole is the essential definer of obligation and duty. The Church is that of the whole society, to which everyone must belong; and moreover, the force which inheres in social obligations comes from the sacred of which the Church is guardian and articulator. Societies organized by such a church are in this (loose) meaning “Durkheimian”, in the sense that church and social sacred are one—although the relation of primary and secondary focus is reversed, since for Durkheim the social is the principal focus, reflected in the divine, while the opposite is true for ultramontane Catholicism. 40

Taylor correctly sees that the “Durkheimian” theory of the sacred is most applicable to the imaginary society that was being idealized, demonized, and analyzed in France during Durkheim’s own lifetime.

Of course, every theory emerges out of a particular historical context, and in itself this does not disprove the universal applicability of a “cultural” theory of the sacred based on Durkheim’s distinction between sacred and profane. Nevertheless, “anthropological studies have demonstrated sufficiently that the primary contrast between the sacred and the profane, which provides the pivot for the Durkheimian sociology of religion, is not constant and is far from corresponding to the mode of structure for all religions.” 41 For this reason, while much writing on liturgy continues to assume the fundamental and universal importance of the sacred/profane contrast, “anthropology and

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41 Hervieu-Léger, *Religion as a Chain of Memory*, 49.
sociology have not been kind to Durkheim’s views of the sacred.”⁴² Even George Lynch, while arguing for the continued usefulness of a “Durkheimian” theory of the sacred, must admit that Durkheim’s approach “fails as a general theory of social life” and leads to much misunderstanding, particularly as “simplistic accounts of the integrative effects of the celebration of the sacred across whole societies fail to deal with the complexities and pluralism of late modernity.”⁴³ Such simplistic accounts that explain all kinds of social or moral “disintegration” as symptoms of “desacralization” are unfortunately common in many contemporary debates about Christian liturgy.

One important reason why this facile narrative of modern secularization persists in spite of its empirical and theoretical shortcomings is that the Durkheimian tradition of assigning “the sacred” a central role in maintaining social order merges readily with the phenomenological tradition of identifying “the sacred” with an experience that is able to transcend individuality and join believers in a communion of feeling. Although the cultural approach to the sacred tends to analyze “social facts” rather than individual experience, Durkheim, at least, is explicitly hospitable to a phenomenological approach to the subject. Referring to William James’s Varieties of Religious Experience,⁴⁴ Durkheim says, “Like a recent apologist of faith, I accept that religious belief rests on a definite experience.” While Durkheim willingly admits that “the unanimous feeling of believers down through the ages” testifies to this common experience, he argues that the

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⁴³ Lynch, Sacred in the Modern World, 22.

“reality which grounds it” is nothing other than “society” itself. 
(This is precisely the kind of “social ontological” claim that Lynch would rather avoid in articulating a “cultural sociological” theory of the sacred.) In contrast, the phenomenological approach to the sacred exemplified by Otto typically grounds the emotional experience of the sacred in a reality that transcends not only the individual, but society as well. “Unlike Durkheim’s sociology, which reduces the sacred to a social phenomenon, the psychology of the experience of the sacred seeks to demonstrate its irreducibility.”

Contemporary scholars trace the roots of this psychological-phenomenological approach to the sacred back beyond Otto and James to European Romanticism of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Friedrich Schleiermacher is seen as a forerunner in a line of authors that ground religion in a “feeling for the infinite” that religion’s “cultured despisers” in the modern world either lack or shun. While Otto describes this feeling as the “non-rational aspect” of religion, Gerardus Van der Leeuw and Mircea Eliade identify it with the experience of a power that is “wholly other” but also the ultimate reality and ground of being in the cosmos. Eliade in particular sees the encounter with the holy as a revelation of “supernatural reality,” a “hierophany” in which the sacred both “shows itself” and “ontologically founds the world.” For Eliade, it is the

45 Durkheim, Elementary Forms, 420–21.
46 Vergote, Religion, Belief and Unbelief, 141–42.
47 Riesebrodt, Promise of Salvation, 48–51; Vergote, Religion, Belief and Unbelief, 142; Hervieu-Léger, Religion as a Chain of Memory, 52–53.
nature of the world to become “saturated” with supernatural reality, and it is the nature of
human beings—in all but the most modern, “desacralized” societies—to apprehend the
supernatural sacred in the natural world. “For those who have a religious experience all
nature is capable of revealing itself as cosmic sacrality.” In all “archaic” or “traditional”
societies, every person is a *homo religiosus*, for whom the primordial experience of space
and time is *hierophany*—the consecration of certain spaces and times as sacred.\(^51\) Modern
people retain a trace of this “religious sense,” but it has “fallen” below the level where
natural symbols are able to “awaken individual experience and transmute it into a
spiritual act, into metaphysical comprehension of the world.” This decline in the sense of
the sacred may be seen as a loss, since it prevents modern people from “living the
universal” by finding “the traces of God that are visible in the world.”\(^52\) In the end, then,
Eliade posits a unitary and universal sacred behind all of its diverse manifestations in
experience. Indeed, the experience of the sacred itself is, in its essence, unitary and
universal: it is Otto’s *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, the feeling of being in the
presence of a “numinous” and “wholly other” power.\(^53\)

The idea that an emotional experience of the sacred constitutes the unchanging
essence of religion in all of its cultural guises easily finds a central place in the work of
Durkheimian sociologists of religion like Roger Caillois. “We couldn’t stress more
forcefully the points at which the experience of the sacred animates all the various
manifestations of the religious way of life. This latter is, in effect, the sum total of man’s

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\(^{52}\) Ibid., 201–13.

\(^{53}\) Ibid., 9.
relationship with the sacred.” In something of a contrast to Durkheim, Caillois emphasizes the way in which the experience of sacred communion suspends the sacred order of society instead of simply reinforcing it, allowing periodic rejuvenation through the release of accumulated tension in religious “festivals.” Lynch points out the similarity of this work to Victor Turner’s “interest in the sacred significance of moments of ‘anti-structure’ in which conventional structures are suspended or challenged in a deeper spirit of communitas” — though Turner insists that communitas is “strikingly different from Durkheimian ‘solidarity.’”

In any case, all of these theories that place sacred experience at the center of religious phenomena assign religious institutions the role of providing, preventing, and/or regulating access to the sacred — primarily through rituals. The effect, as Danièle Hervieu-Léger explains, is to posit the existence of religion on two levels, one universal and one culturally specific.

The distinction between the two levels — that of the immediate experience of the sacred and that of the religious administration of the sacred — comes down to isolating a pure religious core, distinct from the contingent religious forms by which primary religious experience, which is one with emotional experience of the sacred, is socialized.

This primary experience — at once collective and individual — constitutes the source of all authentic religiosity and, as such, cannot be reduced to the body of doctrine and the liturgies which comprise its socially accepted expression.

55 Ibid., 97–127.
Every “authentic” liturgy is animated by a deeply personal yet shared sense of the sacred that transcends whatever ritualized words and actions a social scientist might try to explain simply by analyzing their external appearance. This approach is ultimately “Romantic” in that the interior response of a practitioner is deemed indispensable to understanding the essence of religious phenomena. While such a claim about the need to personally experience a revelation of “the sacred” might be fine as a “theological postulate,” Riesebrodt insists that it “cannot be maintained empirically.”

The assumption of a religious a priori cannot be justified. Man is not “by nature” religious. What is considered religious experience is not given a priori but first learned through socialization and practice…

This approach suffers above all from its apologetic intentions. It attempts to immunize religion against criticism. The separation of religion from society and its internalization as a “province in the soul” seems to put it beyond the reach of criticism. Ultimately, only a religious person knows what religion is. Those who criticize religion have “no ear for religion” and should be pitied for their banality. The approach is thus ultimately subjectivist… The understanding of religious phenomena becomes a matter of mystical empathy through religiously sensitive people. At the same time, this ‘experience’ is understood quite ethnocentrically. It is always a variant of Romantic ‘experience’ [Erfahrung] that has been smuggled in and claims universality. 58

Like Durkheim’s theory of religion as “sacralized society,” this theory of a universal “sacred experience” in multiple social instantiations proves to be a double-edged sword in debates over the role that traditional religious institutions ought to play in modern society. The isolation of religion’s experiential core simultaneously asserts the perennial necessity of religion while denying the exclusivity of any particular institution’s claim to administer the sacred. While this might seem to favor self-directed

58 Riesebrodt, Promise of Salvation, 53–54.
quests for sacred experience over institutionally administered rituals, such is not necessarily the case. The defenders of traditional religion are aware of “the tactical advantages of the recourse to the sacred in a culturally pluralist universe.”

Even in societies committed to the thoroughgoing secularity of their political institutions, there can be widespread acceptance of a “sense of the sacred” that is not the doctrine of one religion but rather the experiential *a priori* of *homo religiosus*. The assumption of a “natural” or “original” sacred allows religious institutions to claim that traditional forms of piety represent the embodied sensibility of “popular religion,” which has been unjustly denigrated as irrational in post-Enlightenment critiques. The presumed authority of “popular religion”—unimpeachable in comparison to the pronouncements of either scientific or religious elites—counters modern efforts to reject religious authority altogether. The rehabilitation of popular religion is frequently joined to a historiography that confidently asserts the central role of sacred “festivals” in all but the most recent periods of Western civilization, adding weight to the evidence that secularization is costing modern people something fundamental to social existence itself.

However, what proves unsustainable, in the absence of sound historical and empirical evidence, is a sociological account of religion and its fate in modernity founded on the demise (or resurgence) of “the sacred.”

What remains, Isambert argues, is an

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interlocking set of criteria deployed to evaluate the “authenticity” of contemporary religious practices:

The system formed by popular religion, the festival, and the sacred falls apart as objective reality. The idea according to which the religious attitude of the masses is expressed by a “festive religion” marked by an exaltation of the sacred is built like a house of cards. The reference to “popular traditions” would appear to put us on the trail of a traditional religious form asking for revival. Unfortunately, it is not there that one finds the nerve of the movement of support for popular religion, which is not really fed by the sources of religious folklore. Festivals—which constitute the principal heritage of this folklore—actually emerging from a sacralization of time appear in their contents as mixed formations where the reference to the sacred is very problematic. For one thing, religious tradition encompasses a range of attitudes so varied with respect to supernatural beings that the unity of a sense of the sacred is scarcely able to be found there…

On the other hand, the bond between the three notions functions as a system of ideas constituting the armature of a certain normative concept of religious authenticity. It is actually in this register that the three terms mutually suggest and reinforce one another. The “popular” evoked would be the contemporary representative of the man of nature, the one that civilization is supposed to have altered least. It is among the “simple folk” that the festival would retain its virtues of gaiety and massive enthusiasm in such closeness to its authentic nature that one would be able to grasp its origins. There one ought to recover this sacred that our society has lost and which is found by nature in the disposition of all who are not putting up a screen of intellectual sophistication. In sum, there is a paradigm of what one could call “the natural religion of the 20th century,” functioning on the basis of a bundle of oppositions: natural/artificial, original/derived, uncultured/learned.62

This paradigm—which can be denoted by its central principle, the “sense of the sacred”—“appears as a tributary of scholarly elaboration, vulgarized by a cascade of stages crossing through philosophical and religious writings and teachings.”63 That is to

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say, it has become a modern social imaginary that many individuals and groups, extending well beyond a small circle of theoreticians, use to make sense out of human actions.\(^6^4\)

Seen this way, the most interesting feature of the “sense of the sacred” is that it provides many modern people with an imaginary hinge between the authenticity of an “original” or “traditional” practice and the authenticity of “unsophisticated” piety and unfeigned “enthusiasm.” The idea that a primitive sense of the sacred animates all genuinely religious behavior need not be worked out in much sociological or theological detail in order for the trope to link the perceived authenticity of a rite’s origin with the perceived authenticity of a minister’s or congregation’s performance of the rite. The perception that ritual participants are moved by a sense of the sacred contributes to the perception that the rite being celebrated has not deviated from its primitive roots. The reverse is also true: one looks to “pre-modern” religion for the ritual forms that will effectively evoke the sacred. These might be taken to be “pre-conciliar,” “pre-Constantinian,” or “pre-Christian” forms, but in every case, the judgment about the present celebration’s heritage is coupled with a judgment about the present participants’ motivations. People in natural harmony with the sacred cannot fail to recognize tradition, and the sacred naturally takes hold of those who faithfully adhere to tradition. The imagined primitiveness of this connection helps to explain the common tendency of scholarly, clerical, and lay supporters of the Latin Mass to describe it as radically alien to a “modern” sensibility, yet so naturally attractive that anyone who makes a genuine effort to know it inevitably becomes attached.

\(^{64}\) Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 171–72.
In the following profile, we become better acquainted with Rick, the St. John Cantius parishioner we met in the introduction. His story is interesting on several levels, but what is most pertinent here is the way in which his search for an authentic religion animated by an authentic spirituality integrates an expansive notion of “mystical experience” that is “universal” with an unabashedly “chauvinist” understanding of the “tremendous spiritual power” of the Tridentine Mass, which Rick attributes to its grounding in the “culture of the West.” For him, the authenticity of his spiritual path is signaled both by the evidence of uncontrived hierophany and by the hard work of conforming to traditional norms of holiness in ritual and moral behavior.

**Rick**

Rick was one of five people who contacted me by email after reading an announcement about my research printed in the parish bulletin at St. John Cantius.

Mr. Marx:

I think you might find me to be an interesting subject for interview because of several factors:

1] I come to Saint John’s specifically because of the highly reverent nature of the sacraments there.

2] I am an adult convert and it has been a long and thoughtful process to integrate traditional Catholic devotions into my spiritual life.

3] Unlike the typical Saint John’s parishioner, I am a hard leftist who takes Catholic teaching on social justice very seriously.

Please let me know if I can be of service to you.

Yours For A Better World — Rick
Rick’s sign-off, he was to tell me later, “is the traditional Communist form of closing a letter.” Although he is an “adult convert” to Catholicism, Rick has been a self-described “bolshevik” from his youth. He correctly surmised that his political leanings did not fit my stereotype of a Latin Mass Catholic. We met after the 11:00 AM Latin Novus Ordo Mass a few weeks later. In the basement of the church, parishioners run a bustling café every Sunday that accepts donations and offers coffee, home-baked goods, and frequently a hot breakfast. Rick, having completed his duties as an usher, was already downstairs keeping an eye out for me. We had exchanged photos by email. Though missing his pork-pie hat, he matched his picture well enough: slightly balding in front, taller than average and built slim. Like the vast majority of the parishioners at St. John’s, Rick is white, though his wife is Japanese-American. He proudly claims “Saint Charlemagne” as a direct ancestor.

Rick greeted me enthusiastically and led me to a table where he was sitting with his teenage son and the parents of his one-year-old godson. It quickly became apparent that Rick would be a most useful consultant. His extroverted interest in getting to know people seems to know no bounds, but his enjoyment of conversation is so infectious that one hardly feels a need to hold anything back. Even after listening to Rick lampoon the liturgical practices at the “liberal” parish a mile or so away, I didn’t hesitate to confess that this was the parish that I usually attended with my family. Rick simply laughed and declared, “Wow—you are a real outsider!” He considers himself to be “the insider and the outsider at St. John’s simultaneously.” If anyone is a “typical” St. John’s parishioner, it is not Rick. His politics as much as anything else preclude that, though he says, “I feel fully accepted at St. John’s. My leftist friends have more trouble with my Catholicism
than my Catholic friends have with my bolshevismin.” His comradely good humor—even when saying things intended to “offend all the right people”—wins him a broad network of friends and acquaintances at the parish. Before settling on a time for me to interview him, Rick had already put me in touch with several other parishioners. Rick owns a small business downtown and lives not far away, which also puts him closer to St. John’s than many parishioners. We eventually made plans to meet there after closing time.

At his shop, Rick provided beer and another gift, a holy medal that he had previously described to me via email in his typically jaunty prose.

In 1950, His Holiness, Pope Pius XII declared it an infallible teaching of the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church that Mary, the Mother of God, was assumed body and soul into Heaven without experiencing that unpleasantness known as “death.” Rather, she had this ultra-cool “dormition” which was no more difficult or inconvenient than passing out after a night of heavy drinking. To commemorate this event (the proclamation, not the dormition) medals were struck showing the super-fabulous Assumption on the front and the ever hep Pius XII on the obverse. About ten years ago I uncovered a cache of about three dozen of these (cheaply made and poorly cast) Holy Medals at a vintage shop and I bought them all. I have worn one every day ever since. They are so shoddily made that the “loop” typically snaps off and so I have taken to drilling them to provide a really durable hole. I have given them out parsimoniously to my friends at Saint John’s, where they are highly valued. You see, this is a bona fide excuse for wearing a Pius XII medal (because it’s really an Assumption medal) and he 

offsends all the right people!

As I was more concerned with not offending people, and as this was one of my first interviews, I specifically asked Rick to say something if any of my questions involved assumptions that parishioners at St. John’s were unlikely to share. He understood immediately. “Like if you say ‘worship space’ when you mean ‘church’? Yeah, okay, I’ll interrupt you there.” With that settled, we were able to get into Rick’s biography.
He was born in 1960 and grew up in Chicago, the son of “totally, completely secular” parents of Welsh and Czech extraction. “The only religious person among my grandparents was my grandmother, who was Disciples of Christ. The others were just sort of vaguely Christian. My father’s parents went to the Presbyterian Church in Omaha because that was where successful businessmen went.” In contrast to this “nebulous kind of non-spirituality that you can’t really pin down,” Rick preferred the “clarity” of atheism. Nevertheless, he recalls having a “mystical experience” at the age of twelve.

The mystical experience. The mystical experience is universal; it is exactly the same when everybody has it. Once you’ve had the mystical experience, you can recognize when somebody is talking about it, like St. Brigid of Sweden with the thing with the hand, or Descartes with the melting wax. It’s like, “That’s it!”… And I was a very different person after having the mystical experience. Not just more self-assured. I wasn’t frightened of things ever after that—I mean, frightened in a healthy way, but not an unreasonable, unreasoning dread, you know, that kind of thing. But I didn’t see it as being spiritual.

It wasn’t until Rick read Descartes in college that he recognized his childhood experience as “mystical.” Despite remaining atheist, he found that the ontological proof for the existence of God stuck with him. “[It] was like a pebble in my shoe for years,” he remembers.

At an even younger age, Rick had decided that communism was “eminently sensible,” but as a young adult he struggled to find a communist organization that was sufficiently “doctrinaire.” He saw no shortage of idealism, but he wanted something like the “party discipline” of a church. In the meantime, one of his communist friends—also an avowed atheist, but from a Catholic background—suggested a way to settle the questions about mystical experience and the existence of God that had been bothering him.
“What you need to do is read St. Augustine’s *City of God.*” Now, I didn’t realize it at the time, but this was a brilliant political move: *The City of God* will get you right back on the revolutionary road. It’s all about how to fix the world… So I went down to the Daughters of St. Paul to get a copy of it. Well, they didn’t have it. But they said, “Oh, we have his *Confessions,* though.” I said, “Oh, okay. Well, I’ll take that.” Big book, same guy, why not, you know. When Pete saw that, you could just see his heart sinking… He’s like, “You got the wrong book….” And he knew I was doomed at that point. And when I was reading it and it got to the thing where he was stealing the fruit that wasn’t ripe just to deny its use to the owner, it was kind of like Augustine was opening my heart with a can opener and stirring it all up inside, just like a can of beans. And after that, I was through. Yeah, that was it. “Okay, I need help.” God’s gotta help me, you know.

Rick “took action immediately,” but the “How to Become a Catholic” class he attended left him “so disgusted” that he didn’t pursue the process further for a full year. (As it turns out, the class was hosted by the same “liberal” parish that Rick got me to acknowledge as my own.) Eventually, he found another parish (though not yet St. John’s) that “seemed to be a pretty solid place,” so he approached a priest about becoming Catholic, completed his catechesis, and was received into the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil. I asked Rick why the Catholic Church was the one he felt he had to join.

Naturally, I was looking for the “vanguard party” of churches, the one true Church. Because, you know, history doesn’t have two answers; it’s got one answer… And it occurred to me that the central question on finding the vanguard party is, “Did Jesus create an institutional church with sacraments that comes down to us through apostolic succession, or did he want us to have a direct communion with God?” And it wasn’t hard to distill down which these two churches were: you got your Catholics on the one hand and your Quakers on the other. And everything else is just kind of a half-measure. And you don’t go shopping church by price or convenience. So I came down on the side of the Catholic Church being the one true Church, with the thought that if I change my mind, I haven’t invalidated anything, but if I were a Quaker and I was wrong, I’d have to play catch-up later on. But then when I read Luke and the Acts of the Apostles, I was kind of confirmed in my decision that, yeah, this is what Jesus intended.
If Rick’s decision seems like a rather intellectual response to a mystical experience from childhood and an emotional encounter with Augustine’s *Confessions*, he agrees that it was. “When I first became a Catholic, I was terribly, terribly dry about it. I didn’t like all the ornamentation; I thought we were paying way too much attention to the saints and a whole lot of too much attention to Mary. I guess I was just thinking about it in terms of a Protestant kind of thing.” Yet Rick, who claims to be “a firm believer in habit,” began to develop an elaborate prayer life through hard work and a little “serendipity.”

I was on the bus, and there was this thing; I picked it up. It was a pamphlet, a single sheet, just a little flysheet saying, “This unknown Communist has a soul. Won’t you pray for him?” I’m looking it over, and it turns out that of course Communists are godless and they’ll never ask for God’s grace, so you have to pray for them so that the love of Jesus will enter their hearts. And you have to wear the green scapular, and you got to send a buck to get a hundred more of these to a place in Philadelphia which no longer gives them out…

And I’m like, “That was me! I was that unknown Communist. And whoever printed this up was praying for me! Wow, that’s pretty cool.” I said, “Well, I’ll follow the instructions,” right? So I got the green scapular and began every day praying for godless Communists. And this was my only prayer life at that time. And it’s grown now for it to take, like, twenty minutes in the morning for me to say my prayers. But that was the seed that started it: praying for the conversion of godless Communists every day.

From under his shirt, Rick pulls out the five-way scapular he still wears—along with the Miraculous Medal and the Cross of Pardon, medals of Saints Benedict, Louis, Christopher, Teresa of Avila, and Our Lady of Aachen; and his newest find, the Pius XII medal. He also prays the Rosary every day now, dedicating each one to a special intention. “Fridays are for the souls in purgatory, Saturdays are for the conversion of godless Communists, Sundays are for the Canons Regular of St. John’s, and then the rest
are just, you know, wild cards.” For instance, Rick had devoted today’s Rosary to my family. All of this praying is an “onerous chore,” but Rick wants it to be that way. Going from godless Communist to practicing Catholic required God’s grace, but it also demanded hard work. “I started developing these habits, and, you know, praying every day does a lot for you… And that really deepened my faith. It’s a matter of habit… I’m a much, much better Catholic now than I was when I first became Catholic, and it’s through habit and through prayer and just doing the things I ought to do—for instance, ever more frequent confession.”

Rick first read about the Latin Mass at St. John Cantius in the pages of the conservative Catholic weekly, The Wanderer, to which he subscribes despite his leftism. “It’s surprising how, even though those people are politically very right wing, that the stuff they talk about in The Wanderer is mostly stuff I can agree with. They’re against the war; I’m against the war. They think capitalism is not doing right by the working man. Their answer is different than mine.” At one point, Rick came across a list of churches that offered the Latin Mass.

And I’m like, “Holy mackerel! I’ve never heard a Latin Mass,” you know? I’ve only been a Catholic for a while. That Vatican II thing was before my time. So this was in 1993, and St. John’s was listed. So I was like, “Well, I’ll go to St. John’s and check this out.” A novelty, okay?

So I went to St. John’s, and I didn’t understand the difference between the Novus Ordo and the Tridentine at the time, so I went to the 11:00. Now, I knew that the new Mass was not just the old Mass in English; I knew that. I’d always known that. But I didn’t realize what I was getting at 11:00 was going to be the new Mass in Latin, so then I went back the next week to get the old Mass, which, it being in Latin, I couldn’t tell the difference.

But I was really struck the first time because, first, the music was good and much more to my taste than that modern stuff. Fr.
Phillips said—it was a scorcher in August—“We shouldn’t take this hot weather as an excuse to dress indecently. Why, there’s some women I can see from here who shouldn’t leave the house dressed as they are.” I’m like, “That’s what I signed up for!” Once a week, somebody hitting me in the side of the head, saying, “You’re bad!” The point being, you go to liberal churches, you don’t hear about personal sin. And personal sin is nine-tenths of being a good Catholic. The other one-tenth is social justice, and you never hear that at St. John’s, but—Let’s put it this way: even though I’m keen on social justice, I don’t really like the flavor of social justice that you get in most Catholic churches, because what you’re getting is liberalism, which is all about more personal freedom, rather than Leftism, which is about justice for the working man.

Rick went to St. John’s more and more frequently until by around 2000 it had become his primary parish. I asked him how much this had to do with the availability of the Tridentine Mass there.

The key thing is that priests who say the Tridentine Mass will say any Mass well… I like the Tridentine, and I guess I prefer it, but it’s not a violent preference, and the most important thing for me is that I feel it’s a serious, valid, well-conducted Mass. And places that do the Tridentine Mass consistently have good, solid, well-performed Masses. They go together, I have found. So there’s a correlation, not a causality, as a social scientist might say.

In fact, Rick most often attends the Latin Novus Ordo Mass at eleven o’clock. The twelve-thirty Tridentine is usually not any longer, but the time is less convenient. “You know, it busts up your whole day when you punch a hole in the middle like that.”

The major advantage that the Tridentine has over the Novus Ordo, from Rick’s perspective, is that the Tridentine Mass is “grounded in Western culture in a way that cannot be separated.”

Without culture, spirituality is in a vacuum, and it cannot exist in a vacuum—it has to be grounded in culture. Culture is the expression of a soul-life, and vice-versa. So the Tridentine Mass is reliable. You cannot separate it from Western culture. Whereas the Novus Ordo, unfortunately, came in during a time of the
dissolution of Western culture—the sixties were a particularly
dangerous decade, when people were questioning all aspects of
Western culture. And so the Novus Ordo can be corrupted, and can
then exist in this culture-less void, which is a-spiritual.

Although Rick declares that “multiculturalism is the enemy” of “spiritual creativity,” he
is personally familiar with the liturgical rites of several Eastern Orthodox and Eastern
Rite Catholic churches, and he has a great deal of respect for their “seriousness.” Still, he
insists that the “Western chauvinism” he expects to encounter at St. John’s is a “big part”
of why he goes there. It also explains why the Tridentine Mass still matters to someone
who usually attends the Novus Ordo.

The reintroduction of the Tridentine Mass and the Tridentine Mass
movement has been tremendously healthy for the church… The
Tridentine Mass is a method and a tool for bringing about greater
spirituality and more reliable, more valid Masses. It is an historical
accident—in the philosophical use of the word “accident”—that
that’s necessary. It’s got nothing to do with the Tridentine Mass,
and it has everything to do with returning spirituality to its
grounding in culture. Yeah, the Tridentine Mass is inseparable
from the culture of the West, as any genuine Western spirituality
is. That’s why when people go looking for Eastern religions, it’s
just so damn funny, you know? It’s people looking for some kind
of novelty in their spiritual life, and that’s exactly the opposite of
spirituality.

I reminded Rick that his decision to attend the Latin Mass for the first time involved
some interest in “novelty.” He clarified, “It was historical curiosity. Curiosity and novelty
are not necessarily the same thing. I wasn’t looking for something different; I was
looking for something historical, and I wanted to know what it was like before.”

Rick attributes his theories about the relationship between culture and spirituality
mostly to Oswald Spengler, the German philosopher of history and author of The Decline
of the West. Not surprisingly, given this intellectual parentage, Rick is “very pessimistic”
about the future of spirituality in America. “Most Americans are Protestant, and the
problem there is that the genuine piety I see in Protestantism now is almost exclusively of
the fundamentalist variety. They don’t have traditions to fall back on; they lack spiritual
creativity; they define themselves by what they’re not. So that’s very discouraging.” On
the other hand, things in the Catholic Church are “a lot better” than when Rick first
became Catholic, but mainly because many who were just “going through the motions”
of being Catholic no longer bother to do it.

I have a feeling the Catholic Church is going to drop off in
numbers, and there’s going to be a real crisis—not of vocations,
because there will be enough priests for the people who remain—
but in that we’re not going to be filling the pews the way we did
before. It’s okay to be secular now, so the people who are *de facto*
secular right now are going to fall away… And I think that’s what
you’re going to see. It’s Lenin’s principle of “better fewer but
better.” I think that the church is going to become smaller and
better.

Although it seems to Rick that St. John’s is “a larger parish every year,” it
represents the kind of “smaller and better” Catholic Church that he envisions. He does
not mean to say that he and his fellow parishioners have succeeded in leading holier,
more ethical lives than other Catholics. Their virtue is in the authenticity of their striving.

Whatever else St. John’s is, it’s really authentic. I mean, there
might be other forms of authentic Catholicism, okay, and we might
disagree on what they are, but St. John’s is nothing if not authentic…

St. John’s is an archetypal self-selected group. I mean they are
there because they want to be. The curious thing about St. John’s is
that here are people who are trying really hard to be what they
understand as normal, which makes them completely at odds with
society. And yet when they go to St. John’s, they’re normal. They
like that. You know, you go to St. John’s, and everyone’s pious.
And it varies from the “real religious,” who go to Mass every day,
to the moderately religious, like myself. I probably go to two extra
Masses a year… But, you know, we’re normal.
[Some people] condemn [people at St. John’s] as conformists, and that’s not what they are, because, yeah, they want to conform to something, but they’re willing to buck society to do that. There’s an interesting contradiction. They would be conformists if this was the 1950s.

I remarked that this was very interesting, and Rick drove the point home. “They’re not sheep; no, they’re not followers, but they want to be sheep. They want a society where they can just be sheep but they haven’t got that, so they’ve got to buck it. I think that’s a strain on them. Unlike me, who enjoys offending the right people.”

**Losing and Recovering the Sacred**

While Pope Benedict might not subscribe to Rick’s “smaller but better” formula for the future of the church, it does appear that he proposes wider availability of the extraordinary form as part of a re-sacralization project: a response to desacralization that aims to reinvigorate the sense of the sacred among modern, Western Catholics. His hope is that the (presumed) sacredness of the Tridentine Mass will inspire the clergy and the laity to celebrate the ordinary form of the Mass with greater “reverence,” so that it “will be able to demonstrate, more powerfully than has been the case hitherto, the sacrality which attracts many people to the former usage.”  

Significantly, the goal of demonstrating more powerfully the sacred character of what takes place in the liturgy is the very aim that the bishops of the Second Vatican Council had in mind when they decreed the reform of the Missal of Pius V: “In this renewal, both texts and rites should be ordered so as to express more clearly the holy things which they signify.”  

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65 SP cover letter.

66 SC 21.
cases, the project of liturgical renewal is conceived as a clearing away of historical and cultural obstacles to full recognition of the holiness of the church’s public prayer. It is disputed whether the main inhibitor to the sense of the sacred is the historical accretion of ritual superfluities that are now “out of harmony with the inner nature of the liturgy” or a modern cultural devaluation of “reverence” for ritual performed “in harmony with the liturgical directives.” Mainstream liturgical scholars may also assert, as M. Francis Mannion does, that the former problem has lately become overshadowed by the latter, so that a liturgy “once noted for its excessive rubricism” has now “become subject to anti-ritual bias.” What is not disputed, but rather assumed, is that some kind of re-sacralization of the liturgy—“a recovery of the sacred and the numinous in liturgical expression”—is both necessary and possible. In this, modern agendas for liturgical renewal that appear diametrically opposed are in fact alike.

Concern about the failure of Roman Catholic liturgy to convey a sense of the sacred shows up in the writing of many staunch supporters of the post-conciliar reform. Indeed, they often argue that a more thorough implementation of the reform—rather than its reversal—is the key to renewing the sense of the sacred in Catholic liturgy. Rembert Weakland, who served as a consultor to the Consilium, relies heavily on Eliade to suggest that “ever new manifestations” of the sacred emerging in the context and creativity of contemporary culture must be given time to achieve a “durable symbolic form.”

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67 SC 21.

68 SP cover letter.


Mitchell, while arguing that modern people have not “lost” their “sense of the sacred,” nevertheless regards it as troublesome that the “location” of this sense has shifted to personal “peak experiences” to such a degree that “the sacred has become disengaged from its earlier location among a community of people at public prayer.” His proposal to “restore a sense of the sacred to our liturgies” seeks to counter individual “narcissism” by ensuring that lay people “have a much more active and decisive role in shaping the practical policies of worship and mission in the Church.”  

Robert Hovda claims that “access to the mediated glimpses of the Holy in liturgy’s symbolic action is the aim of liturgical renewal in every age.” Although these authors are careful to avoid suggesting that sacred symbols can be invented or manipulated at will, they do urge a certain kind of re-sacralization project themselves. It is based on the thesis that even if the experience of the sacred exceeds mere intellectual appropriation, intelligibility nevertheless plays a fundamental role in recognizing manifestations of the sacred—at least those that are “authentically” Christian. “It’s not a question of reducing sacred liturgical signs to nothing,” Congar says, “but it is important to make them less burdensome, to simplify, and to critique liturgical forms according to criteria of truly Christian meanings, assuring them a real intelligibility for the faithful.”

Still, the argument for ritual re-sacralization is most often associated with agendas that favor either a “restoration” of the pre-conciliar liturgy or else a “reform of the

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reform” to correct the alleged mis-implementation of the Council’s Constitution on the Liturgy. Even Mannion, who criticizes the specific proposals of both of these conservative agendas, admits that “the desire of the restorationist agenda to recover the transcendent character and sacred ethos of the Church’s worship and to renew an atmosphere of reverence, awe, majesty and solemnity is to be commended and embraced.”

Kevin Irwin—hardly an opponent of the post-conciliar reform—similarly affirms the good intention of Catholics who go to the traditional Latin Mass “seeking transcendence” as a remedy to “some careless informality in the implementation of the post-Vatican II liturgy.” Peter Jeffery, while pointing out some historical ignorance among supporters of the pre-conciliar liturgy, nevertheless insists that “what they really want is a more profound sense of the sacred,” a desire that ought to be respected as “a common human need even though not a universal one.”

As a rule, the experience of the sacred or the transcendent is unproblematically linked to the “high” ritual formality and “reverence” of the pre-conciliar liturgy by supporters and critics alike. Many, of course, share Pope Benedict’s confidence that the Novus Ordo can demonstrate the same sacrality when celebrated with reverent attention to its prescribed form. Even so, the traditional Latin Mass supplies the standard of sacrality to which the reformed liturgy aspires.

Thus, while historian James Hitchcock can hardly be accused of advocating a wholesale abandonment of the Novus Ordo in favor of the Tridentine Mass, the


“principles” he enunciates in his “search to rediscover the roots of the sacred” are essentially those of “traditional Catholic liturgy,” which he believes the liturgical reform has utterly failed to follow. Hitchcock, who is a member of the advisory board for the Canons Regular of St. John Cantius, has been called the “foremost apologist and polemicist” of post-conciliar conservative Catholicism in the United States. He expresses ambivalence about the “conservative” label, “preferring to speak merely of authentic and inauthentic kinds” of Catholicism. In any case, his 1974 book, The Recovery of the Sacred, serves as something of an intellectual manifesto for the “reform of the reform” movement. The motto of the Canons Regular—“To Restore the Sacred”—bears an obvious resemblance to Hitchcock’s title, though Fr. Phillips describes this as a coincidence. In 2011, the Adoremus Bulletin published an online edition of Hitchcock’s book with a foreword by his wife, Helen Hull Hitchcock, the editor of Adoremus and a prominent Catholic conservative activist in her own right. She writes that her husband’s “analysis of the unexpected and rapid desacralization of the Liturgy in the years following the Second Vatican Council under the influence of a new class of professional liturgists remains an insightful guide.” This is especially true today since “signs of authentic renewal of the Church’s liturgy…are no longer rare, as they were in the 1990s,” when the last reprinting of the book was issued.

77 Hitchcock, The Recovery of the Sacred, 39.
78 Cuneo, Smoke of Satan, 33.
“Professional liturgists” bent on “desacralization” are certainly the main polemical targets of *The Recovery of the Sacred*, and the major weapon that Hitchcock deploys against them is a “concept of the sacred” that he attributes to “traditional Catholic theology,” but which he mostly defines on the basis of his reading of professional phenomenologists and sociologists of religion. With some justification, Hitchcock claims that the modern liturgical movement that preceded Vatican II was partially grounded “in the work of certain scholarly students of religious phenomena whose position was essentially humanistic but who pointed to the ‘religious sense’ in man as an ineradicable and central part of human life.” This “sense” is a primordial “awareness of the sacred” as a reality opposed to the profane, which is observable “in almost all human cultures” but which “modern man has lost.” In describing this “sense of the sacred,” Hitchcock repeatedly cites Otto, Eliade, and sections of Louis Bouyer’s *Rite and Man* that similarly rely on the findings of modern religious phenomenology. In Hitchcock’s view, the scholars and pastors responsible for implementing the post-conciliar reform are to blame for allowing the liturgical movement to devolve into a search for ephemeral “relevance” in the modern world. These intellectual elites refused to see that “modern culture, in its secularity, is radically truncated, lacking in some awareness of reality which most societies of the past possessed and many in the present still possess.”

In his analysis of the ensuing “chaos” in Catholic liturgical and ecclesial life, Hitchcock takes a more Durkheimian tack. He heavily cites Victor Turner and especially

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82 Ibid., 5, 8, 17–18, 37–38, 58, 63, 105, 111–12, 123, 152, 163, 166.

83 Ibid., 26–27.
Mary Douglas to prove that any group which allows so-called “experts” to “experiment” with their traditional sacred symbols does so at the risk of its own cultural and moral dissolution. In this framework, the shortcomings of liturgists who sought to make the Mass “relevant” become downright apocalyptic in their consequences:

The official liturgy, as well as the various manifestations of folk piety, articulate and symbolize a total moral and religious order. Thus the apparent breakdown of that system of symbols—a breakdown which was abetted in many cases by those who were supposed to be the guardians of the ritual, the clergy—conveyed the symbolic message, only dimly understood at the conscious level, that all restraints were now removed. This message soon had repercussions not only in the symbolic life of the Church but in its actual life as well: priests who became laymen, and nuns who repudiated their vows; laymen who rejected all religious authority on moral questions; radical changes of lifestyle everywhere in the Church. Religious communities which had been notoriously strict attempted to modernize almost instantaneously. Colleges which had been bastions of a genteel folk Catholicism suddenly proclaimed their secularity. Individuals who had been deeply involved in Church work gave it all up. Apparently quite stable marriages were dissolved as the former partners discovered their need to find themselves. There was a desacralization not only of the ritual but of man as well, as enlightened Catholics hastened to adopt a utilitarian secular ethic which could permit birth control, divorce, abortion, or sex outside marriage.84

All this devastation might have been avoided, Hitchcock thinks, if the liturgical elites had shown more respect for the “folk religion” of “uneducated Catholics” who, “despite their ignorance of the explicit meaning of particular symbols…tend to have a stronger loyalty to these symbols and to the traditions behind them than do the educated.”85 Instead, an arrogant if not entirely malicious class of bourgeois intellectuals tried to turn an elaborate liturgy full of ancient symbolism into a simpler, more easily explained rite that they

84 Ibid., 87.

85 Ibid., 121. See also ibid., 8.
patronizingly foisted on the common folk, who already “knew” in their bones what sacred ritual was and was not.

Hitchcock’s narrative is echoed less polemically by theologian and Catholic priest David Torevell in *Losing the Sacred*. Torevell’s central theme is a critique of modern “rationalization” and “disembodiment” that claims Max Weber as an inspiration, though he draws many of his basic assumptions about the sociology of religion from Durkheim. Here, the “Protestantization” of the Catholic liturgy by the post-conciliar reform is caused less by the overemphasis of the “word” *per se* than by an accompanying underemphasis on the body. Both Torevell and Hitchcock, following Douglas, see the excessively cognitive approach of the new liturgy as an example of modern “anti-ritualism.” Even defenders of the reform such as Baldovin seem ready to grant that contemporary liturgy has lost some of the Tridentine’s characteristic attention to “embodiment,” especially when Douglas is cited as an anthropological authority making this claim. Yet while Douglas expresses disappointment with the clerics and scholars currently handling the “liturgical signal boxes,” she can hardly be read as attributing their failures to some kind of complicity with secularization. Her project, as Catherine Bell points out, is precisely to show that reactions against ritual are not unique to modernity but can be found also in


88 Baldovin, *Reforming the Liturgy*, 103.

89 Douglas, *Natural Symbols*, 44.
certain “tribal” societies. Moreover, despite being “a bit doctrinaire” in her Durkheimian social functionalism, Douglas allows that a wide range of ritual forms can convey the integrative and emotional effects of “sacred” experience.

The Catholic rituals I know are not conducive to the arousing of emotion which Durkheim seemed to think is the function of ritual. Something is wrong, either Durkheim or the religion. Being of a loyal nature I tried in this book [Natural Symbols] to save them both. Australian totemic dances cannot do for a model of ritual in all situations. The answer is not that Durkheim was wrong or that the Catholics are failing in their ritual duties; the idea of the dangerous and powerful Sacred is indeed formed by living together and trying to coerce one another to conform to a moral idea. But the Sacred can be engraved in the hearts and minds of worshippers in more ways than one: there are several kinds of religion. Some ritualists plan to achieve spontaneity, others aim at coordination.

Although some relationship to “the sacred” continues to be a defining feature of religion for Douglas, she is able to contemplate a great deal of flexibility in the ritual forms taken by that relationship. In part, this is because her earlier work adds considerable nuance to Durkheim’s absolute distinction between sacred and profane, while simultaneously expanding an anthropological understanding of ritual to include not only “religious” contexts, but “secular” ones as well.

Torevell, by contrast, assumes a classically Durkheimian concept of the sacred, both as a force for social cohesion and an experience of “effervescence.” He cites Otto, Eliade, and Van der Leeuw to further support the claim that “the dominant characteristic

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91 Bell, Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions, 202.

92 Douglas, Natural Symbols, xvii.

of the religious…consists in its absolute division from ordinary life, which allows a collective gathering to celebrate its identity publicly and formally, and through which an experience of the sacred emerges.” Thus, for all of his emphasis on “embodied experience,” Torevell is clear that religious ritual seeks to evoke a sense of the sacred that is absolutely other than the familiar experience of being a bodily person inhabiting “ordinary” time and space. The only real counter to the rationally “abstracted self” is the ritually transcended self, which leads Torevell to minimize not only the importance of intelligibility, but of “subjective experience” itself, at least in the context of the “public and objective” liturgy. His critique of the Enlightenment turn to the subject, which parallels that of Catherine Pickstock, associates the liturgical movement’s call for “personal participation and comprehension” with a de-ritualizing, disembodying emphasis on individual religious experience. Yet far from discarding “experience” as inherently subjective, Torevell takes up the concept and fills it with “objective” content: the “sensual,” emotional experience of “the sacred” shared by all participants in a public ritual through a kind of “bodily knowing” that does not depend on individual intellectual responses.

In effect, Torevell’s commitment to an absolute distinction between sacred and profane ends up re-inscribing the separation between mind and body, for the pre-

94 Torevell, Losing the Sacred, 2–3, 169.
95 Ibid., 31, 48, 117–19.
96 Ibid., 117.
cognitive body is now the privileged site of an experience of the sacred that cannot be dismissed as merely “subjective.” Ironically, this return to the body eliminates the need to consult actual participants about their “embodied experience” of liturgy, since the “stability and power” of worship comes precisely from its status as “a formalised drama of sacred action, free from any erratic interruptions emerging from the psyche of the worshipper.”

What worshipers “think” about the rite is not as important as what the rite requires their bodies to “know.” Oddly, this ends up privileging the “insights” of a few intellectuals “such as Gerardus van der Leeuw, Rudolf Otto, and Mircea Eliade,” who articulate the true meaning of Catholic liturgy for the masses who, since the 1960s, have been mired in an “individualistic approach to worship.”

This is perhaps the most contradictory outcome of linking disembodiment so tightly to desacralization. Far from bringing into sharper relief the actual bodies of worshippers—which are many and diverse—this analysis replaces them with a homogenized “sense of the sacred.”

Kieran Flanagan, who unlike Torevell and Hitchcock is a trained sociologist, expresses similar interest in “re-sacralization” of Catholic liturgy, though he associates the experience of the sacred less with the bodily character of ritual than with the “ambiguity” of its symbolic forms.

Ambiguities have definite functions within a liturgical form, of precluding a reductionist closure, and maintaining an opening, an availability, to the sacred. Some ambiguities, however, amplify an uncertainty within the mechanism, and are unproductive, whereas others are more productive and necessary, especially when

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99 Ibid., 145.

100 Ibid., 169.

101 Ibid., 145.

102 Flanagan, Sociology and Liturgy, 54.
handling the limits of rite, the meanings it produces and the symbols it handles. It should be possible to provide some sociological means of distinguishing between the two.\(^\text{103}\)

For Flanagan, the experience of “the sacred” in liturgy is heightened by the productive ambiguity of “liminality” but hindered by the unproductive ambiguity of ritual that is too loosely structured. Turner’s dialectical ritual process, in which an egalitarian sense of *communitas* emerges from and gives way to hierarchically structured ritual, figures prominently in Flanagan’s analysis. He suggests that it is a methodological advance for sociologists and anthropologists like Turner to have “developed a reverential awe of the sacred and the holy in ritely productions” under the influence of phenomenology. “To gain sociological access to the mysterious basis of liturgical actions, a phenomenological approach is required.”\(^\text{104}\)

When it comes to offering a phenomenological assessment of Christian liturgical forms, however, Flanagan does not provide many detailed descriptions of how specific rites are experienced. Instead, he states what he imagines Rudolf Otto would say about what participants are likely to experience in two very general kinds of ritual.

Otto did not relate the details of how the performance of a rite could be linked to a manifestation of the numinous. It is, however, not difficult to imagine what liturgical forms are *unlikely* to realise the numinous. Rites with little discipline, much light and noise, that claim to have direct links with the production of the numinous, would seem to stand a slim chance, in Otto’s estimation. Those associated with humble and indirect petition of the holy, who [*sic*] strive to keep the social subservient, and which proceed in a solemn, formal manner, seem more likely to have success. Consciousness of the numinous may be stirred by feelings analogous to it, and Otto argues that half intelligible or wholly unintelligible forms of devotion generate a real enhancement of

\(^{103}\) Ibid., 158.

awe in the worshipper. A liturgical form with mysterious cast is most likely to be related to a sense of the numinous. Thus, the numinous is linked to the relative *unintelligibility* of strictly governed rites—in contrast to the *unpredictability* of rites whose requirements and rubrics have been simplified for easier understanding. There is no need to imagine which description Flanagan would give to the two forms of the Roman Rite. “Tridentine rites had an exhaustive and exhausting number of detailed guidelines” that gave them “a timeless, objective cast, one above human intervention.” On the other hand, “The liturgical instructions of Vatican II were conceived in a climate of imperfect sociological understanding” that favored “intelligibility, clarity, ‘a noble simplicity’ and the need to make manifest the sacred properties of rite.” To Flanagan, the Council’s suggestion that intelligibility can heighten the sense of the sacred “makes an odd sociological argument,” for he is convinced that his claims about the relationship of sacrality to “opaque” ritual represent sociological orthodoxy.

In fact, neither opacity nor intelligibility provides a straightforward index of whether or not a rite will be experienced as “sacred,” “timeless,” or “objective”—even if we make the rather large assumption that these terms all describe the same kind of experience. The following profile of a student who began attending the Tridentine Mass after arriving at college shows that half-intelligible or wholly unintelligible ritual is at least as likely to be related to feelings of confusion and frustration as it is to any sense of the numinous. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that Bridget very nearly identifies “inaccessibility” (though not unintelligibility) with “solemnity” and with the kind of

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“respect” owed to a “king.” Rather than an innate sense of the sacred, this suggests a deeply ingrained though culturally specific idea of reverence that is learned—or more precisely remembered—in the context of “traditional” liturgy. Importantly, Bridget’s appreciation for the reverence of the Latin Mass has increased as its prayers and actions have become more intelligible to her and as she has become habituated to this liturgy’s bodily and mental demands.

**Bridget**

Bridget had just finished exams at the end of her junior year when I spoke with her. This hardly explained her bubbly enthusiasm, which immediately put paid to the notion that only the dourest Notre Dame students attend the Latin Mass. Her family background doesn’t scream “traddie” (as she calls her “traditional” friends), though she grew up in a very active Catholic household. Her father is a crisis counselor at a “strongly Catholic” hospital, and her mother works for a large parish in Washington state, doing “sacramental prep” for children and adults. Her family attended the same parish on Sundays, usually going to the “children’s Mass,” and she often hung around the parish office during the week, getting to know the priest and the parish staff very well. Bridget and her two younger siblings attended first the parish elementary school and then a prestigious Jesuit prep school. In high school, she often attended the Life Teen Mass at her parish, which she says was “solid as well as interactive.” She was happy to sing along with the “contemporary Christian worship music” that was “always respectful.” She was all ready to attend the College of St. Benedict in Minnesota when she got into Notre Dame. In the end she decided to go to the school from which her mother had received a master’s degree in liturgical studies.
Notre Dame undergraduates can be overwhelmed by the sheer number of opportunities for liturgical prayer and other religious activities on campus. Bridget did what a lot of first-year students who feel strongly connected to their Catholic faith do—a bit of everything: Mass at the Basilica on Sunday morning, Mass in the dorm chapel on Sunday night or during the week, and the Freshman Retreat, among other things. She relished the chance to sing along at Mass and to learn new songs—“the more music there is, the better”—but mostly she found herself “focused on Jesus’s presence.” She says, “Jesus showed up at every Mass, so it made me very happy.” This crucial point aside, however, her first experience of the Tridentine Mass was not so happy. By way of explanation, she begins her story with the stories she had heard about what Mass was like when her parents were children.

So my mom is a very liberal Catholic. The only thing I’d ever heard about the Tridentine is this vague like, “There was once a time when the Mass was in Latin and you couldn’t hear the priest and he wasn’t even looking at you and if you missed it you had to go—” And it was all these stories, and I was like, “Why would anyone do that? That’s so dumb, blah blah blah.” So she did not like the Tridentine Mass at all. I’m still not sure why, but she really did not like it…

So the first time I went was early on, freshman year, when my friend—she was Mormon, but she used to be Tridentine Catholic, like she only attended Tridentine Mass—she wanted to try and go back because she knew I was Catholic and I was trying to [say] like, “You shouldn’t be Mormon; you should be Catholic.” And so she was like, “So there was this Mass and I used to go to it,” and I was like, “OK, maybe I should go.” This is a really big deal for me, and it’s kinda sneaky. I’m like, “What would my mom say?”

So we both showed up. We showed up late, first of all. We didn’t realize that there were booklets in the back. It was just a debacle; it was so horrible. We had no idea where we were. I don’t know any Latin…but I pick up the words and things pretty easily, so I would try to flip along in the book and try to catch, like, where the bells are ringing and if there were any words that I recognized or
whatever—or the people said something and I could look and see the bold… So we got confused and then like we’re like, “Oh yeah, it’s a consecration!” I didn’t hear anything, I have no idea what’s going on… And I was so angry, so I was like, “I am never coming back. This is the dumbest thing ever. I have no idea what’s happening.”

Bridget was not of a mind to give the Latin Mass another chance, but she was finding her best friends among students who belonged to Catholic devotional clubs, like the Children of Mary and the Militia Immaculata, whose members have gravitated toward the Tridentine Mass since it became available on campus following *Summorum Pontificum*. Many of them make the annual bus trip with hundreds of other Notre Dame students to the March for Life in Washington, D.C. On the overnight ride back from the rally, Bridget listened to her friends complain about how early they would have to be up in order to make it to the Tridentine Mass in Alumni Hall. She intended to catch up on sleep instead, but she couldn’t shake the idea that God was “telling” her that she “needed to go to the Tridentine.” So she “slunk into the back” of the chapel at 8:00 AM, remembering this time to grab a booklet missal, but the Mass was just as confusing as it had been before. Frustrated, exhausted, and behind on homework, Bridget was in tears by the end. The young woman next to her offered a sympathetic ear and an invitation to join the Tridentine “regulars” for brunch. There she got talking to Doug, who often served the Mass and who had been “exuberantly traddie” in high school. His preference for the Tridentine Mass had mellowed somewhat, but he was more than happy to explain it and its merits. He and Bridget “started Facebooking about the Tridentine and about Catholicism and the Mass and stuff like that,” and before long, they were also dating each other.
Between Doug and her “traddie” friends, who were also helping her get through a tough academic transition to college, Bridget was convinced to keep going to the Latin Mass. In retrospect, she’s somewhat critical of her own readiness to accept their views about the Mass, but she points out that these were the people who’d most earned her friendship and trust. “It didn’t really cross my mind to not go to the Tridentine Mass. And it’s not something I’m very proud of actually, that I didn’t think about any other ways of doing it, other than the way that everyone else was doing it. I was like, ‘Well I guess they’re right; this is the better Mass,’ and kind of went along with it.” Back home, this attitude created some tension between Bridget and her mother. “She’s not angry at me for doing the Tridentine; she just thought I was wrong. And so we had some clashes about that because the people that were Children of Mary at that point were [saying] that anything that’s not traditional or traditionalist is wrong. So I was trying to convince her that she’s being wrong, and that didn’t go over very well.”

Once Bridget was attending the Alumni Hall Latin Mass regularly—with Doug alongside to guide her through the missal—she began to appreciate the extended periods of “silence” when the priest is saying prayers inaudibly. This is perhaps the feature of the Tridentine Mass that her mother objects to most strongly. Bridget understands that the scarcity of opportunities for the congregation to vocally join the priest in prayer—or even to hear what the priest is saying on their behalf—makes some people feel like they “don’t get a chance to connect to God themselves, except at communion.” However, she also thinks the silence can be instructive, and in some ways a corrective to mistaken ideas about why the priest is saying the prayers and to whom they are directed.

I think there is a reason for the silence, because a priest is praying to God and not praying to the people. Something I think a lot of
priests do wrong these days is that they look at the people and they pray and say the prayers to the people rather than like looking above the people and praying to God, but allowing people to see that and through that enter into God. But the priest saying the prayers quietly reminds me that he’s not doing it for my benefit so that I can do all this stuff with him. He’s doing it as a prayer to God. And so being able to participate in that silent prayer is good, I think. But I also like to know what’s happening.

In order to know what’s going on, Bridget always uses a missal. In regarding it as “essential,” Bridget is like most of the students at the Alumni Hall Mass, who seem less likely to be without one than people who attend the Latin Mass elsewhere. “It would be better,” she admits, “if I got to the point where I knew what the priest was saying and I could follow along with it in my head.” As it is, without the missal she would miss the “beauty and meaning and theological significance” of the words, which she describes as “liturgical” and “sacramental” because they “can lead you close to God” when understood. But while the Latin language and the silence of the priest are obstacles to quick comprehension, she also thinks that the extra effort required for understanding yields, in the end, a stronger and deeper connection to the text because “you can bring your thought into line with it, if that makes sense.”

I think Latin has been an important part of our faith for a long time. I think it’s the traditional and historical—traditional, not traditionalist—but traditional and historical way we have done things. I mean it’s historic, but I think it’s well suited for our purpose. I think we shape ourselves around it. I think Latin has shaped who we are as a church, and so I think it’s good that we still have a Latin Mass.

On the whole, Bridget experiences the Latin Mass as a tradition that she can “conform” herself to, and though this isn’t always what her spiritual life needs, sometimes it is.
It depends on where I’m at in my week or in my life at that point in time. When I just want to be able to connect to God, like, who I am and connect to God that way, I think it’s easier to go to a vernacular Mass. But I think when I’m more able to lay down who I am—that doesn’t make any sense, that’s not right. When I’m more able to like step outside of who I am, and stand before God in a different way, I like to conform myself to the Tridentine Mass, to the boundaries it has set up. And it’s a different experience in that way. It’s like a different Mass experience. The Mass is the same, but it’s a different experience I have of God through the Mass.

If it sounds as though Bridget is describing different experiences of herself in relation to God, she might not disagree. But the point of “stepping outside” of herself—and outside of an “easier” way of connecting to God in prayer—is to be reminded of who God is: her “friend,” but also her “king.” Although she has “never had a problem” with forgetting this at an ordinary form Mass, she thinks the extraordinary form “reminds you even more that God is our God, God is our King; God is not just a friend.”

For Bridget, respect for “Christ as King”—or the lack of respect—provides a basic way of evaluating specific differences between the Tridentine Mass and the Novus Ordo. The additional offertory prayers in the 1962 missal, for example, remind her that “this is something very important, very solemn.” She explains, “It’s a great privilege that God is giving us, and we need to respect it and come to it with the right attitude. I think that’s missing in the Novus Ordo.” Additional gestures, genuflections, bells, and so forth also make the Tridentine Mass “more solemn and more of a big deal” even as the text “explicitly brings your attention again and again and again to the fact that He is King.”

For her, the congregation kneeling during the eucharistic prayer follows the same logic. This is a practice by no means confined to (or required by) the extraordinary form, though it’s probably the exception to the rule in Notre Dame’s chapels. Even though Bridget learned to stand during the eucharistic prayer when she was younger, she
eventually came to like kneeling better after her bishop made it the mandatory posture. “I mean it’s Jesus. He’s the King; we should be kneeling.” Similarly, Bridget has been serving at the altar since she was in fifth grade, and she still likes being able to serve Mass in the ordinary form. Yet she’s “O.K. that just boys get to serve in the Tridentine.” She says, “That I cannot participate in that makes it more—not inaccessible but more solemn, like you’re in a court. I mean, not anyone can just, like, bring the king a cup of water or whatever, right?” On the whole, Bridget says that the Tridentine Mass is “very clearly” the Mass more in continuity with the church’s tradition because it has maintained the “focus on Christ as King” more than the Novus Ordo has.

I think the Novus Ordo also maintains a lot of what has been historically Catholic… It just is a different manifestation of it. It brings people to look at it differently, but it’s the same stuff behind it. I think the only difference is that it doesn’t have as much focus on Christ as King. Other than that, if there were more of a focus on Christ as King—I mean I’ve never thought of this before so I might be very wrong in what I think about this later—but I think if there were more of an emphasis on Christ is King, it’d be more similar.

There are still many aspects of the ordinary form Mass that Bridget prefers. The three-year lectionary is better “because you get more of the Bible,” including the Old Testament. Music that the congregation can sing along with (as long as it’s “respectful”) and other opportunities to participate vocally make the Novus Ordo more “accessible” to many Catholics, including herself. “I like the music, and I like interacting, and I like expressing. And I can do that quietly almost as easily. It’s not as natural, perhaps. Or it’s natural, [but] it’s not as logical for me to do it that way… I can do that very easily in the Tridentine, but I have to know what to expect.” Now that she knows what to expect at a Tridentine Mass, however, the “connection to God” that she experiences while
participating quietly can seem more “real” to her, even if her silent devotion appears hollow to skeptical observers.

We’re not just pious, quiet people standing in our pews, just quiet, happy and peaceful. No, we’re real people. Maybe we do have a different kind of connection to God than most people have, because we appreciate the silence and stuff. But I think it’s just because people haven’t experienced it. And yes, we want a deeper relationship with God and a more real and direct way than a lot of times is available through poorly done Novus Ordo. It’s more real and exact, I think, and it’s not as easily messed up as a Novus Ordo, so I think it’s better access—more accurate, often, than the Novus Ordo is about who God actually is. But we’re normal people and not weird, pious, boring, whatever.
The build-up to Holy Week and Easter at the Shrine of Christ the King has been substantial, with multiple reminders to “Make your Holy Week Extraordinary” arriving in my email inbox to supplement the flyers and bulletin announcements. Not least among the attractions for people who have been coming to the Shrine since its founding is the return of Monsignor Michael Schmitz, who remains the rector of the Shrine and the provincial superior for the United States even though his duties as vicar general for the entire Institute keep him out of the country for most of the year. The regulars speak very highly of him as a speaker and as a counselor, though they also seem to think that Canon Talarico is doing a fine job of managing the Shrine in the rector’s absence. I’m not surprised to find a somewhat larger congregation at the Shrine this Thursday evening for the Missa in Coena Domini than what I see most Sunday mornings at high Mass. About one hundred people are present, most of them having made the trip into the city in time for the 7:00 PM Mass. Those who live in nearby Hyde Park are here, of course, and so is the one family that has moved into a (very slowly) gentrifying part of Woodlawn in order to be closer to the Shrine. The congregation here in this predominantly black neighborhood is not exclusively white, but nearly so. There is an African American family, at least one Asian American woman, and a family that might be Latino. I count about equal numbers of men and women, and the range of ages seems wide, though
dominated by young and middle-aged adults. There are several families with infants and small children despite the late hour for beginning a series of liturgies—Mass, a eucharistic procession, and compline—that will last nearly two hours.

There is a booklet to pick up on the way to my seat, with a medieval painting of the Last Supper photocopied on its cover. Inside are parallel Latin and English texts for the readings, the proper prayers and chants of the Mass, and the *Pange Lingua* that will be sung during the procession at the end of Mass. I select one of the cushioned chairs set up behind the last row of pews (which are also temporary installations) and take off my coat. Many people are still wearing theirs, as the un-insulated interior of the Shrine is only somewhat warmer than outside, where the temperature has dropped into the forties on this evening in late April. This makes it a little hard to determine a dress code, but suits and ties seem to be standard for men, sweaters and skirts for women. I see maybe twenty women wearing mantillas, though if one were to count those who have simply kept their hats on from outside, the number who have their heads covered might represent half of the women. Of course, this means that at least as many women have chosen not to “veil” their hair at all.

Canon Talarico is giving the large contingent of altar boys some last-minute instructions, probably for the procession at the end of Mass to the altar of repose that has been set up in an alcove just to the left of the sanctuary. The 17th-century wooden statue of the Infant King that ordinarily sits above the main altar has been removed, and the altar cross has been veiled in a white cloth. The statues on the other altars are veiled in purple. The altar boys are sporting the blue and white vestments that servers at churches of the Institute were recently given permission to wear. Since Msgr. Schmitz will be the
principal celebrant at this Mass, Canon Talarico is wearing a dalmatic rather than a
chasuble, indicating that he will be filling the role of the deacon. Canon Ueda, the new
vicar from Japan, will assume the job of the subdeacon even though he, like Canon
Talarico, is an ordained priest. A deacon and a subdeacon are both required for a solemn
high Mass. At least since Canon Ueda arrived, the high Mass here on Sunday has
typically been a missa solemnis, in contrast to the ostensibly more elaborate celebration at
St. John Cantius, which is nevertheless “only” a missa cantata most Sundays. I am
reminded of a parishioner from St. John’s who observed that while the Shrine can’t
match their music program, the priests of the Institute, with their “European” training, are
more keen on rubrical detail and precision than the SJC canons are. Whenever Canon
Talarico gives one of his “20-minute lessons on the liturgy,” he always points out how
every single gesture of the priest and the other ministers is carefully measured in the
Roman Rite. And as a rule, the canons of the Institute speak an Italianate Latin that is a
good deal more elegant than the Americanized pronunciation typically heard at St.
John’s.

The number of liturgical ministers in the sanctuary at the Shrine also frequently
exceeds that at St. John’s, notwithstanding the much smaller congregation. Tonight there
are no less than seventeen ministers for this congregation of barely one hundred people.
In addition to the three priests, there are ten altar boys, three seminary candidates, and a
clerical oblate who are all serving at the altar. Abbé Georg, the oblate, is the Shrine’s
sacristan, and he usually serves as the subdeacon. Another oblate is the organist, and he
presently begins playing an instrumental on the electronic organ as the ministers emerge
from the sacristy. They don’t go to the back of the church, but proceed across the front,
walking between the first row of pews and two long kneelers that function as a makeshift communion rail. When they enter the sanctuary, they join a visiting cleric—probably a priest—who is already standing there. He has been given a seat opposite the celebrant’s, though he has no liturgical duties at this Mass beyond those of any other member of the congregation.

There is no sprinkling rite before the Mass itself begins, so the schola begins chanting the introit as soon as Msgr. Schmitz begins the prayers at the foot of the altar. The congregation kneels while the priest says these prayers, which are spoken in a low voice and covered in any case by the introit. There are around five or six men in the schola, and they are usually the only choir at Mass. Some of the members are candidates for the Institute’s seminary, and all of them are volunteers. They handle the simpler chants competently, though they often struggle with some of the more difficult ones. The organ joins them for the Kyrie, by which time Msgr. Schmitz and the two canons have finished the Confiteor, the censing of the altar, and their own quiet recitation of the Kyrie. The congregation, still kneeling, seems unfamiliar with the melody for the Kyrie and does not sing along. Ordinarily, though, their vocal participation is encouraged by a printed “guide to responses” containing music in the traditional square-note format for all of the ordinary chants.

After the end of the Kyrie, the congregation stands for the priest to intone, “Gloria in excelsis Deo.” The schola doesn’t take up the chant immediately, for there is a long, upbeat organ instrumental throughout which one altar boy rings the altar bells continuously. I wonder if that job is coveted or dreaded. Presumably, the tired ringer is consoled to know that he is the last one who gets to ring the bells until the Easter Vigil.
This is also the last time the organ will be heard until Saturday night; the schola will sing unaccompanied tonight and tomorrow. The instrumental affords Msgr. Schmitz time to recite the entire *Gloria* inaudibly. When the organ and bells finally stop, the priests and ministers take a seat, followed by the congregation, and all listen to the schola chant the rest of the *Gloria*. I flip through the limited *Kyriale* in the back of my hand missal, but I can’t figure out which Mass is being sung tonight. The chant is less syllabic than the melodies that I usually hear on Sunday, but it still ends up being shorter than the instrumental that preceded it. After it is over, we stand for Msgr. Schmitz to chant the collect of the day, which he does in a clearly audible voice, though facing the altar. After responding, “Amen,” the congregation sits back down, as does the priest.

Canon Ueda, acting as the subdeacon, remains standing to sing the epistle. He faces the altar and chants loudly enough to be heard, but not loud enough for the Latin words to be distinguished clearly. It’s from First Corinthians and is rather long, containing Paul’s account of the institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper. It also includes a famous warning about eating the bread and drinking the cup “unworthily,” which the translation in the booklet renders this way: “He who eats and drinks unworthily, without distinguishing the body, eats and drinks judgment to himself.”¹ For me it simultaneously calls to mind both those Latin Mass Catholics who have spoken with me about the importance of receiving communion “worthily” and those who have emphasized faith in the real presence of Christ’s body in the Eucharist as the most

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characteristic belief of “authentic” Catholics. It’s hard to say whether anyone else is having similar thoughts. Only half of the congregation appears to be following along with the translation, and the reading will not be repeated in English before the homily.

The congregation remains seated after Canon Ueda finishes the epistle, and the schola starts singing the gradual. They do their best with this melismatic chant setting of the so-called “Philippians hymn” (Christus factus est pro nobis obediens usque ad mortem...), but there are a few hiccups. Msgr. Schmitz, who has returned to the right (or “epistle”) side of the altar, quietly recites the same text that the schola is singing. The chant covers this and the next few actions that prepare for the proclamation of the gospel. Canon Ueda moves the missal to the left (or “gospel”) side of the altar, while Canon Talarico places the evangelarium (the book containing the gospels) in the middle of the altar so that Msgr. Schmitz can bless it with incense. Then, acting as the deacon, Canon Talarico kneels to receive the priest’s blessing before he proclaims the gospel. Retrieving the evangelarium, he walks down the steps of the altar preceded by the thurifer and two candlebearers, and accompanied by Canon Ueda. As the subdeacon, Ueda holds the evangelarium while Talarico reads from it. They stand opposite each other on a line perpendicular to that made by the altar and the people, with the candlebearers flanking the gospel book.

Everyone is in position by the time the schola finishes the gradual. The congregation stands when Canon Talarico chants, “Dominus vobiscum,” and most sign their forehead, mouth, and breast with the cross while he incenses the book another time. Talarico chants more loudly and clearly than Ueda did a few moments ago. The reading from John’s gospel recounts Jesus washing his disciples’ feet at the Last Supper. Each
time the name “Jesus” is mentioned, Canon Talarico inclines his head slightly while
Msgr. Schmitz, who has been facing the gospel book from his spot on the top step of the
altar, turns slowly toward the altar and makes a rather more profound bow. When the
gospel has been sung, Canon Ueda brings the book to Msgr. Schmitz to kiss it, after
which the monsignor is incensed by Canon Talarico. Msgr. Schmitz removes his maniple
and chasuble and dons his biretta, which Abbé Georg brings him before accompanying
the priest to the pulpit. Georg will have to remain standing there for the entire sermon,
though everyone else now sits down.

Msgr. Schmitz turns out to be an animated homilist, preaching apparently without
notes in fluent English touched by a German accent that makes him sound refined and
cosmopolitan rather than foreign. He begins, “In the name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.” He doesn’t specifically refer to the epistle (or to the
gospel), but the theme of the homily is related to “distinguishing the body” when
receiving the eucharistic bread.

Even the greatest mystery, even the mystery of the Holy Eucharist
the Church celebrates today, can become commonplace, can
become meaningless. The dogma of the real presence can become
hollow if we do not cherish, if we do not renew our belief in the
presence of the blessed Lord under the species of bread and wine
every day. The Evil One wants to thin out our faith and make it so
hollow that it doesn’t claim us in our hearts. The Church, in over
two thousand years of history, has known that all the time. And
therefore the glorious rites that we celebrate are certainly there to
glorify God almighty, but they also are there to stop the hollowing
out of the dogma and of the faith. Every gesture, everything we
celebrate has meaning, and this meaning like a compass points to
the one central mystery of our faith: to the Incarnation and to the
presence of God Incarnate among us in the greatest mystery that
we have, in the Holy Eucharist.
Interestingly, Msgr. Schmitz doesn’t claim that the Eucharist becomes an empty ritual when the doctrine of the real presence is forgotten, but rather that the dogma itself becomes “hollow” and unconvincing when the rite is performed in a “commonplace” way. Therefore, he doesn’t explain the doctrine of the real presence theologically so much as he describes, in some detail, the liturgical and conventional behaviors that are supposed to reinforce belief.

The rite that we celebrate, underscores very clearly that this mystery is not commonplace. We come into the church, and the first act that we undertake is an act of adoration: we genuflect. And we teach already the children that you do not go to the church like any other place. Here God is present… We keep the silence of adoration, and we behave in our churches respectfully not because of human convention only, but because we know God dwells here. And therefore the rite surrounds the mystery with gestures of awe and respect. The priest, as you know, once he has touched the consecrated host, keeps his fingers closed so that not one particle of the host, eventually attached, can come off to his fingers and get lost. You know the host is placed not only on three folds [of the] altar cloth but additionally on the corporal, on a small cloth that is only there to preserve the host and every particle of the divine species from being not treated with the greatest respect… We observe during Mass that the priest and all the servants at the altar many times genuflect in the same act of adoration that you use when you come into the church because also the priest does not have to forget that he is the servant of God present, that he at any moment at the altar serves the living being, God almighty, who in His great merciful love for us He sends from heaven.

Speaking to this congregation, Msgr. Schmitz hardly needs to defend the practice that he describes next, for it is the behavior that my consultants most frequently mention as indicative of faith in the real presence.

Finally, among many other signs of respect and veneration, we receive communion kneeling, on the tongue. In the famous apostolic letter, *Memoriale Domini*, in which Paul VI tolerated in some dioceses at that time what he calls the “abuse” of receiving communion in the hand, the very same pope underscores that the best way to receive communion—the most respectful and the most
historically proven—is to receive communion kneeling on the tongue, to make sure again that nothing of the precious sacrament that is given to us is lost, forgotten, or trampled underfoot.  

This age-old venerable custom is a sign of our love, a sign of our belief, a sign of the real presence, a sign of God among us.

The accusation that Msgr. Schmitz makes next sounds apocryphal at best, but it’s effective in making the prevailing communion practice in most American Catholic parishes seem “Protestant.”

When Calvin wanted to destroy the Catholic faith, he told his preachers, “Do not preach against the Catholic dogma of the real presence. Simply introduce communion in the hand, and you will see that soon belief in the real presence will dwindle.” That is the reason why the Holy Father in Rome, our beloved Pope Benedict XVI, since some time only distributes communion again on the tongue. That is the sign and the reason why we that we have the grace to follow the rite, that we can receive communion on the tongue, should receive it with the greatest veneration and the most profound love. If you receive it on the tongue, this tongue should

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2 Memoriale Domini is not in fact an “apostolic letter,” but an “instruction” issued in 1969 by the Congregation for Divine Worship (CDW) under the authority of Paul VI. The document acknowledges that communion in the hand was an “ancient usage” of the church but asserts a present preference for administering the host on the tongue to kneeling communicants. Although the instruction seems to regret that communion in the hand was re-introduced “without prior approval” in “recent years,” I am unable to find any place where it actually terms this practice an “abuse.” Moreover, the instruction does not simply “tolerate” deviation from administering communion on the tongue, but engages the conferences of bishops in different parts of the world in the “task of weighing carefully” the local circumstances that might favor allowing communion in the hand, with the ultimate goal being the “edification of all” through “mutual good example.” The conference of bishops in the United States subsequently decided to petition the Vatican to allow communion in the hand in its dioceses, and the CDW conveyed the permission required by Memoriale Domini in 1977. See DOL 260; DOL 261. The support of the U.S. bishops for communion in the hand was not obtained easily or quickly, however. See the detailed account of the years between 1969 and 1977 in Margaret M. McGuinness, “Let Us Go to the Altar: American Catholics and the Eucharist, 1926-1976,” in Habits of Devotion: Catholic Religious Practice in Twentieth-Century America, ed. James M. O’Toole, Cushwa Center Studies of Catholicism in Twentieth-Century America (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 225–27.

be clean, and our hearts should be cleansed by a good confession and interior preparation also, so that what we believe with our reason is received worthily by our heart.

In this account of spiritual formation, the heart aligns itself with the mind, and both take their lead from the body. Consequently, the replacement of “glorious rites” with “commonplace” actions undermines faith. Msgr. Schmitz concludes, “We cannot allow, and we will not allow that this greatest mystery is hollowed out by secularism, misunderstanding, and foolishness… This evening, let us renew our faith, let us renew our gratitude, let us renew from the depth of our hearts the act of adoration that we owe the blessed Lord present for always in his Church, in our hearts, and in every tabernacle in the world. Amen. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, Amen.”

This is probably the first Holy Thursday Mass I have attended at which the homily is not followed by some ritual washing of feet. The rite is available in the 1962 Missal, complete with eight antiphons for the choir to sing while the priest washes the feet of twelve “selected men” from the congregation. I’m not sure why this is left out, though the temperature inside the Shrine would doubtless make the foot washing an uncomfortable experience for all involved. There is also no recitation of the Nicene Creed following the sermon. The prayer of the faithful (or general intercessions) does not exist in the extraordinary form, so we proceed directly to the offertory after reflecting briefly on Msgr. Schmitz’s words.

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4 Prior to the reform of Holy Week instituted by Pius XII in 1955, the foot-washing rite (sometimes called the mandatum after its first antiphon—hence “Maundy Thursday” in British usage) was usually performed sometime after the Mass of the Lord’s Supper, which was ordinarily celebrated earlier in the day. As we will see below, the priests at the Shrine follow pre-1955 practice at some points in the Holy Thursday liturgy. This could be an explanation for their decision not to perform the mandatum during Mass. The omission of the creed, on the other hand, conforms to one of the changes made in 1955. See Anne Christine McGuire, “The Reform of Holy Week, 1951-1969: Process, Problems, and Possibilities” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 2001), 200–26, 407, 417.
To me, the beginning of the offertory in the Tridentine Mass always seems like an odd sequence. We all stand when the priest chants, “Dominus vobiscum,” and we respond, “Et cum spiritu tuo.” But when he continues, “Oremus”—“Let us pray”—the congregation immediately sits back down. I try to remember whether liturgical historians have determined that this exchange is a remnant of a unit that once included an audible proper prayer like the opening and post-communion collects do. Or perhaps there used to be a dismissal of catechumens and penitents at this point, here at the end of the “Mass of the Catechumens” and the beginning of the “Mass of the Faithful.” In any case, the prayers that the priest now begins to say are inaudible. They are also fixed, with the exception of the opening offertory chant and the concluding secreta, which are proper to the day. If one has a missal and is inclined to follow along, there is plenty of time to read through all of the twelve prayers (including the chant). More people, however, simply sit and listen to the schola, which first sings the offertory chant and then some longer Latin hymn that I can’t identify. Meanwhile, one of my consultants takes up the collection in a long-handled basket. He’s the white, middle-aged engineer who moved to Woodlawn with his wife and son in order to be closer to the Shrine. While the ushers at St. John’s are always impeccably dressed in dark suits, I’ve noticed that the men who take up the collection here at the Shrine rarely wear so much as a tie. The basket looks pretty full by the time it gets to me. The Shrine may not be a parish, but it nevertheless has collection envelopes in which the faithful who attend regularly can enclose their offerings.

Since this is a solemn high Mass, the offertory also includes a long series of incensations that always follows a precise order of precedence. First, Msgr. Schmitz censes the chalice and host, the veiled cross above the altar, and the altar itself. Then, he
gives the thurible back to Canon Talarico, who does the deacon’s job of censing the
priest. While Msgr. Schmitz washes his fingers in a bowl of water and continues to say
more prayers in a low voice, Canon Talarico proceeds to cense the visiting cleric and then
Canon Ueda before handing the thurible to the thurifer (one of the older altar boys). The
thurifer in turn censes Canon Talarico, then the other altar servers, and finally the
congregation. For each incensation, he bows slightly, waves the thurible three times in a
very restrained manner, and makes another slight bow. All of this takes the thurifer more
time than it takes the priest to finish saying the offertory prayers, so we in the
congregation are still seated when Msgr. Schmitz turns toward us and extends his hands
momentarily before turning back to the altar. According to my missal, he simultaneously
issues the invitation, “orate fratres” (pray, brothers), in a slightly elevated voice, but I
still don’t hear him. I don’t hear the response either, which presumably only the deacon
and subdeacon standing by the priest say aloud. A moment later, Msgr. Schmitz ends the
secreta in a loud voice, chanting, “per omnia saecula saeculorum.” We respond, “Amen.”

Without turning toward us again, Msgr. Schmitz begins the preface dialogue with
“Dominus vobiscum,” and the congregation responds as usual. Only after we have
chanted, “dignum et justum est,” and the priest has begun chanting the preface does the
thurifer finally get around to censing the congregation. The Preface of the Cross is to me
a welcome change from the longer and less lyrical Preface of the Trinity that is used on
most Sundays of the year, but my feelings in this matter are probably idiosyncratic. No
one who has heard me extol the virtues of the post-conciliar missal’s greater variety of
texts for the preface has ever seemed to have any idea what I was talking about. In any
case, it’s hard to imagine many people noticing the difference just from hearing the Latin,
especially since the beginnings of the two prefaces are identical and the endings are similar. After chanting last word of the preface, “dicentes,” Msgr. Schmitz switches to a quiet voice and recites the Sanctus. Tonight there are no altar bells, but the ministers and congregation know well enough that this is the moment to kneel. After a beat, the schola begins chanting the Sanctus. I notice one or two people in the congregation trying to sing along, but otherwise we are silent. The schola stops short of singing the Benedictus, so there is soon nothing but the background noise of two portable heaters and a few restless children to cover the inaudible recitation of the Roman Canon taking place at the altar. Maybe half of the people are using hand missals to follow along. I find that I can’t keep up with the priest, especially since it takes a moment to locate the unique Holy Thursday text for the communicantes prayer. Still, there is a solid minute or so of silence before we come to the institution narrative.

The genuflections, elevations, and incensations that surround the silent pronunciation of the words of institution are done as usual. The deacon and subdeacon (i.e. Canons Talarico and Ueda) are responsible for lifting the corners of the priest’s chasuble when he elevates first the host and then the chalice for all to see. However, the triple ringing of the altar bells that normally accompanies each elevation is replaced on Holy Thursday with the stark sound of a clapper.5 The first time that this is heard, a toddler in the back of the church gleefully shouts, “Boom!” It’s insufficient to elicit a reaction from anyone other than the child’s mother, who quietly shushes him. After the priest’s last genuflection, the schola resumes the Sanctus at the point of the Benedictus, covering for just a few moments the priest’s continued quiet recitation. This part of the

5 The Latin name for this instrument, crepitaculum, means “noisemaker.”
canon is slightly longer than the part that precedes the “consecration,” so there is another minute or two of relative silence before Msgr. Schmitz says, in a barely audible voice, “per omnia saecula saeculorum.” If people in the congregation now add their assent to the eucharistic prayer with an “Amen,” they do so inaudibly.

At the same time, everyone responds to the end of the canon by rising to their feet for the chanted recitation of the Lord’s Prayer by the priest. This Msgr. Schmitz does in a relatively quiet voice, still facing the altar and the consecrated bread and wine. The congregation supplies the final clause of the prayer, “sed libera nos a malo,” and the priest silently says, “Amen.” The prayer said during the fraction of the host is similarly inaudible. Msgr. Schmitz then offers the Lord’s peace to the people—“Pax Domini sit semper vobiscum”—though he does not face us as he chants this aloud, since the rite calls for him to simultaneously sign the chalice three times with a small piece of the host before dropping the particle into the cup. Still, we respond, “Et cum spiritu tuo,” before kneeling again. The priest says the Agnus Dei quietly, and the schola begins chanting it aloud. Although this is a solemn Mass, the clergy don’t exchange the “kiss of peace” on Holy Thursday. And as usual in the extraordinary form, there is no exchange of peace among the people in the congregation.

The schola’s Agnus Dei is short, so the priest’s communion mostly takes place in silence. The priest’s prayers and gestures as he consumes the entire host and all of the wine are precisely specified. But from where I kneel, the only easily observable action is Msgr. Schmitz drinking from the chalice. I’m a little confused by what happens next, because it’s not mentioned in my 1962 missal. I’ve seen it done at other Shrine Masses,
but not at St. John’s. Canon Talarico and Canon Ueda repeat the Confiteor that they said much earlier, when it was one of the preparatory prayers at the foot of the altar. Canon Talarico chants rather loudly, and he can be heard clearly even though he is on his knees and bowed halfway over. It becomes obvious that he and Ueda are saying the Confiteor when they simultaneously swing their upper bodies toward Msgr. Schmitz at the words, “et te, pater,” as they ask the priest to pray for their pardon. In the absence of a deacon and subdeacon, the Confiteor would be said by two altar servers. When Msgr. Schmitz half-turns to chant the “absolution,” everyone in the congregation makes the sign of the cross. The priest retrieves the ciborium full of consecrated hosts from the altar, then turns all the way around to face the people, holding up a host and saying out loud, “Ecce Agnus Dei, ecce qui tollit peccata mundi.” Although he has already received communion, he leads the congregation in saying the response three times: “Domine non sum dignus ut intres sub tectum meum, sed tantum dic verbo et sanabitur anima mea.” The voices in the congregation are subdued, and those who “strike” their breasts at each repetition of “Lord, I am not worthy” generally do so without violence. Still, this prayer to be made

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6 As it turns out, I stumbled into a point of ritual on which traditional Latin Mass adherents differ and occasionally disagree. The Confiteor near the beginning of the Mass is in its more ancient position. According to Joseph Jungmann, the “second Confiteor,” repeated after the priest’s communion, became a regular part of the preparatory prayers for the communion of the faithful between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. He deems it “a rather unnecessary repetition.” Joseph Jungmann, The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origins and Development, New Revised and Abridged Edition in One Volume (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1961), 504–506. See also 203—205. The removal of any reference to a second Confiteor was one of a very small number of changes made to the Tridentine Missal when its 1962 edition was promulgated. Since the 1962 Missal (“The Missal of Blessed John XXIII”)—and not any other—is the missal authorized for use in the extraordinary form, some Latin Mass communities take the view that a second Confiteor is certainly not required and is possibly forbidden. Other communities, noting the absence of an explicit suppression of the second Confiteor and citing the authority of long custom, claim that the practice is not only permitted but commendable. Of the four communities in my study, only the Shrine of Christ the King and the St. Patrick’s Latin Mass community retain a second Confiteor, at both low and high Mass. Confusion over whether or not to say a “second Confiteor” before the people’s communion has led the Canons Regular of St. John Cantius to add a page devoted to “local customs” in the Frequently Asked Questions section of their web-based tutorial on the extraordinary form of the Mass. See “Local Customs,” Sancta Missa, accessed May 30, 2013, http://www.sanctamissa.org/en/faq/local-customs.html.
worthy to receive the Lord is the most extended instance of vocal participation by the congregation in this entire Mass.

Almost everyone receives communion; there are fewer than ten non-communicants among the hundred of us. The schola has come down from the choir loft to receive communion first. They divide themselves between the two kneelers and wait for Msgr. Schmitz to administer the host. Starting at the right, the priest goes from one communicant to the next, each time making the sign of the cross with the host and quietly saying the full Tridentine communion formula—"Corpus Domini Jesu Christi custodiat animam tuam in vitam aeternam, Amen"—before placing the host on a more or less extended tongue. An accompanying altar boy holds a paten under each communicant’s chin, presumably ready to arrest a missed transfer before the consecrated species lands on the floor. When Msgr. Schmitz is finished distributing communion at one kneeler, those who have just received stand and walk back to their seats, where they resume kneeling, and another few people who have been waiting in line take their places for communion.

It all goes surprisingly quickly, and the distribution of communion is almost over by the time the schola, back in their loft, begins singing. First, they chant the final antiphon from the omitted Holy Thursday washing of feet: "Ubi caritas et amor, Deus ibi est..." This is a favorite text of mine, so it seems unfortunate that neither the Latin nor an English translation appears in the booklet. I’ve heard it in both languages at ordinary form Holy Thursday Masses, so I know it’s an effusive hymn urging the followers of Christ to set aside division and controversy and love one another “with sincere hearts.” When they have finished this antiphon, the schola sings the communion chant, which does appear in the booklet. It reprises the end of tonight’s gospel reading, in which Jesus
instructs his disciples to follow the example he gave when he, their Lord and Master, washed their feet.

Msgr. Schmitz, having returned to the altar, prepares the extra hosts to be carried in procession in a few moments to the altar of repose. As tomorrow is Good Friday, no Mass will be celebrated, and the faithful will receive communion with hosts that have been consecrated today. When Monsignor is finished, he chants “Dominus vobiscum,” and we all stand for the post-communion collect. In the ordinary form, Holy Thursday Mass is unusual in that this last collect isn’t followed by a final blessing or dismissal. I’ve always liked the sense of incompletion that this lends to the opening liturgy of the Paschal Triduum. According to my 1962 missal, the extraordinary form similarly omits the dismissal and blessing—and also the Last Gospel. But that’s apparently not what happens here at the Shrine, for Canon Talarico chants the usual “Ite, missa est” after the collect instead of “Benedicamus Domino,” which (in a separate departure from the 1962 missal) the Shrine has been using at the end of Masses during Lent. With the consecrated hosts still on the altar, however, he only turns halfway toward the congregation as he sings this. We respond, “Deo gratias,” then kneel for the priest’s blessing, which follows the dismissal in the extraordinary form. Again, Msgr. Schmitz does not turn all the way toward us as usual, but makes the sign of the cross facing the side of the church, so that his back is not to the Blessed Sacrament as he says, “Benedicat vos omnipotens Deus, Pater, et Filius, et Spiritus Sanctus.” We stand again after saying, “Amen.”

The “Last Gospel” is actually the prologue to John’s gospel, specifically John 1:1-14. It is read by the priest at the end of every Tridentine Mass. I had thought Holy

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7 It would seem that the priests at the Shrine are not following the 1962 missal on these points, but pre-1955 practice. See McGuire, “The Reform of Holy Week,” 239, 412.
Thursday was the one exception to this rule, but Msgr. Schmitz reads it as usual. He is inaudible, but we know when he has reached the beginning of the final verse, for he genuflects at the words, “Et Verbum caro factum est.” Tonight, he genuflects in the direction of the Blessed Sacrament in the center of the altar instead of continuing to face the card from which he reads, set as always on the gospel side of the altar. The congregation genuflects at the same time, then stands back up with the priest.

Ordinarily, a hymn would now accompany the procession of the clergy and ministers back to the sacristy. But instead, while Msgr. Schmitz has been reading the Last Gospel, the altar servers have been getting into place for the Holy Thursday procession to the altar of repose. Now Monsignor replaces his chasuble with a white cope and puts incense into two thuribles, one of which he uses to cense the Blessed Sacrament on the altar. The people kneel as they do when Mass is followed by Benediction. After several silent prayers and genuflections, Msgr. Schmitz puts a humeral veil over his shoulder and arms. He uses this long, white cloth to hold and cover the vessel containing the Blessed Sacrament while he carries it in procession. He is preceded by a cross bearer, candle bearers, and two thurifers who take turns walking backwards in order to incense the Blessed Sacrament. Abbé Georg also walks in front of Monsignor with the crepitaculum, sounding it every few steps as the procession winds its way down the center aisle of the church and back up the side where the altar of repose waits. The Holy Thursday booklet states that “the faithful are invited to join in the procession.” Three African Americans—

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8 In the pre-1955 rite, this vessel is a chalice containing a single host, which the priest alone will consume on Good Friday. However, the Shrine’s service booklet describes a ciborium containing multiple hosts for communion by all the faithful who attend on Good Friday. Thus, it seems that the Shrine is following the 1955 rite (i.e. the same rite contained in the 1962 missal) on this point. See McGuire, “The Reform of Holy Week,” 240–47, 411–14.
a family, perhaps—heed the invitation and get up to follow after Monsignor Schmitz and the two Canons pass by, but everyone else in the congregation continues to kneel in place. Throughout the procession, they chant the hymn *Pange Lingua*, whose text, the booklet notes, was written by St. Thomas Aquinas. Although all of the words are provided alongside an English translation, the singing is not really loud enough to fill the church. The procession is short enough that there is no need to repeat verses before the Monsignor Schmitz arrives at the altar of repose.

After censing the Blessed Sacrament again on this altar, Monsignor deposits the ciborium in a small tabernacle that has been set up at its center. Then he kneels at a kneeler that has been placed for this purpose in front of the altar of repose. Hardly anyone in the congregation has left at this point; all remain kneeling in silence. After three or four minutes, the clergy and servers leave us and to return to the sanctuary. There the priests remove their liturgical vestments before returning to the sanctuary for the stripping of the altars. This begins with Msgr. Schmitz intoning the antiphon for Psalm 21.\(^9\) The booklet provides a translation: “They have parted my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.” The schola chants the whole psalm, beginning with the question echoed by Christ on the cross: “*Deus, Deus meus, respice in me: quare me dereliquisti?*” The entire text appears in the booklet, but only in English translation, so we in the congregation listen without singing along.

Despite the Institute’s efforts to beautify this building that narrowly escaped a wrecking ball not long ago, there is not much to strip from the gutted interior of the

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\(^9\) Modern Catholic translations of the Psalms, such as those contained in the *Nova Vulgata* and the *New American Bible*, number this Psalm 22, in accordance with the enumeration of the Hebrew Masoretic text. The booklet provided by the Shrine and the 1962 missal follow the numbering scheme used by the Greek Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate.
Shrine. Even the main altar is a temporary structure. The table on which the tabernacle, six candles, two reliquaries, and an altar cross are set is not actually fixed to the eastern wall of the church. A large trompe l’oeil painting on the flat wall behind the altar simulates a rounded altarpiece adorned with marble pillars, statues, and a large crown above the pedestal on which the 17th-century statue of the Infant King stands. In truth, this is the only real statue adorning the high altar, and it was taken away before Mass began.

There is little to do beyond removing the altar cloths from the high altar and six temporary side altars (a seventh is being used as the altar of repose). The stripping is completed before the schola finishes Psalm 21. A few people in the congregation now sit down, but most remain kneeling.

One by one, people begin leaving the church in silence. Before they go, many now walk to the front corner of the church where the Blessed Sacrament reposes. They kneel on the hard stone floor for longer or shorter periods of silent prayer. About half of the congregation is still in the church when Msgr. Schmitz and the other ministers return from the sacristy to say compline. Actually, the altar boys just sit and listen while the clerics and seminary candidates chant the office antiphonally in the sanctuary. When they are done, they depart to the sacristy once again, returning in a few moments to set up additional kneelers and resume the vigil in front of the Blessed Sacrament. A few of the faithful are still keeping vigil with them when I walk to the entrance of the church, having spent a few minutes myself kneeling on the floor in front of the altar of repose.

Outside, the air is cold and the street is empty; this is not a busy neighborhood at any time of the day or night. The sounds of the city seem distant, and it’s not hard to imagine
a lonely place at the edge of town where a few disciples try, and fail, to stay awake with their Master.
Monsignor Schmitz’s homily for Holy Thursday Mass at the Shrine is an elaborate example of the attention that Latin Mass Catholics regularly give to the doctrine of Christ’s “real presence” in the bread and wine consecrated at Mass. The other examples I’ve encountered are too numerous to list exhaustively, so a few will have to suggest the tenor of the rest. For Thomas, whom we’ll meet in this chapter, faith in the “true presence” was the one thing he held onto “by the grace of God” during a crisis of faith in college. A young woman at St. Patrick’s who was a “lukewarm” Catholic teenager describes becoming convinced of the real presence as a conversion experience.

I just actually paid attention to what the priest was saying during the consecration. And when he held up the host, I was suddenly felt like, “Oh, okay, that’s really God.” It was kind of an instant moment of belief. But from that point on, I just felt like I need that as part of my life, like to fill this void in my life… I have to eat God every week or else…

A woman in her sixties who describes her first time walking into St. John Cantius as an encounter with everything she “knew as a child” focuses on the location of the tabernacle containing consecrated hosts. “He was right there,” she says, not even uttering the name of her Lord, dwelling within. “I didn’t have to go around. It was a horrible thing going to these churches: ‘Where is he? Where is he?’” Multiple women explain that they veil their hair with a mantilla, not only at Mass but whenever they are in the presence of the
Eucharist, out of “reverence” for the “Blessed Sacrament.” Finally, even people who were not raised Catholic cite belief in the real presence as something that they look for when determining whether or not a particular celebration of the Mass is traditional and sincere. “There’s a lot of intuition,” Rick says, that goes into knowing whether or not a Mass is “grounded in culture” and “serious,” but “people’s attitude towards the real presence is really central, and you can kind of tell.”

It’s no exaggeration to say that for most Latin Mass Catholics, evidence of belief in the real presence is the best indicator of authenticity. Ultimately, a particular celebration of the Mass is perceived as authentic—“real”—to the degree that it takes seriously the reality of Christ’s presence in the Eucharist.¹ Sincere belief in this reality is displayed in many ways, but above all in “reverence” for the eucharistic elements. The individual and collective behaviors that Latin Mass Catholics perceive as reverent will be discussed in greater detail in chapters five and six. The present chapter, however, aims to extend the argument of chapter three in a more theological vein in order to make two additional points about “the sacred” and its relationship to “the real”—points that are obscured by simplistic assimilation of Christian doctrines like “real presence” to universalizing accounts of the sacred as “ultimate reality.” The first point is that changes

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¹ It’s important to note that a Mass perceived as “inauthentic” by this standard is not necessarily deemed “invalid” by those Latin Mass Catholics who employ this term derived from medieval sacramental theology. On the contrary, most would affirm that Christ is really present in the consecrated elements “ex opere operato” even if it appears that no one else at the Mass shares this belief, as long as the requirements for validity are satisfied (i.e. proper matter, proper form, proper minister, and proper intention). Some do question validity when it seems to them that even the priest offering the Mass has no belief in the real presence, for they wonder how such a minister can intend to “do what the church does” in the eucharistic sacrament. I would point out, though, that Thomas Aquinas addresses the problem of discerning a minister’s intention explicitly in the Summa Theologiae, coming to the conclusion that a minister’s “unbelief notwithstanding, he can intend to do what the Church does, albeit he esteem it to be nothing.” ST III, q. 64, a. 9, ad. 1. Unless he expresses a contrary intention, the sacrament is not invalidated by the minister’s lack of conviction because he does not act on his own initiative or by his own power, but “in the person of the whole Church.” ST III, q. 64, a. 8, ad. 2.
to the liturgical forms that mediate the reality of Christ’s presence do not imply a “loss of
the sacred” simply because they destabilize systems of symbolic representation that
assume a “natural” division between sacred and profane.

The second and more positive point is that theology is capable of offering a better
account of the realism of sacramental worship than that provided by a
phenomenologically inspired theory of “natural sacredness.” Theological reflection on
Christian sacred ritual must begin with the proclamation of divine incarnation in a human
being before advancing to claims about the universal capacity of material things to
manifest divine realities. When sacred ritual refers to a decisive historical manifestation
of divinity, extended to subsequent generations through the proclamation of its reality,
then the mediation of tradition becomes central to any account of how that sacred event
is experienced as a present reality. It turns out that a theological account of the sacred that
keeps the unavoidable mediation of tradition in the foreground fits the stories that emerge
from Latin Mass Catholics well. Their attraction to the Latin Mass—and to the “sense of
the sacred” that its adherents display in reverence for Christ’s real presence—is
inextricable from the perception that its words and gestures have been handed down
faithfully from earlier generations who believed in the past what their spiritual heirs
believe now.

Natural Sacredness or Incarnational Sacramentality

Chapter three aimed to show that “sacrality” is neither self-evident nor self-
explanatory. From a sociological perspective, “the sacred” does not correspond to a
universal human experience that defines religion, and it does not supply a “scientific” or
“anthropological” standard by which the suitability or effectiveness of particular
liturgical forms may be evaluated. The point of exposing the artificiality of “the sacred” is not to deny the authenticity of subjective experiences; nor is it a question of causing claims about an objective “sacred order” to appear irrational. It is rather a matter of “knowing at what level of interpretation we must situate this obscure aspiration toward God. Does it concern a recognizable fact in the very content of beliefs or in the symbolism of practices—which the history of religions and ethnology would have a very hard time corroborating—or the meaning ultimately attributed to these phenomena, at the end of a hermeneutic procedure animated by a prior conviction?” Taken to an extreme, the purposeful or unwitting confusion of these registers results in a Christian theological conviction being advanced in the guise of a scientific theory of the sacred. At the same time, this confusion involves a distortion of Christian theology, which I now wish to indicate. For if “the sacred” bears the marks of an ethnocentric concept borrowed from Christian theology and exhibiting at times a distinctly Catholic flavor, it might be thought that the modern “discovery” of its universality merely provides confirmation from the human sciences of something that has been understood by theology for a long time.

Christian theology can hardly dispense with its religious a priori insofar as its core kerygma proclaims the universal significance and accessibility of God’s self-manifestation in Jesus Christ—an event so “sacred” that Latin Mass Catholics genuflect at its recollection in the Last Gospel at almost every Mass. For many liturgical theologians of the past century, the universal character of the sacred is not only a datum

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3 In this vein, one might note the explicit universalism of the “primitive” Christian kerygma contained in the well-known “hymn” quoted by Paul in his Letter to the Philippians. Significantly, though, creation’s acknowledgement of holiness seems to be made in response to the proclamation of Jesus’ name at least as much as to the manifestation of his self-emptying and exaltation by God: “At the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth” (Phil 2:10).
of the sociology and phenomenology of religion, but a truth revealed by the incarnation. Good examples of this can be found in books written just prior to Vatican II by Louis Bouyer and Edward Schillebeeckx, two of the most influential theologians of their generation. In *Rite and Man: Natural Sacredness and Christian Liturgy*, Bouyer uses the work of Otto, Van der Leeuw, and Eliade to explore the “manifold treasures of natural religion” that Christianity has “appropriated” for use in its own rites. He suggests that what the modern study of religion calls “natural sacredness” — “man’s primitive and basic experience of his utter dependence on a God who is both distinct and transcendent” — is from a theological standpoint the “stepping-stone to the Incarnation.”

In *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, Schillebeeckx follows Augustine and Thomas Aquinas in claiming that the “service of God which we know and practise in the Church is as old as the world.”

As an outcome of the quest for some manner of expressing the deeply hidden but authentic religious urge, there has arisen among pagan peoples a motley collection of religious forms and aspirations which in its queries and in its beliefs, and through all its diversity, can still be traced back to a few particular fundamental religious motives… Precisely because they did not have the support of a special, a visible divine revelation, they became a mixture of true devotedness to God, of elements of an all-too-fellible humanity, of dogmatic distortion, moral confusion and finally even of diabolical influence; yet in all of this there was a spark of real holiness which now and again managed to shine forth. Only in their fulfillment in the Old Testament, and eventually in

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4 It’s worth nothing that Bouyer and Schillebeeckx represent frequently opposed camps among theologians of their generation. Schillebeeckx participated in the founding of the “progressive” theological journal *Concilium*, while Bouyer helped to establish its “conservative” rival, *Communio*.

5 Bouyer, *Rite and Man*, 37.

6 Ibid., 11.
the New, does it become clear to us that God was showing us his active concern for the heathen too.\footnote{Edward Schillebeeckx, \textit{Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God}, trans. Paul Barrett (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1963), 7–9.}

The idea that the “primitive” religious experience of “pagans” constitutes preparation for the revelation of Christ as the incarnate Word of God has an extremely long heritage in the Christian tradition.\footnote{For an impressive compilation of historical Christian texts that address this topic, see Robert Fastiggi, “The Church on Non-Christian Philosophy and Religion as a Preparation for the Gospel,” \textit{Reflections on the Philosopher Pope}, October 27, 2011, http://jp2forum.blogspot.com/2011/10/sibyls-magi-athenians-on-assisi-part-2.html.} The Second Vatican Council relied on this heritage at several points to articulate a positive (though frankly supersessionist) understanding of non-Christian religions in relation to the church.\footnote{See, for example, Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church \textit{Lumen Gentium}, November 21, 1964, no. 16; Second Vatican Council, “Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity \textit{Ad Gentes Divinitus},” December 7, 1965, no. 11.}

What must not be forgotten is that for Christian theology, it is the proclamation of the Word made flesh that affirms the sacred potential of the created universe, not the other way around. Faith in the incarnation does not and cannot rest upon an empirically observed cross-cultural penchant for religion. Theology does not proceed from an \textit{a priori} “sense of the sacred” that proves human readiness to apprehend either the incarnation or its symbolic re-presentation in the liturgy. Odo Casel, a central figure in the twentieth-century liturgical movement, is clear about the direction in which Christian theological reasoning moves on this point, emphasizing the theological priority of the signified mystery over its typological signifier.

We may not, of course, carry over our elaborate concepts of Christian symbolism into the ancient mysteries… They were only a shadow, in contrast to the Christian mysteries; but they were a longing, “a shadow of things to come”; the body whose shadow
they cast was “the body of Christ” which showed itself beforehand in the types of the old Testament too… They did not give existence or content; how, indeed, were the weak and poor elements of the world to attain of themselves the mystery of Christ? But they made it possible to give a body to the new and unconceived elements of the New Testament’s revelation.¹⁰

The proclamation of the Christian mystery—whose “content” is “the person of the god-man and his saving deed for the church”—¹¹ can only build upon “ancient” hierophanies by radically transforming a symbolic universe that seemed fixed in its representations and mediations of “sacred” power. While this in no way implies an iconoclastic rejection of all sacred symbols, it does, as David Tracy argues, insist upon the intrinsic inadequacy of all symbolic manifestations of sacred reality save one: “the event of Jesus Christ as self-manifestation of God.”¹² Yves Congar similarly asserts, “Christianity consists completely in the person of Jesus Christ, who is the center and the completion of the history of salvation. We can never allow Christian sacred expressions to be identified simply with those of a natural religious instinct. It is always necessary to verify the validity of sacred signs in terms of the history of the faith and the events by which God has disclosed himself in coming to us.”¹³ Joseph Ratzinger (in a book written prior to his election as pope) also insists that the Christian “sacred” inheres paradigmatically in historical events.

The Christian faith can never be separated from the soil of sacred events, from the choice made by God, who wanted to speak to us,


¹¹ Ibid., 12.


to become man, to die and rise again, in a particular place and at a particular time. “Always” can only come from “once for all”. The Church does not pray in some kind of mythical omnitemporality. She cannot forsake her roots. She recognizes the true utterance of God precisely in the concreteness of history, in time and place: to these God ties us, and by these we are all tied together.\textsuperscript{14}

While an a-temporal cosmic order and a primordial experience of the numinous can be manifestations of the sacred, neither can be so \textit{decisively} for Christian faith. Only “the whole event of the Incarnation, Cross, Resurrection, and Second Coming,” which Ratzinger describes as the essential “liturgical action” of God,\textsuperscript{15} can mediate God’s sacred presence. The signs that ritually re-present this event are “sacred” \textit{primarily} because of what they proclaim about the history of salvation and only secondarily because they derive from natural correspondences in the cosmic order affirmed in that proclamation. “God has acted in history and, through history, given the gifts of the earth their significance.”\textsuperscript{16} Ratzinger’s claim is essentially a paraphrase of Thomas Aquinas, who insists that “sensible things” are “ordained unto sanctification not through any power that they possess naturally, but only in virtue of the Divine institution.”\textsuperscript{17}

Of course, God’s action in history does not simply invalidate the “natural” uses that humans have made of the gifts of the earth—including their symbolic use in what Bouyer describes as “unsophisticated forms of natural religion.” That God’s decisive act of revelation takes the form of incarnation is traditionally seen as a repudiation of iconoclasm and an affirmation of nature’s ability to represent the divine. However, it is

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 173.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 224.
\textsuperscript{17} ST III, q. 60, a. 5.
misleading to say, as Bouyer does, that “the natural symbolism of washing and eating, which of itself has a religious significance” is “simply…amplified and enriched” by Christ’s historical institution of rites of washing and eating as sacraments.\footnote{Bouyer, \textit{Rite and Man}, 64–65.} This underestimates the degree to which the cross and resurrection of the incarnate Son of God overturns “natural” symbolism, which needs not amplification or enrichment, but redemption and fulfillment. In the New Testament, this is expressed in “hard sayings” that challenge or offend the religious sensibilities of the hearers. “No one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit;”\footnote{Jn 3:5.} the bread given by the Son of Man is his “flesh for the life of the world;”\footnote{Jn 6:51.} the man “cursed” to hang on a tree “ransomed us from the curse of the law.”\footnote{Gal 3:13.} Schillebeeckx summarizes well the symbolic reversal implied by the incarnation: “The Son, entering into the fallen world of mankind, has taken to himself precisely the \textit{sarx}; a human existence which is branded with the sign of sin, condemned to suffering and death. This he has done to make the curse itself, the sign of condemnation, into a sign of supreme adoration of God.”\footnote{Schillebeeckx, \textit{Christ the Sacrament}, 31.} The claim that Christ offers himself sacramentally in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass “\textit{in remissionem peccatorum}” already assumes that the “natural” sign of God’s curse—death on a cross—has been eclipsed by the sign of the cross as the occasion of God’s mercy, revealed as such in Christ’s resurrection from the dead.
Paul Ricoeur explains that while the “cosmic symbolism” evoked in pre-Christian hierophanies “does not die,” it is nevertheless “transformed in passing from the realm of the sacred to that of proclamation.” Proclamation of the gospel involves both “radical desacralization” that “unmakes the cosmos that ritual is employed to make sacred” and a “symbolic resurgence of the sacred” in the form of a prophetic word whose “power” consists in its ability to carry the meaning of the “ancient symbolism” well beyond its former limits.  

Tracy perceptively associates this dialectic of sacred manifestation and prophetic proclamation with the tension between “sacrament” and “word” in Christian theology. The historical emphasis of Protestant theology on “word” helps to explain why the critics who detect a “desacralizing” tendency in the post-conciliar reform so often describe it as a “Protestantization” of Catholic liturgy. What this view misses is that the contrast between manifestation and proclamation is not one of opposition or competition that requires striking some kind of balance between holy sacraments and prophetic words. “A dialectical sense, not a juxtapositional one nor any relaxed compromise” characterizes the mutual relationship between word and sacrament that is likewise “present in the entire Christian symbol system.” The proclamation of salvation worked out in the secular time of history does represent a certain “desacralization” in that it insists upon the religious significance of the “ordinary,” now seen not as the “separated profane” but as “the central expression of God’s word and action.” Yet this affirmation of God’s sanctifying presence in history signals not the negation of the sacred cosmos, but its transformation and resurgence in the form of eschatological hope.

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23 Ricoeur, Figuring the Sacred, 57, 66–67.

24 Tracy, The Analogical Imagination, 203.
The word radically negates the profane as profane. Thereby, but only thereby, does the word desacralize and defamiliarize the cosmos… The sacred time of origins (Urzeit) is reformulated and transformed as the proclaimed and promised time of the end-time, hoped for as really new… To speak Christian eschatological language is to speak a language where the religious power of the whole has entered time and history in the decisive proclamation of this particular word and event, where that power has freed the “profane” to become the “secular” and has liberated the present and the future from the exclusive hold of the sacred time of past origins by empowering history and ethical action with religious power.25

The natural symbols deployed in Christian liturgy now manifest the cosmic lordship of Christ that is “not yet” perfected but “already” established under sacred signs that mediate a presence whose reality is affirmed whenever the church proclaims its Lord’s gospel in the “profane” world of everyday ethical action.

It would be a mistake to read such a theological account of the foundational “desacralization” present in the Christian kerygma as a “collapse of Christianity…in the face of contemporary secularism.”26 Of course, someone might adopt a non-dialectical understanding of desacralization that expresses itself as contempt or indifference toward any time or place specially consecrated. Ratzinger attributes this attitude to unspecified “progressives” who say that “with the traditional form of celebrating the Mass the Church has strayed far from the original intentions of the Lord.”

The Lord, they say, held a simple meal of fellowship with his disciples, and he said: “Do this in remembrance of me!” But it is precisely this that the Church does not do, they say; rather, she has made of it yet another sacral cultic ritual; she has reworked the whole thing into the Mass, has surrounded it with richly decorated cathedrals and with an imposing and sublime Liturgy, and has thus altered beyond recognition the simple nature of what Jesus

25 Ibid., 210–18.
26 Ibid., 211.
commanded us to do. The watchword that emerges from such reflections is: desacralization.\textsuperscript{27}

In Ratzinger’s view, these liturgical progressives are not holding together the “already” and “not yet” of Christian hope through a dialectic of prophetic desacralization and symbolic resurgence of the sacred. Instead, they seek to affirm the profane by simply eliminating the sacred.

The cult is no longer something set apart from ordinary life, but holiness dwells in everyday things. What is holy is no longer a special, separate sphere but has chosen to be everywhere, has chosen to make itself felt even in worldly things. Entirely practical conclusions have been drawn from this, right down to some concerning priestly dress, concerning Christian worship and church buildings. This razing of the bastions should be carried out everywhere; nowhere should cult and life be any longer distinguishable one from the other.\textsuperscript{28}

Ratzinger persuasively argues that mere rejection of the sacred \textit{qua} sacred would represent a “substantial misunderstanding” of the New Testament, but he nowhere demonstrates that the “practical conclusions” about worship, architecture, and dress that he criticizes are necessarily motivated by this faulty premise. For the sake of both sociological and theological clarity, careful distinction must be made between critique of particular sacred forms and promotion of desacralization as an end in itself.

Still, it could be that certain practical changes to traditional ritual, despite being based on sound theological and historical principles, cannot be made at all without calling into question the very idea of a sacred cult of divine worship, especially when those changes coincide with a broader process of secularization. This would appear to be the


\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., 99.
conclusion that some critics draw from influential analyses of the liturgical reform written by Victor Turner and Pierre Bourdieu.\textsuperscript{29} However, as Louis-Marie Chauvet points out, the danger of erasing all distinction between the sacred cult and the world of profane life is more than equaled by the danger of allowing the sacred and the profane to become fixed in total opposition to each other. An incarnational theology insists that “the otherness of God is manifested not, as in the hieratic approach to the sacred, in opposition to the world, but as holiness freely communicated to human beings so that they may sanctify the whole world of the ‘profane.’”

This profane to be sanctified in our everyday existence is thus not set in competition with the “sacred,” no more than Christians should live separated socially from the rest of humankind or certain moments of life should be reserved for “religion”—even if, as we have seen, marks of differentiation should appear at each of these levels.\textsuperscript{30}

Symbolic “marks of differentiation” crucially affect a rite’s “credibility,” but they also introduce a risk of reducing the significance of a rite to its differentiation from the profane, in which case sacredness becomes a mere “cipher” for an established social order. Consequently, both liturgical change and liturgical “fixism” can result in misunderstandings, though of different kinds.

It is the social “acceptability” of these changes that is in question: no longer corresponding to the representations that one has “always” had of it, the ritual has lost the symbolic attributes of its legitimacy. The “error” denounced here concerns the cipher or code which governs what one traditionally understands as “Catholic” liturgy. This cipher (not acknowledged as such) seems


to be grounded especially, as Isambert has observed, in the opposition between the “ordinary” (profane) and the “non-ordinary” (sacred). The “error” which causes such confusion lies in the transgression of their opposition, culturally imbibed as fundamental: the host has become ordinary bread; the altar has been transformed into a table; priests no longer wear certain important insignia of their office (such as the chasuble), while lay people seem to have usurped the role that belongs only to priests. In brief, the code has been broken. And when the code is broken, here as in any other language, people no longer understand (“hear”) one another…

The positioning which [rite’s] “digital” nature brings about, through the attribution of identity, status, and role, is essential for the life of the group as well as for that of individuals as subjects. But it happens that one asks no more of it than that. And it can happen that the theological belief in the efficacy of the ritual order is no longer anything else than a sociological belief in the ritual of the established order: what one generously attributes to the gracious action of God is then no more than a religious alibi masking a demand for conformity to the social order, “God” becoming simply a cipher standing for this order. No one is safe from this cultic formalism, generally subtle enough not to reveal itself.  

In short, Christianity asks more of its rites than that they distinguish the sacred from the profane, even though this distinction may, for some modern people, play a significant role in marking rites as “true,” “credible,” or “authentic.” In order to preserve the “cutting blade of the gospel message, without which…the liturgy loses its Christian status,” these rites must also proclaim God’s gracious decision to upset supposedly “sacred” orders while drawing all ordinary, “profane” time and space into the eternity of the reign established by the cross and resurrection of God’s Son. Consequently, Christian theology cannot insist upon one symbolic code fixed as “sacred” for all times and places any more than the sociology and history of religions can provide evidence for the

31 Ibid., 350-51. All emphasis in original.
32 Ibid., 351.
“naturalness” and universality of such a code. From the standpoint of Christian theology, neither the liturgical reform nor modern secularism are responsible for throwing into confusion all comfortably fixed distinctions between the sacred and the profane. The incarnation, cross, and resurrection of Jesus Christ have already done that, and the rebuke heard three times by the apostle Peter—“What God has made clean, you must not call profane” (Acts 10:15)—forestalls every effort to “naturalize” the distinction.

Alexander Schmemann is perhaps the liturgical theologian who most consistently subordinates any discussion of “natural sacredness” to evangelical affirmation of creation’s “sacramentality.” This affirmation is based on the belief that “it is God and God alone that has made this world His symbol, has then fulfilled this symbol in Christ and will consummate it in His eternal Kingdom.” It’s true that Schmemann credits modern “Religionswissenschaft” with discovering a “basic and primordial intuition…that the world, be it in its totality as cosmos or in its life and becoming as time and history, is an epiphany of God.” But he does so only in order to highlight modern theology’s dismal failure to advance a genuinely Christian “proof” of “the sacramental character of the world and of man’s place in the world.” The traditional proof of this is nothing other than “faith in the Incarnation,” that “great and all-embracing mystery of the ‘Logos made flesh.’” Yet because the mystery of the incarnation is inseparable from that of the cross and resurrection of Christ, the “sacramental” consciousness of Christian faith is both continuous and discontinuous with a “natural” religious sense that recognizes God’s self-manifestation in the world as something “sacred” opposed to everything “profane.” The continuity consists in the fundamental human orientation to worship. The Son’s total

commitment to the will of his Father “is the fulfillment of worship as adoration and prayer, thanksgiving and sacrifice, communion and knowledge, because He is the ultimate ‘epiphany’ of man [sic] as worshipping being,” as “homo adorans.” The discontinuity consists in the judgment executed by this perfect act of worship on merely “natural” worship—not on Jewish, Greek, or other non-Christian forms of worship per se—but on any self-serving religion “which assures, by means of orderly transactions with the ‘sacred,’ security and clean conscience in this life, as well as reasonable rights to the ‘other world.’” This kind of religion based on “neat distinctions between the sacred and the profane” is the “religion which Christ denounced by every word of His teaching, and which ultimately crucified Him.”  

Schmemann is convinced that forgetfulness of Christianity’s discontinuity with worship based on “sacrality”—rather than a failure to maintain the “natural” distinction between sacred and profane—has actually been a major support of modern secularism. For Schmemann, secularism is not a generalized denial of “sacrality” but a specific “heresy” that distorts a fully incarnational understanding of Christian “sacramentality.” Bruce Morrill notes that Schmemann regularly summarizes this distortion “as the introduction of the notions of sacred and profane into the Christian liturgy and, thereby, into Christian life.” Morrill continues, “The problem with the language or mentality of ‘the sacred’ is that it limits leitourgia, the work of worship and sanctification, to isolated religious practices.” Such an isolating notion of sacrality is deadly to Christian worship

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34 Ibid., 119–23, 130.

because it substitutes a simple dichotomy for the “antinomical ‘holding together’ of the reality of the symbol, and of the symbolism of reality” that defines “sacramentality.”

Importantly, this is a criticism that Schmemann applies equally to the “liturgical piety” of “rigorists” and the liturgical “experiments” of “liberals.” Both groups are similarly obsessed with liturgical forms, either as unchangeable guarantors of sacramental “validity” or as privately manipulable “audio-visual aids” to understanding the “meaning” of sacraments.

“Sacramentality” has been replaced everywhere by “sacratality,” “epiphany” by an almost magical incrustation into time and matter (the “natural”), by the “supernatural.”

What is truly disturbing here is that such liturgical piety, such understanding and experience of worship, not only is in no way a challenge to secularism, but is in fact one of its very sources. For it leaves the world profane, i.e., precisely secular, in the deepest sense of this term: as totally incapable of any real communication with the Divine, of any real transformation and transfiguration… And there is virtually no difference here between liturgical “rigorists,” i.e., those who stress long services, compliance with rubrics and the Typicon, and liturgical “liberals,” always ready and anxious to shorten, adapt, and adjust. For in both cases what is denied is simply the continuity between “religion” and “life,” the very function of worship as power of transformation, judgment, and change. Again, paradoxically and tragically, this type of approach towards worship and this kind of liturgical experience are indeed the source and the support of secularism.

While Schmemann is specifically concerned with the predicament of Orthodox liturgy in this “secular age,” his comments about the ubiquitous pursuit of “sacratality” could easily apply to current struggles surrounding the liturgy of the Roman Rite. In the following profile, we meet Thomas, a young Roman Catholic man discerning a vocation

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36 Schmemann, For the Life of the World, 129.

37 Ibid., 123–33.
to the priesthood while living at the Shrine of Christ the King and participating daily in
the extraordinary form of the Mass and other liturgical celebrations. His piety, which
might be described fairly in Schmemann’s terms as “rigorist,” nevertheless seems
motivated by a deeply incarnational logic of sacramentality. “God has stepped into
history, in the most condescending way,” Thomas affirms, “in order that we might come
to him through his divine grace, through the sacraments of the Church.” It’s true that
there is a certain “fixism” to his sense of the beauty, holiness, and objective reality of the
particular liturgical symbols employed in what he calls “the traditional form of the
Mass.” Still, if he insists that the material “externals” of the Mass should be “timeless,”
it’s not because he imagines a “magical incrustation into time and matter,” as
Schmemann says, of a supernatural “sacred.” Instead, he explains the ability of the liturgy
to “transcend time” by referring to “tradition,” which he imagines as something “simply
introduced at a certain time in history and then passed down faithfully through [the]
ages.”

Thomas

After sitting through Low Mass, Benediction, a Novena to St. Thérèse, and a 45-
minute lecture on the history of relics of the true Cross, I was ready for the promised
buffet dinner to be served in the basement of the rectory next to the Shrine. I filled my
plate with food prepared mostly by the women and took a seat along the wall of the small
room. No more than twenty people attended the “History of Spirituality Class,” but there
was still not much space at the table. Fortunately, one of the young men who is always at
the Shrine asked to sit next to me, and we were soon joined by two of his fellow seminary
candidates. They were living at the Shrine while discerning a vocation to the priesthood
in the Institute of Christ the King. One was Irish; he wore a friendly smile but didn’t say much. The other two were from Pittsburgh and Cleveland, both recent graduates of Catholic colleges. Paul had attended Christendom College, an “alternative” Catholic school that allowed him to continue attending the Latin Mass as he had been doing since childhood. Thomas, who graduated from Ohio Dominican University, had become a devotee of the Latin Mass more recently. Learning that I was from Notre Dame, Thomas supplied the obligatory wry comment about the threat to my faith that it represented, lightly teasing, but in a comradely sort of way.

Thomas was immediately interested in talking about why he loved the traditional Latin Mass, and he had a lot to say. A few weeks later, at the end of an interview that lasted nearly three hours, he admitted that he had once received back a paper from a teacher with a single comment: “too verbose.” Still, if Thomas is a talker, he speaks softly and with a practiced humility that’s surprising coming from a 22-year-old who is an overachiever in multiple pursuits. He grew up in a “devout home” with a mother who converted after marrying his Catholic father. His father’s brother is a Catholic priest who assisted at a nearby parish when Thomas was a child. His parents sent him to a Catholic grade school, but removed him after fifth grade when they heard that the nun teaching sixth grade was “unorthodox.” They home-schooled him for a year, then sent him to another Catholic school that was “prestigious” if still not very “orthodox.” “It wasn’t as if it was teaching bad things,” Thomas says of the religious instruction he received there, “but in not teaching anything, it was teaching bad things.”

A star running back in high school, Thomas was recruited to play Division III football at a Catholic college, which he describes as a dream come true.
It was the first time that I really ever devoted myself and dedicated myself to something. And that was definitely Providential and formative as well, because I can now, in the spiritual life, relate everything to the dedication that you need to have and the fortitude against all adversity when it comes to something physical like a sport.

So I went, and God has a way of waking you up, you know, in one way or another. He loves your soul, he desires your soul to be with him; that’s why he created you. And he’ll get your attention in any way you want. I was still hanging on—I was showing up to Mass, you know, I was doing things at least externally, as a Catholic should do when it comes to the positive parts of the faith (as in what you’re supposed to do as opposed to what you’re not supposed to do). And I was very successful—that’s a complete understatement—I was very successful as a freshman. And it all went away like that when I blew out my knee. It was just gone: blew up second to last game of the season, and just went out.

“Embittered” by the sudden loss of his athletic potential, Thomas transferred to a big state university. As far as his Catholicism was concerned, he kept doing what he was “supposed to do”—mainly attending Mass—“but without any sort of love, any sort of fire, nothing: not a feeling, not a sentiment, not an emotion, not a true sense of devotion.”

Still, he says, “God kept me coming back, you know, and being there, he started to work at me.”

Unexpectedly, a teaching assistant in a history class at his secular university “single-handedly influenced a real conversion of heart” by making Thomas acutely aware of how hollow his practice of Catholicism had become.

I showed up to class late. I mean at this point very little of me cared about anything; what was important to me was gone... We were studying just right after Christ’s historically documented death, [the] crucifixion. And he asked me when I walked in, “Mr. Fletcher, it’s good for you to join us. I was wondering if you could answer a question I had.” And he said, “What did Jesus Christ hate more than anything?” Or, “What did he despise most?”
And I just kind of sat down, and with a very, very indifferent sort of tone I said, “Hypocrites.” Because I knew the answer. I mean, I knew it, and it almost just kind of was blurted out—kind of how our Lord says, “Don’t worry about what you’re going to say because you will say what you need to say,” and Providence will dictate that. And that started to ruminate with me, because here I was. I had friends that wanted to know about the Catholic faith. I was telling them about it, but I wasn’t living it, you know, outside of going to Mass and things like that. Which, not to—you know, that’s what kept me around, that’s what really started to pull me in eventually. But, “Hypocrites.” It started to really make me think, “I gotta change,” you know? So I started talking with a spiritual director. He started helping me out very, very slowly, very patiently. And very soon after that, I kind of—with almost, you know, the flesh kicking and screaming—embraced a life of devotion, of really avoiding occasions of sin, so on and so forth.

Soon after this “conversion of heart,” Thomas began to “re-discern” a vocation to the priesthood, which had attracted him when he was a small child. He also attended his first Latin Mass, which he’d only “heard tales about” because it was “kind of underground” in the area where he was from. He immediately recognized not only that the Latin Mass was “traditional,” but that he himself had been “born traditional.”

I don’t mean that in the sense of like I grew up that way, but I mean that in a much more kind of metaphysical sense, as like the human soul is such that it desires that which is eternal and timeless. Tradition is, by the fact of what it is, something that transcends time. It doesn’t fit into, like, a decade. It’s timeless, and it’s simply introduced at a certain time in history and then passed down faithfully through those ages… My soul is traditional, and when I found the traditional Mass, it was like finding—like, you know, you’re searching everywhere for something. You don’t really know it, but when you come across it, you know, you just know. It was kind of like that. I wasn’t raised in a house that was adamantly opposed to tradition. Quite the contrary. It was very embracing of it, but just not knowing what it was. And so when I found it, it was like, “This is it.”

Thomas admits that although he was not raised in the Latin Mass, his “conservative” Catholic childhood in many ways prepared him to embrace it.
I should maybe make clear that the *Novus Ordo* kind of atmosphere that I grew up in initially, like up until I was about 12 or 13, was extremely conservative. Like when I say extremely, it desired to be in continuity with the faith from our fathers, not, you know, this idea that the faith is somehow only 40 years old... It had that spirit of valuing what they’ve done and honoring it and wishing to present it and pass it on to the future...

So when all this came back around finally, I saw also an identity with my childhood, with my youth. And there’s a beautiful prayer. The first prayer of the traditional Mass is the Psalm, *ad Deum qui laetificat juventutem meam*—“to God who gives joy to my youth.” And so I’m reading this in a red book—you know, those little missals—and all this is happening almost faster than I can think, and the priest is just going on away with this psalm, and I’m like linked onto this. This is not only *my* youth as in what I remember as a child, but this is, like, *youth*—this is the fountain of youth. This is what ages upon ages have been filled with. This is the means by which all the saints have been filled with grace and have come to know and love and serve our Lord... If you met some of your greatest heroes that children in, you know, good families learn about—the great saints throughout the ages—you wouldn’t be able to say a word to them. Other than whatever manifestations of charity would be able to be translated through the times, you couldn’t really speak with them. But you could pray with them. You could offer the greatest thing that a human person can do with them, and you couldn’t do anything else.

Thomas’s desire to “pray with the saints” causes him to defend, “perhaps over-zealously,” not only the “substance” of the traditional Latin Mass, but its “externals” as well. “The way in which God sanctifies souls in every age is through the Holy Sacrifice, the Mass. And if he’s going to sanctify souls in every age as he said he would through the Church, then in some way, as we’re human, it’s important how things appear or how they present themselves. That, too, will be more or less just as timeless as the sanctification itself.” The traditional Latin liturgy is replete, Thomas thinks, with external “accidents” that seem historically contingent but are nevertheless willed by God for the salvation of
souls. If modern Christians think that they can do without such externals, it’s because they are mistaken about the nature of human perception and knowledge.

The prideful thought that we don’t need externals in order to understand a substantial reality is demonic. It’s inflated with pride, and it’s something that has infiltrated the human mindset for centuries—well, I mean since the fall—but philosophically, in large part in the last 500 years…

We’re called to a great dignity as humans, but we also have to remember that in this life, we have the limitation of knowledge and how it is that we acquire knowledge. And we acquire it through the senses. God has blessed us with these wonderful receptors in order to know things beyond what we sense. But yet, these are the receptors that pick up the information, and so you have to submit humbly to that fact that I’m not an intuitive being and I can’t just all of a sudden Matrix information into my head.³⁸ I have to receive them through the senses…

And so God has stepped into history, in the most condescending way, in order that we might come to him through his divine grace, through the sacraments of the Church. He must, and he did, become that bridge by coming down to our level. And so in condescending to become man, taking on our full nature, including the fact that we need things that are sensual—or sensible—it’s no wonder that he would then through the power of the Holy Ghost move the Church in such a way as to work within the means that he condescended [to].

The material means by which God draws human beings to himself are, in Thomas’s view, even more fixed than the terms “traditional” and “timeless” suggest. The beauty of the things used in the liturgy is “objective” and “real.” They lead people to contemplate God as the source of all beauty—so long as their natural symbolism is not “corrupted” by worldly interests but “perfected” by the activity of the Holy Spirit in the church. Thus, Thomas half-apologizes that his answer to the question of why he’s

³⁸ Thomas’s pop-culture reference here is apparently to the science fiction film, The Matrix, in which the human characters acquire various kinds of information and skills by connecting their brains directly to computers. Andy Wachowski and Lana Wachowski, The Matrix (Warner Brothers, 1999).
attracted to the Latin Mass is not going to be as simple or “subjective” as, “Oh, I liked the incense.” He does like incense, of course, but he believes it’s only natural that he would.

“It’s such a perfect thing that God has introduced to the liturgy all the way back in the time of the Israelites to worship him, because what does it do? It rises to him. It rises to the heavens in such a way that nothing can.”

Liturgy, traditionally, is such that it uses material to glorify God, the best that we have. It uses material things or sensible things, and we need that. I mean, that’s a statement of humility. That’s not a statement of arrogance. It’s not being ostentatious to think that we need the precious materials of what the Old Testament conveys: gold and precious threads and linens and all these things that were used to adorn the temple. We need those things because those are objectively created beauties, and if we wish to understand the source of all beauty, why would we do it apart from the beauty that he’s given us to know him?

Also, interestingly enough, you walk into—there’s beautiful places in downtown Chicago that are clad with marble and gold and chandeliers and everything. There are shopping malls. Material is real. It’s, you know, it exists. It’s here. It’s been offered to us. I mean, the world is an attic full of treasures. I mean, there’s wonderful things, but for some reason, if they think that, “Oh, we should not use those things in church,” well, they’re going to be used somewhere else… The material wealth that God has endowed the world with, if it’s not used for his glory, it’s going to be used in an attempt to wage war against God—futilely of course—but nonetheless, it’s going to be cultivated. It’s going to be used to cultivate a spirit of materialism as opposed to a spirit of devotion, a spirit of worship.

I mean, there’s corrupting influences everywhere, or potentially everywhere. We ourselves are imperfect. We’re fallen. We’re corrupt. But the liturgy traditionally uses those [beautiful] things in order that by receiving them through the senses, our mind might be extended or elevated to he whom we were created to contemplate. And when you pretend that that’s not the case, that is hidden, stealth pride. Because what you’re implicitly saying is that, “I’m angelic because I can intuitively known God by denouncing the things proper to my human nature that he’s given me to know him. I don’t need those. I can do it on my own.” That’s the attitude of Satan. That’s the attitude of the fall.
Although Thomas maintains that human reason can “recognize” the objective beauty of things used in the liturgy, this belief goes hand-in-hand with the claim that human reason alone could not have ordained those beautiful things to such dignified use.

It’s not as if man sat down one day and was like, “Oh, I wonder what symbols I can think of to make man think of God.” God knows very well what symbols make us think of him. And so by introducing those throughout the ages and then perfecting those over time—obviously, after Pentecost, through the power of the Holy Ghost influencing the Church at every moment, we have kind of an unfair advantage, if you will. I mean, people want to know how to get to God. Well, we kind of have the Paraclete on our shoulder… The Paraclete is right here, and God the Holy Ghost is telling us what it is that he wants. You just have to listen.

For Thomas, “listening” to the Holy Ghost is synonymous with listening to the church and particularly to the magisterium exercised by its hierarchs, since they are the successors of the apostles to whom Christ promised the assistance of the “Paraclete.” He calls this attitude toward the church “docility,” and he makes analogy to the docility that a child displays (ideally) toward his mother; indeed, he has adopted the habit of his future religious superiors in referring to the church as “holy Mother Church.”

While Thomas thinks that docility is required in order to recognize the objective beauty and truth of the liturgy that God has given the church, this very attitude makes it difficult for him to advance an objective reason to prefer the extraordinary form of the liturgy to its ecclesiastically approved ordinary form. I asked him, “If the church has accepted the ordinary form of the liturgy as its ordinary form, why not learn to become docile to that form? Why is the extraordinary form important?” He declared this “a scholarly question,” expressing toward it neither hostility nor dismissal but rather incompetence to supply a sufficiently “scholarly” answer. “I couldn’t prudently make any sort of claims as far as that goes between the two different forms other than to concede to
what the Holy Father has said,” namely, that both forms may (and must) be recognized as
expressing the same *lex orandi* of the Roman Catholic Church. Although he’s a cradle
Catholic who has known only the Mass of Paul VI for most of his life, Thomas’s
endorsement of the ordinary form sounds a little cool—almost a *pro forma* explication of
ecclesiological doctrine. “The Church is indefectible, and if she produces a liturgy, then
do we not believe and hold most sacred that the Holy Ghost directs the Church at every
age and by divine providence that she shall never be led astray? People that would object
to the new Mass as such in itself, well, under good faith, I wouldn’t think that they’d be
willing to oppose the words of our Lord himself.”

Since Thomas finds it unacceptable to object to the new Mass “as such,” it’s hard
to pin him down about specific ways in which the extraordinary form of the Mass is
“objectively” superior to the ordinary form. However, his “simple response” to my
“scholarly question” about why he shouldn’t satisfy himself with docility to the ordinary
form of the liturgy suggests an explanation for his preference. “In all things, you have to
be able to evaluate what’s driving them. It’s true that external good might be being done,
but what’s driving that external good might not in itself be good.” Thomas insinuates—
without declaring outright or getting very specific—that certain kinds of “corruption” and
“corrupting influences” have infiltrated the ordinary form. He accuses no one of
deliberate bad faith, but since “everything material is able to be corrupted,” it’s
unavoidable that the liturgy will be exposed to the possibility of corruption when

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39 SP 1.

40 In addition to Christ’s promises regarding the “Paraclete” (or “Advocate”) in the Last Supper
discourses of the Fourth Gospel (see Jn 14:16-16:15), I suspect that Thomas also has in mind Jesus’s
declaration to Peter that “the gates of hell shall not prevail” against the church (Mt 16:18).
entrusted to fallible human beings. Even the “traditional form of the Mass” can be “offered poorly.” Still, “you could very scientifically quantify the number of things that are in the traditional liturgy that preserve it through ages despite our best attempts at corrupting it.” Thomas isn’t a liturgical scholar, so he doesn’t think this is his exercise to perform. What he can do is evaluate the “spirit” with which people approach each form of the Mass, and this brings him back around to docility. “Is it a spirit of docility and reverence and complete adoration of God, or is it a spirit of rebellion and of adoration of self? If you wish to adore yourself, well, then you’re going to be terribly unhappy and problems will result. If you wish to adore God, then there’s no end to that happiness because the target of your entire strength, soul, and heart is himself endless.”

How does one presume to judge the whole “spirit” that one or the other form of the Mass inculcates in its adherents? “You will know them by their fruit,” Thomas says, citing “Holy Scripture.” He doesn’t deny that people committed to the ordinary form have been sincere in their efforts to “solve a problem” that really exists; he just doubts that their approach has been successful. “It doesn’t seem as if souls are coming to Christ, so there’s a problem. I mean, you can observably see that society is not Christian in its behavior, and so there’s a problem. So how do we fix it? Well, now everyone has an idea, but what the Institute presents—and what the real wisdom is—is that we don’t have the idea. She [the Church] has the idea, and we wish to adopt her idea because we know it’s the best one.” If the ordinary form allows or even encourages each culture, each congregation, or each individual to “have an idea” about how the liturgy should be

\(^{41}\) Mt 7:16; Lk 6:44.
celebrated, then this, in Thomas’s opinion, is a historical anomaly and an ecclesiological mistake.

Those that have kind of looked into it realize that sociologically, before recently, liturgy was something that was more passive—in a good way—in the sense of, “Not everyone’s an expert.” Everyone’s become almost a self-proclaimed expert. Even myself, I have to remind myself of it, that you’re studying this; I’m not. I try to be docile to the instruction that I’m being given, but the fact is that certain people are called to be experts in it, and certain people aren’t. And those that aren’t called to be experts in it, truly called by God to study this sacred cult of divine worship—you know, you can’t be a—what do they call it? I can’t think of the word, but you know, just like a casual student of or a casual expert or something.

I suggested that Thomas was looking for the word “dilettante.” He agreed.

Yes, exactly. And that’s something that the most passionate of souls need to learn, is that we need to be, once again, docile to the Church as opposed to kind of wishing to form it in our image and likeness. We’re formed by her just like any good child is formed by the mother… The mother forms the child, and so the Church forms us.

In requiring a “more passive” approach to liturgical prayer, the Latin Mass actually demands more of a layperson than the ordinary form Mass in English does, Thomas thinks. A lot of practice is necessary before the prayers, the postures, and the mental attention become habit. “To assist at the Mass was difficult at first. Yes, everything from the chant, the language, the structure, the postures. I mean, why do I have to do all this? Well, we’re human, and once again, you humble yourself to that humanity to know that your mind is connected to your body in such a way that if you position your body one way, your mind will be inclined to think certain things, and your

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42 Thomas uses the word “assist” here as many Latin Mass Catholics do—not to refer to service at the altar or to any other liturgical ministry, but to the prayerful attention and “interior participation” that all laypeople are supposed to offer from their place in the pews.
soul will be inclined to certain dispositions.” Ultimately, Thomas finds the liturgy’s ability to form human bodies, minds, and souls incompatible with the idea that human beings form the liturgy. “If there’s one main point, it’s that the liturgy is not something man-made. It’s something that exists in heaven. Very, very simply, it exists in heaven and was offered to us. A ‘thank you’ will suffice. And because it is that, it is the tool which God has offered to man to teach him how to be holy… And well, what man creates, man will destroy. What God creates won’t be touched. It will last forever, what he gives.”

**Remembering the Eternal**

Can Thomas’s “main point” that the liturgy is not “man-made” but “given” by God for all eternity be reconciled with the argument that I have been making so far? I believe that it can, because although Thomas imagines the liturgy existing “in heaven,” that conviction depends on his ability to imagine the liturgy here on earth being “introduced at a certain time in history and then passed down faithfully” by human beings with the assistance of the Holy Spirit. While I might suggest different criteria for * authenticating, in the present, the faithfulness of this transmission, the understanding of tradition’s inescapable role in mediating the symbolism of the sacred is the same. My claim is that the sacredness of Christian liturgical symbols does not consist in their “natural” opposition to the profane, the secular, or the ordinary. They are sacred because they symbolically extend to all historical reality the once-for-all sanctification offered through the life, death, and resurrection of the incarnate Son of God.

Since the perfection of this sanctification awaits the second advent of Christ, the liturgy as yet “expresses the ‘between-ness’ of the time of images,” as Ratzinger says. In Trinitarian terms, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is a sacred image of the Son’s eternal
self-offering to the Father in the Holy Spirit. Through the image, “time is drawn into what reaches beyond time,” and the faithful are incorporated into the eternal life of the Trinity as they “learn to see the openness of heaven.” Thus Ratzinger insists on the need for “sacred space, sacred time, mediating symbols.” He explains, “We do indeed participate in the heavenly liturgy, but this participation is mediated to us through earthly signs, which the Redeemer has shown to us as the place where his reality is to be found.”

Yet because the Redeemer chooses to mediate his reality through earthly signs of the present *saeculum* (age, generation), which is passing away, the sacrality of the liturgy is tied not to the permanence of its forms but to their *provisionality*. “The sacred” does not persist to the end (*permanere*) in its opposition to the profane. Instead, during this “in-between time” God provides the means to sanctify every part of human life and “restore all things in Christ.”

Even the traditional Latin Mass—“the most beautiful thing this side of heaven”—remains *this* side of heaven in order to draw humanity into the eternal adoration that all creation, restored in Christ, offers to God. The Mass ceases to be traditional when its particular historical forms are no longer seen as provisional. This does not deny but affirms the *providential* character of the liturgy as no mere invention of human beings. It is the “scandalous contingency” of a ritual marked by the accidents of history and human use that confounds the desire to worship “a God who is nothing but the imaginary projection of ourselves.” It is important to emphasize, as Chauvet does, that avoidance of contingency results in seemingly opposite kinds of excess: on the one

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44 The motto of Pope Pius X, “*instaurare omnia in Christo*,” is drawn from Eph 1:10. The motto of the Canons Regular of St. John Cantius, “*instaurare sacram*” seems an intentional echo.
hand a ritual “fixism” that demands “a sacred of purely external transcendence which tolerates no proximity under pain of sacrilege;” on the other hand an ideological “deprogramming” of ritual that “will allow nothing that is not ‘spontaneous,’ ‘authentic,’ or ‘true to life.’” In either case, “the sacred” is reduced to a mere instrument of social control.

Is it meaningless, then, to insist that the Latin Mass was “sacred then” and remains “sacred now”? On the contrary, this is a very important claim; supporters and critics of Summorum Pontificum are right to single it out. The foregoing analysis only seeks to avoid drowning the specificity of the claim in a sea of questionable assumptions about desacralization and re-sacralization. The slogan “sacred then and sacred now” suggests the possibility of identifying liturgical forms whose ability to mediate a “sense of the sacred” is independent of history and culture. It hides a great deal of cultural work behind a veil of “natural sacredness.” But Pope Benedict’s actual words are not as obscurantist as this slogan makes them seem. “What earlier generations held as sacred, remains sacred and great for us too, and it cannot be all of a sudden entirely forbidden or even considered harmful.” There are two central claims here, and neither one assumes anything about an innate sense of the sacred. The presumed sacredness of the Tridentine does not imply its authenticity; rather the authenticity of the traditional Latin Mass conditions any recognition of its “true” sacramity. Benedict asserts the authenticity of the pre-conciliar liturgy by claiming continuity with the past and credibility in the present.

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45 Chauvet, Symbol and Sacrament, 342–45, 381–82.

46 SP cover letter.
With respect to continuity, Benedict’s statement cannot be a general claim about the permanent persistence of “natural sacredness” in relation to any ritual form that some group at some point in history considered sacred. The history of Christianity—to say nothing of the evangelization of non-Christians—obviously includes the replacement or reconfiguration of rites that “earlier generations held as sacred.” Nor is there any claim that the sacredness experienced by earlier generations will be experienced in the same way by contemporary adherents simply as a result of precise reproduction of the previous liturgical forms. Such a view would be little different than the “antiquarianism” (real or imagined) that some critics attribute to the post-conciliar reform.\footnote{The accusation of antiquarianism is a particularly prominent theme in Reid, \textit{Organic Development}.} The goal of maintaining continuity is not to replicate the experience of the past so that current adherents can access its sacred power. Benedict’s own theology points instead to a desire for \textit{contemporaneity} with “earlier generations” and with the sacred events that are held to gather past, present, and future believers into the one body of Christ—the church—and into Christ’s singular act of perfect worship. The kind of continuity sought here is the “symbolic historical continuity” that both theology and sociology of religion call “tradition.”\footnote{Riesebrodt, \textit{Promise of Salvation}, 77.} Its “distinctive mark” is “to actualize the past in the present, to restore to human lives as they are lived the living memory of an essential core which gives its existence to the present.”\footnote{Hervieu-Léger, \textit{Religion as a Chain of Memory}, 88.} From the perspective of tradition, what makes something that was “sacred then” still “sacred now”? In a word, \textit{recognition}—recognition that what earlier generations did then is the “same” as what contemporary believers do now. How
Latin Mass adherents recognize the continuity of what they do with what earlier generations did is largely the subject of the next two chapters.

This is a good place, however, to introduce a wrinkle in this model of authentication by reference to a continuous tradition. For having set aside “desacralization” as an ill-defined threat to traditional belief and practice, we nevertheless encounter a modern religious crisis associated, as Hervieu-Léger explains, with the relationship between tradition and memory.

By placing tradition, that is to say reference to a chain of belief, at the centre of the question of religion, the future of religion is immediately associated with the problem of collective memory. The possibility that a group—or and individual—sees itself as part of a chain or lineage depends, to some extent at least, on mention of the past and memories that are consciously shared with and passed on to others. Yet one of the chief characteristics of modern societies is that they are no longer societies of memory, and as such ordered with a view to reproducing what is inherited.

As a “way of believing,” religion struggles to be credible when individuals in a society no longer link their actual experiences to collectively shared memories of a religious tradition’s founding events, major witnesses, classic texts, and habitual practices. While modern changes in economic and social structures—including the “collapse of the traditional family”—are key factors in the “disintegration of the imagined continuity that lies at the heart of the modern crisis of religion,” the problem is ultimately hermeneutical, concerning the “social authentication of individual meaning” that is required in any society “in order for meaning to have an effect.” Religious authentication takes place essentially through the “act of recalling a past which gives meaning to the present and contains the future.” Hervieu-Léger calls this act anamnesis—a term certain to catch the attention of liturgical theologians—and she adds that anamnesis is usually (though not
always) “observed as a rite.”⁵⁰ Chauvet agrees that religious rites “form the prime reservoir of the collective memory of the group” by providing “an anamnestic reimmersing of the group into the primordial time where it was born.”⁵¹

This line of thinking suggests that the crisis facing modern liturgical prayer is not an anesthetized “sense of the sacred,” but an amnesiac collective memory. Between these two diagnoses, the fundamental disagreement is about how to explain the credibility of liturgy, which Bourdieu describes as “the belief of everyone, which pre-exists ritual [and] is the condition for the effectiveness of ritual.”⁵² The former view ultimately explains the credibility of liturgy as an intuitive sense that a particular ritual form, by separating the sacred from the profane, corresponds to a “natural” division of the world of experience into these categories. The latter view explains credibility not as the agreement of a rite with religious instinct, but as recognition that the rite belongs within the collective memory of a group claiming to share the same religious tradition. Since the recognition and renewal of memory takes place within ritual itself, it is possible for the credibility of liturgy to become associated with a ritual form or ethos that arises at a specific time and place. Indeed, to a certain degree the emergence of a cultural “cipher” or “code” of credibility is necessary in order for liturgy to function as ritual and be accepted as authentic. “To be recognized as true,” Chauvet says, “rite must be socially and culturally acknowledged as credible.”⁵³ The previously mentioned danger of looking for nothing in liturgy beyond that which is “credible” in the sense of being “socially acceptable”

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⁵⁰ Ibid., 76, 94–95, 123–40.

⁵¹ Chauvet, Symbol and Sacrament, 340.

⁵² Bourdieu, Language and Symbolic Power, 126.

⁵³ Chauvet, Symbol and Sacrament, 349.
remains. But as Isambert explains, significant challenges to standards of social credibility can threaten the belief of the entire group.

The first efficacy of rite appears to be that of causing people to believe in the rite itself. Thus we are essentially facing a question of mise en scène—without any doubt a serious question and one that rejoins that of “cipher”… For behind effects intended to impress, there may be the purpose of signifying not only the supernatural, but also belief in the supernatural as the primordial sense of the ritual assembly. Simple etiquette aside, ordinary clothing, non-sacred objects, non-hieratic speech and gestures can be globally coded as not serious on the part of the celebrant or of the assembly. The belief of each one is nourished by the belief of all: the latter is broken if one believes that certain others don’t believe.54

A fair reading of Summorum Pontificum and the pope’s accompanying letter should acknowledge the effort that the “universal pastor” makes to nourish the “belief of each one” by assuring Catholics who worship according to the 1962 and 1970 missals that both forms of the Mass are authentic expressions of the “belief of all.” In this light, Benedict’s claim that a “sacred” liturgical form “cannot be all of a sudden entirely forbidden or even considered harmful” can hardly be seen as an attempt to describe liturgical history in either sociological or theological terms. More likely, it represents an acknowledgment that the credibility of liturgical forms is tied to cultural codes that may not change at the same pace with which official liturgical reform proceeds. Modern “fragmentation of memory” exacerbates the problem by increasing the likelihood that Catholics who claim to share one and the same Eucharist may end up cultivating very different visions of what an “authentic” Mass looks like. As a “code which originated in the post-Tridentine reform and was considerably reinforced during the Ultramontane

54 François-André Isambert, “Réforme liturgique et analyses sociologiques,” La Maison-Dieu no. 128 (1976): 84.
period of the [nineteenth] century,” the association of the traditional Latin Mass with a “sense of the sacred” is itself an artifact of modernity.

Still, the concern for “the sacred” expressed by Latin Mass adherents has to be taken seriously if we are to understand why they experience certain liturgical forms and performances as more “serious” than others. As I will argue, reverence for rites, objects, and people deemed sacred forms a counterpart to continuity in such a way that the two overlapping criteria supply a cultural hermeneutic for verifying the authenticity of traditional faith and of its representation in performance. Something of the logic that inspires this imaginative joining of “reverence for the sacred” and “continuity with tradition” is captured by Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi when he describes the transformation in Jewish memory and history that accompanied the sealing of the biblical canon. The inclusion of historiographical works in the canon of Jewish scripture represented an unprecedented claim to originality, on the part of a historical record, and to authentic interpretation, on the part of its caretakers. “Every generation of scribes would copy and transmit the historical texts with the reverent care that only the sacred can command. An unbroken chain of scholars would arise later to explicate what had been recorded long ago in a constantly receding past.”

Although the attitude of Latin Mass Catholics toward the liturgical patrimony of the Roman Rite is complicated by modern transformations of memory and by the interweaving of text with performance, its essential logic is similar. Those who treat the

55 Chauvet, Symbol and Sacrament, 351.

Mass with the reverence that “only the sacred can command” are assumed to be its most faithful transmitters and interpreters. Conversely, those who offer Mass in careful continuity with a tradition of codification and interpretation are its most reverent celebrants, fully imbued with a “sense of the sacred.” We can see this logic at work in Barbara’s comments in the following profile. From her perspective, the priests and laypeople who are “serious about really praying in the right way” are also those who can be counted on to transmit “the faith, complete and undiluted.”

**Barbara**

As our interview in the parish hall after Mass was winding down, Barbara gave me a friendly warning, speaking as an experienced parent to a new one.

You need to make sure you know what you know because now you’ve got two kids to pass it on to. And your wife’s got to be on the same page. And don’t trust the school to do it, don’t trust the catechist to do it, because all they do is repeat the truth that their parents have taught them, and if their parents haven’t taught it to them, then it washes over them. It can’t sink in because they haven’t heard it before, and you really need to hear something three times before it clicks in your brain. But especially the little ones, they won’t believe you unless they’ve heard it in some way from their mom and dad. And so you can’t waste those opportunities.

Barbara’s determination not to waste any opportunities to teach her children the faith is what brought her to St. John Cantius at the beginning of Fr. Phillips’ tenure, and she has been there ever since.

She describes her own upbringing as a model of what she wanted for her children. She was born in 1952 “into a family of generations of life-long Catholics.” Being Catholic was as “natural and normal” as “breathing,” especially since her family lived
right next door to their parish church and convent, in one of the city’s west side neighborhoods. Barbara’s mother, who had been in a convent during high school, would take her four daughters to do many of the traditional devotions at the church while her father volunteered for the orphanage that the nuns ran. The girls also did chores for the nuns, who were occasional houseguests. “It was nice to have Christmas, because the nuns would come over and have eggnog at our house, and that’s the first time I realized that they could drink something with alcohol, and like, ‘whoa.’” Barbara describes her childhood parish as “the center of the neighborhood,” where kids and parents would go to socialize in addition to going to Mass.

The Mass was still in Latin when Barbara made her first Holy Communion. She remembers very precisely when the entire liturgy began to be celebrated in the vernacular.

I was in eighth grade when they changed the Mass to English. So I mean, I remember when that happened. We were all happy because now the Mass isn’t quite so long… We had no reason not to [be happy]. Up until that point, we didn’t have to sit and worry… The Church teaches, and we’re faithful, that was the dynamic. We didn’t question our faith. We were told never to question our faith. If you had questions, ask them and get them answered, but not to ever entertain a doubt. And now, you have the priests and the bishops telling you to doubt.

In Barbara’s telling, the changes to the liturgy coincided with social upheaval in America and the disintegration of confident catechesis in the Catholic Church.

I went to a Catholic high school for two years. In the middle of that, Martin Luther King was assassinated, and the city of Chicago rioted and burnt down half the West Side. And that’s where I went to high school. So my parents took us out of that school, and we had to go to public school for the next two years. So then they put us in CCD at the parish. There was no more catechesis anymore. By 1969, we talked about the Vietnam War and hippies and, you know, all that kind of stuff. It was all gone.
After graduating from the public high school, Barbara went to a Catholic college, though even there “they were starting to not teach the faith properly anymore—not complete.” At the time, the theology she was being taught didn’t seem incorrect, just “different.” A few years after college, though, she began to think that something was seriously wrong. She married a man “from a similar background, a lifelong Catholic,” started having children, and moved to the suburbs, where they joined the parish. When the time came, they enrolled their children in the parish school.

I realized that this is a certainly a very different approach to the faith in the classroom than I had been exposed to my whole life. And the more involved I became, the more I was [thinking], “Well, this isn’t really correct.” Many of the mistakes at the time were just those of omission, and then as time went on, actually incorrect theologies being taught… I nicknamed it the “Jesus Cares, Jesus Shares” curriculum. So I thought, “That’s all they’re getting. They think Jesus is a good guy, and he shares what he has, and he loves you.”

Barbara believed that the school was neglecting the basics of Catholic faith, and she was disturbed by what seemed to be taking the place of good catechism. Teachers were taking it upon themselves to teach “sex ed” to her children using “shocking curriculums” that broke “all the rules” established by the Vatican. Catholic schools across the archdiocese had developed lessons based on the American bishops’ 1983 pastoral letter on international peace, which represented “a socialist position at best” and had “no force” beyond that of “opinion.” Simultaneously, her whole parish was participating in the

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57 As the source of these “rules,” Barbara cites a document called “Educational Guidance in Human Love,” which was issued in 1983 by the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (though Barbara simply describes it as being issued by “the Holy Father,” Pope John Paul II). The document does not describe its “outlines for sex education” as mandates but as “guidelines” that “should be adapted by the respective Episcopates to the pastoral necessities of each local Church.” Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, “Educational Guidance in Human Love,” November 1, 1983, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_19831101_sexual-education_en.html, nos. 2–3.
RENEW program, which “was just getting started and traveling around, destroying parishes one after another,” apparently through its emphasis on small faith-sharing groups led by laypeople. Barbara complained to the teachers, then to the pastor, and eventually worked herself “all the way up to the bishop’s office.” There she asked, “Could I please have a school where you don’t teach all these things; where you haven’t gutted the catechism so that you have to shore it up with these other three things? Just give me the faith complete and undiluted—I’ll drive anywhere in the diocese.” According to Barbara, the bishop’s response was, “Sorry, there’s no such animal.”

Consequently, Barbara began home-schooling her children in 1985. This has been her full-time occupation for more than twenty-five years. The youngest of her nine children is expected to follow his brothers and sisters off to college soon. When she began, home schooling “had been a Protestant thing for many years,” but it was still an unusual choice for Catholic parents, and resources for the kind of education she wanted to give her children were scarce. Nevertheless, Barbara doesn’t see how she could have made a different decision.

I had a huge responsibility to make sure that my children learned their faith; they needed to learn it correctly. And I had to put them in a place where I wasn’t in contradiction of the authority, who was the priest, even though he was in contradiction to his authority, the Pope. Or the bishop—usually the priests don’t get away with doing what they’re doing unless the bishop says so. So we’ve always said there’s a middle management problem here. The Holy Father is teaching the right things, and it’s not trickling down here. So I had to do it myself and say, “Wait, I can do better than...” At least if I pulled them out of school, kept them home, I would do no harm.

Still, removing her children from the parish school did not completely solve the problem of having to contradict the authority of priests—albeit “disobedient” ones—in front of her
children. This became most apparent when her family attended Mass. In addition to hearing homilies with which she could not agree, Barbara recalls witnessing a whole catalog of “liturgical abuses” perpetrated by priests.

They would invent as they went along; they wouldn’t follow the prayers in the Missal. They didn’t understand what a rubric meant… We had one priest [who] had a joke occur to him between consecrating the host and consecrating the wine: “Oh, you know, something happened the other day...” I’ll never forget that one.

And then the sermons, of course, were horrific. And I would say my Rosary during the sermons, and my children would sit in the pew and look at me, and they didn’t know, “Can I believe what Father’s saying? Or is Mom going to blow a gasket over here?” So I thought, “I can’t have the children worried about my opinion of the Mass,” because they can’t separate what the sermon is from the rest of it. Or on the ride on the way home: “Father didn’t use the proper form, he didn’t use the proper sacred vessels, he wasn’t wearing his proper vestments, he...”

And then of course as time went on, they got more inventive. They would leave the altar and they would step into the congregation—you’re not supposed to do that. Women would have roles that they shouldn’t have had. At the time, altar girls were not allowed, and girls were everywhere on the altars—it was a disobedience, and we all knew that; that wasn’t even something that we had to read a book over. And Father would say things like, “I’m a priest, but I’m no different than you are.” So he was diminishing his own role as an ordained priest, and putting us all on the same level... And if the priest can do whatever he wants, then so can you.

Unable to trust the priests in her own parish, Barbara looked elsewhere for guidance in teaching her children the Catholic faith. She attended courses in Catholic catechesis taught by Fr. John Hardon, SJ, a prolific author and speaker who had a reputation for orthodoxy.\(^{58}\) Frequently, she and the other students would bring him

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\(^{58}\) Hardon is probably best known for his *Catholic Catechism* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975) and for training many of Mother Teresa’s Missionaries of Charity to be catechists. Barbara identifies him as “Mother Teresa’s spiritual director.” He died in 2000, and a cause for his beatification and
questions and complaints about what their parish priests had done at Mass. “In those days, liturgical abuses were shocking to all because there were enough of us around then that knew that they were abuses. Nowadays, I don’t think too many know that they are abuses.” At one of these classes, Barbara found herself discussing these “abuses” with a substitute teacher, a priest about her age who had just been made pastor of St. John Cantius Parish in downtown Chicago. “Well,” Fr. Phillips told her, “come to my parish.” Barbara protested, “That’s way downtown; we don’t live there anymore.” But she had a six-year-old son who needed to make his first Holy Communion and Fr. Phillips needed a catechist to help prepare children to receive the sacraments. Almost before she knew it, Barbara was running the CCD program at St. John’s, for the parish had virtually no “programs” in 1988, save the one that mattered most to Barbara’s family: “We came here because we were expecting a faithful Mass.”

Thus, Barbara became one of the early pioneers who remember when there was no regular Tridentine Mass at St. John Cantius, even though there was, strictly speaking, a Latin Mass every Sunday.

When Father first started, he started the Novus Ordo. And we were just clamoring for something standardized. You know, you don’t know what’s going to hit you tomorrow, because we knew these liturgical abuses… So we were grateful because there wouldn’t be any made-up common prayers. The eucharistic prayer would be read right out of the book, and it would be read in Latin, so everybody could relax. You didn’t worry that you just sat through an abomination or a desecration. Because when you see a person who doesn’t have the same faith—or any faith—take it upon himself to do what he has no authority to do, it destroys your trust and your confidence, and it also makes you mad because, darn it, you’re not supposed to make me have to go find another parish.

canonization was initiated in 2005 by Cardinal Raymond Burke, who currently directs the Marian Catechist Apostolate that Hardon founded.
Happily, in Barbara’s estimation, she never had to go looking for another parish after finding St. John’s. Although she thinks its liturgical life has benefited from vastly increased attendance, the music program, the restoration of the church, and the abundance of priests, she attributes her attachment to the parish more to what has not been done at St. John’s than to anything that has been accomplished there.

I think that too many priests are trying to form the liturgy around whatever congregation they have, almost making it like the flavor of the neighborhood, like this parish is more ethnic, so we’re going to go with this ethnic tradition. And pretty soon you’ve got Masses in Spanish and Polish and Korean or Filipino… I thought, you know, “Come to St. John’s” “Oh, that Mass is in Latin.” I said, “Yeah, we’re all equally disadvantaged. But guess what: it’s called a Missal.”

If it’s an Italian or Polish parish, they’re going to have a devotion to a particular saint from that country—those are all lovely, those are things that kind of make it a tapestry, in a sense. But the seams need to be all the same, and unfortunately that’s the problem.

We all ended up here mostly for the same reason: for the Mass… Not everybody was convinced right away, especially the younger mothers and fathers… They come for the pretty church, you know, but it’s not worth the hour drive or whatever. What they didn’t realize but I think they grew to know over time [is that] they’d come for a while and then they’d go somewhere else, and it was unnerving because you’d come to believe that the obedience that is expected of us, there’s a benefit to that. That you can’t create your own church; you need to mold your self around it. You have to put on the mind of Christ; you don’t expect him to put on yours.

Barbara feels confident that a priest who says the prayers of the Mass in Latin is doing only what he’s supposed to be doing, and this in turn makes her feel “comfortable” about what she’s supposed to be doing, both at Mass and in the rest of her life. “It’s very hard to figure your life out all the time, to figure out, ‘What do I have to do?’ or ‘Where do I want to be?’ or ‘What do I want to do?’ You don’t have to do that. You just come
and say, ‘I’m going to try to be better at this standard,’ instead of, ‘What is a standard?’”

Barbara rejects the idea that standard to which she aspires is greater participation, if “participation” means taking part in the “action” of the Mass.

The whole thing is to try to change what I’m thinking about [the Mass]. I’m not going to change Christ; I’m not going to change the action that the priest is doing. I can’t do any of that; I’m only a witness to it. And the new—the weaker text makes you think that you’re participating in that. Well, you’re not. Because that’s happening without you. I can’t get up there and do a darn thing. I can adore from the pew. I can participate from the pew. I can receive communion. I can pray with the Church. I can pray with the communion of saints. I receive; I don’t give anything to this, because the priest is going to do this whether I’m standing there or not—and even if I can’t do it. And so I have to understand that I’m not participating in the sense of making it better. I’m receiving the grace from this, and I’m hopefully to become a better person, to make my family life better, to make my world better, to get to heaven.

So some of this is so misleading because of the wording, and it makes you think that you can be the priest, or you can do his duty. Which then people don’t bother to come because, “You know, I love God; I can pray at home.” I have a cousin that says, “You know, I can go out in the forest preserve and pray on Sunday morning.” And I thought, “You know, other people do other things in the forest preserve on Sunday morning, and I don’t think it’s praying.” (laughs) If God wanted you to believe he was a blade of grass, he would have told us that, and then we could have sat and adored grass.

Despite her criticism of the “weaker” text of the “new” Mass—she especially has in mind the 1970 English translation of the Missal of Paul VI, which had not yet been replaced with the 2011 translation when we spoke—Barbara has probably attended the English Mass at St. John’s more often than either the Tridentine Mass or the Latin Novus Ordo. This is partly because of her involvement with the CCD program, but also because she didn’t want her children to be exposed to the Latin Mass exclusively, especially given its limited availability elsewhere.
I wanted to train my children in the English Mass, so that they could go anywhere and know what Mass was. And if they eventually wanted to spend time at a Latin one, then it was their call. And now they’re perfectly comfortable at whatever Mass they’re at. The point was, I thought, “This is the Mass the Pope says; this is what I’m training you in.” Because there was so much chaos—how do you pick and choose? And there are some that their kids come to the 12:30 [Tridentine Mass] all the time; that’s all they come to, and [that’s] perfectly fine. But they’re going to go to college someday, and I didn’t want them to freak out. I didn’t know at the time either how long this was going to last. Because it was pretty much at the discretion of Cardinal Bernardin, and we all knew he was no friend to us. So I didn’t want them to be so selective that they couldn’t understand that the Mass is the Mass, and done poorly it’s still the same Mass.

As it turns out, only “one or two” of Barbara’s grown children now prefer the Tridentine Mass. More importantly to her, “they all married faithful Catholics, and they want to be faithful Catholics” irrespective of which Mass they attend.

Nevertheless, Barbara insists that her own preference is for the Tridentine, which she has been attending almost every Wednesday night for well over a decade. This Mass is connected to the St. Monica Novena, which Barbara prays for the sake of “family members and friends who have left the church, left the faith.” She does not usually bring her husband or children along. Freed from distractions, she is able to concentrate on the prayers of the pre-Vatican II missal (in English translation), which she finds “richer” and “more meaningful” than those of the newer missal. “Just one little old proper is just beautiful. One little prayer inside of it is just lovely, and it takes you to a level you weren’t. So when you’re not busy trying to “participate,” you can more concentrate on that.” This does not mean that Barbara’s appreciation for the Tridentine prayers resides primarily at the level of intellect. “I’ve come to this over the practice of it, not because I looked at the two and decided one or the other. It’s in the doing of it that it becomes part
of you. And there is better teaching from the old one. The two can be just as beautifully
done, and most people wouldn’t know the difference because they don’t know what they
don’t know.”

If most Catholics don’t know what they’re missing, it’s not the fault of the newer
missal in itself, but of the “Protestant approach” to its celebration that is usually taken.
“It’s the priest walking around, standing there, and you’ve got a woman shouting at you
in the microphone about greeting your neighbor. They do everything they can to distract
you from trying to turn inward and to recollect yourself.” Barbara seems aware that her
claim that “you’re not supposed to be here for your neighbor” is likely to be criticized as
privatization of a fundamentally communal faith, for she offers a defense without being
prompted.

The community that we’re searching for is [that] we’re all there for
the one purpose. And the congregation is the community to adore
God. You know, the community is us to Him, not us to each other.
Our communion—because we are one communion under one
head—is that we all pray the same prayers, we all—I hate the word
“worship,” because the Protestants kind of stole it, but—worship
God in the same way under one head, with one faith, with one
Mass…

The community that we’re looking for isn’t community with me
and you; it’s community with me and God through the corporate
worship of the Mass. And the community part comes in
Communion, when we receive Communion, receive the Word and
Communion.

In Barbara’s view, a misplaced emphasis on the community of “me and you” distracts
Catholics from the “sacrificial” character of the Mass and turns it into a “social
engagement.” To her, this actually represents a more negatively self-centered approach to
the Mass that replaces inward “recollection” with satisfaction of various personal
preferences.
The focal point becomes each other. You know, instead of me working with myself on what I need to work on, and attaching my petitions and my prayers and my sacrifices to the Holy Sacrifice going on, it becomes an exercise in, well, taste: “I don’t like this; I don’t like that. He said this; he said that. He offended me with this.” Then we have to get comfortable pews so people won’t leave, and we have to get children involved in things that only adults should be doing…

You can attain spiritual growth, if it’s your desire, at a place that isn’t going to change every week, that isn’t going to depend on the mood of the priest every week, that isn’t going to depend on whatever group is having a party that week.

As far as Barbara can tell, the Mass in most Catholic parishes “just keeps changing, changing, changing, changing at the whim of whoever”—“that’s all we’ve been doing since ’65.” She thinks that when the Mass is changing all the time, it is harder for Catholics to concentrate on changing themselves. They are led to believe that the Mass is “about them,” which to Barbara is the opposite of recognizing that the Mass is “sacred.” Asked what St. John’s has to offer Catholics that they won’t find elsewhere, her first response is “the understanding of the sacred.”

What does “sacred” mean? The word is sort of misused. [It means] that the church—specifically the tabernacle where the Lord is present—is a very different place from anywhere else in your whole life. And it isn’t about you in this room; it’s about Christ; it’s about learning to be like him.

Inevitably, Barbara believes, Catholics who attend the Latin Mass get used to this understanding of the sacred and to the “reverence” it demands of them. Moreover, parishes that offer a Latin Mass are bound to see it grow as a result of “the graces that come from (A) obedience and (B) from people who are serious about really praying in the right way.” Even if people do not immediately become attached to the Latin Mass,
“they’re going to appreciate a Mass that’s said with more reverence, and with more respect, and with more obedience to the texts.”

Because the need is in all of us, and I think that once they understand that this Mass isn’t about you, their expectations will be changed, and they won’t want to expect that I’m going to get something out of it. They’ll understand the need for me to go give something to it. You know, because it’s so reversed—it’s, “Well, I get nothing out of it.” I mean, I guess they’ve been saying that since there’s been teenagers, but, “I don’t get anything out of it.” “Well then maybe you’re not putting anything into it.” You know, it’s not about you. Ultimately it is, but Christ doesn’t need to keep doing this—we need to have him keep doing this.

So I guess I would say even if you didn’t attach yourself to a love of the old Mass, what you will attach yourself to is love of the respect and devotion and the way it’s done. And you will change your opinion of the church, of the tabernacle, of the sanctuary, of everything when you understand that it isn’t about you; it’s not a human invention.

Barbara is confident that current interest in the Latin Mass is not going to “blow over,” even if in most places it will “have to be done kind of quietly and without a lot of fanfare.” She advises people who want to see all Masses celebrated with more “reverence” to start small. Even if they only manage to get one Saturday Latin Mass a month, the reverence is going to “trickle up” into everything else the parish does. “I think that will work,” she says, “I can see it happened here.”
I’m not the only person who finds it hard to be fully awake at seven forty-five on Sunday morning, but there’s nothing to be done for it. St. Patrick’s Parish celebrates its regular Sunday Mass in English at ten-thirty, so a later start for the Latin Mass would probably result in a collision, especially on days like today, when five girls and three boys who belong to the Mother Theodore Guerin community are receiving their First Holy Communion. Today is the Solemnity of the Most Precious Blood, celebrated in the extraordinary form on the first day of July, so at least the sun is up.

I’ve made the effort to arrive ten minutes early (better than usual) in order to rehearse the introit and communion chants with the schola. I’ve been doing this for a few months now. James, an architecture student with some conducting experience, proposed the idea to a few young men in the community last fall when I happened to be around, and we finally got organized in time for Lent. We sing at most of the High Masses, which are offered only twice a month, at least until the joint Latin Mass community in Fort Wayne and South Bend receives the second chaplain they’ve been promised by the Priestly Fraternity of Saint Peter. James is away for the summer and fall, though, and

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1 James usually says “chironomy,” not “conducting.”

2 The Fort Wayne half of the Mother Theodore Guerin Latin Mass Community became a “personal parish” with its own church building a few months later. Fr. Gabet was made pastor of the parish while continuing to serve as chaplain for the community in South Bend. The FSSP sent a newly ordained priest to assist Fr. Gabet in both locations, allowing high Mass to be celebrated every Sunday in South Bend.
I’m not sure whether he’ll be returning. While he thinks it’s important to teach Gregorian chant to anyone willing to learn, he affiliates himself more closely with an SSPX chapel almost an hour away, and it’s not easy to get to two Masses every Sunday. I thought his departure would mean the end of the schola, but John, a somewhat more permanent member of the community, has taken responsibility for organizing practices.

I walk into church carrying a binder containing pages from an out-of-print edition of the Liber Usualis that the Church Music Association of America has made available online. Inside the small vestibule, there is a line of people waiting for the chaplain, Fr. Gabet, to hear their confessions before he begins the Mass. Walking past them and into the nave, I hear someone leading the other early arrivals in a Rosary. I tarry just long enough to bless myself with water from the small baptismal font at the back of the church. Next to it is a table with the red booklet missals from the Coalition in Support of Ecclesia Dei, some flyers containing the propers for today, and a few copies of the processional and recessional hymns. I go back into a separate corner of the vestibule, where the schola usually runs through the chants one last time before ascending the stairs to the choir loft. Six men, all my age or a little younger, make for an unusually large group. This helps to fill out the full choir, which would otherwise be composed mainly of women’s voices. I had been leaving the loft and returning to the pews after doing my bit with the schola, but it became clear that an additional male was more than welcome to stay for the whole Mass, regardless of how little he had practiced with the choir. As it turns out, the choir practices even more sporadically than the schola does, and the only significant changes in repertoire occur when we shift from one liturgical season to the
next. Since the same songs are repeated at every high Mass for months at a time, it took only a few Sundays singing with the choir to learn nearly all of the music.

So presently, when we hear the organ start in on “Heart of Jesus, Hear,” I quickly ascend to the loft with the men of the schola, singing my bass part as we walk to our places. The choir has been singing this song during the entrance procession for several weeks now—probably since Pentecost. In my imagination, at least, the tune and lyrics epitomize the most sentimental style of Catholic congregational hymnody from the first half of the twentieth century.

Sweetly we’ll rest on thy Sacred Heart,
never from Thee, oh, let us part,
Hear, then, thy loving children’s prayer,
Heart of Jesus, Heart of Jesus, hear.

It’s hard to tell from the choir loft whether anyone in the congregation sings along, but even when I was sitting in the pews I rarely heard any voices other than the choir’s. The hymn lasts just long enough for the priest and four altar boys to process from the back of the church to the front. Fr. Gabet wears a red chasuble for today’s solemnity. A red cloth also hangs down the front of the high altar. To reach this original altar, Fr. Gabet has to walk around the newer freestanding one in the middle of the sanctuary. There is no asperges today. I’m not sure why—perhaps it would Mass too long with the addition of First Communion. Ordinarily, Fr. Gabet performs the sprinkling rite with gusto, if not with a lot of water, shaking the aspergillum vigorously as he walks down the main aisle and back up. Today, instead, he begins the inaudible prayers at the foot of the altar immediately.

The six of us in the schola step to the front of the loft to chant the introit. Robert has sung more chant than the rest of us, but he’s also our only real tenor. He intones the
incipit, choosing a starting pitch that makes the range a bit too high for me to sing comfortably. With this many voices, though, it proves not to be a problem. It’s a relatively long introit, with an antiphon taken from the Book of Revelation and a verse from Psalm 88. To be honest, though, I’m not very conscious of the meaning of the Latin text while I’m singing it. I may have looked at a translation earlier in the week, but there isn’t one in front of me now, and my mind is focused on singing the right notes. James, our erstwhile chant instructor, would undoubtedly say that my lack of attention to the text is not ideal, since its meaning is supposed to inform how one sings the chant. On the other hand, he also claims that the melodies are divinely inspired and naturally lead listeners to a deeper understanding of the text, so an accurate performance seems at least as important as a comprehending one. In any case, we get through the antiphon, verse, *Gloria Patri*, and repetition of the antiphon without making any major mistakes, and we count this as having done our job more than adequately.

Fr. Gabet finishes the preparatory prayers before we finish the introit, so he sits down. The congregation, which had been kneeling, follows suit. As soon as the men are back in their usual places in the choir, Ellen, the choir director, signals the organist (who is also her teenage daughter) to begin playing the *Kyrie*. This is a four-part setting from the *Mass of the Holy Cross*, written in 1908 by a German immigrant and church musician named Alois Bartschmid. It’s substantially shorter (and probably less demanding) than the settings typically performed at St. John Cantius—no longer, really, than the Gregorian chant settings that the choir here sings at other times of the year. Still, it remains more repetitive than the *Kyrie* at an ordinary form Mass, for we sing “*Kyrie eleison*” three times, followed by “*Christe eleison*” three times, and finally three more
repetitions of “Kyrie eleison.” During the final “Kyrie eleison,” Fr. Gabet rises from his seat and returns to the altar. The congregation also stands and waits for the priest to intone the Gloria, which he does as soon as the last note of the Kyrie has sounded: “Gloria in excelsis Deo.” There is a long organ introduction before the choir completes the sentence, singing, “Et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis.” By this time, Fr. Gabet has nearly finished reading the entire Gloria quietly at the altar. When he does finish, he returns again to his seat, and the congregation sits down with him.

When the choir finishes singing the Gloria, Fr. Gabet and the congregation stand again for the reading of the collect. When he chants, “Dominus vobiscum,” Ellen signals us in the choir to respond, “Et cum spiritu tuo,” though it seems likely that the congregation would sing this in unison with or without our help. Fr. Gabet chants the collect in a loud voice, facing the altar. After the congregation’s “Amen,” he continues in a similar voice, chanting the epistle as all of us in the choir sit down for the first time along with the congregation. The epistle is taken from the Letter to the Hebrews, and since it will be repeated in English before the homily, many of us in the loft and in the congregation don’t bother to look at a translation while Father chants in Latin.

I take a moment to survey the congregation from above. Total attendance looks to be around 150, which is as large as I’ve ever seen at St. Patrick’s. More often, I count between seventy-five and one hundred congregants. I suspect that some of today’s attendees have been invited for First Communion. People apparently attending with their families substantially outnumber singles, and there are more children in the congregation than senior citizens. All of the congregants are white. The building is already quite warm; so few men are in jackets, though a majority of them wear dress shirts and ties. Nearly all
of the women and girls wear skirts or dresses, and about half of them cover their hair with a mantilla or a hat—a somewhat smaller percentage than usual, owing perhaps to the presence of more women who are not regulars at this Mass.

As soon as Fr. Gabet finishes the epistle, the women in the choir chant the gradual and alleluia. They use a simple psalm tone for this. The actual Gregorian settings are at the opposite end of the chant spectrum in terms of difficulty and length. Routinely, after struggling to learn the introit, someone at schola rehearsal will suggest that we tackle the gradual. It’s something of a running joke, though I think most of the men nevertheless believe that the long-term goal is to have the schola sing all of the chant propers. Anecdotally, I know that some people already complain about Mass being too long, so I’m not sure they’d be thrilled to sit through the Gregorian gradual. As it is, the women breeze through the gradual and alleluia in less than a minute. There is still enough time for the priest to say these texts quietly at the altar, for an altar boy to move the missal from the epistle side of the altar to the gospel side, and for the priest to silently petition God for grace to proclaim the gospel. When the women finish, Fr. Gabet announces the gospel reading, and the congregation stands. Most people sign their forehead, lips, and breast along with the priest. The reading is taken from the Gospel according to John. It is prefaced, as the gospel always is at the Tridentine Mass, by the phrase, “In illo tempore…” The pericope follows, chanted in a loud voice. There is no concluding acclamation as in the ordinary form. When he reaches the end of the reading, Fr. Gabet removes his maniple, genuflects, receives his biretta from an altar boy, and walks to the ambo as the congregation sits down.
Speaking from the ambo, Fr. Gabet repeats the readings in English. Those of us who didn’t already read a translation now learn that both readings revolve around the theme of today’s feast: the blood of Jesus, offered for the forgiveness of sins. The epistle from Hebrews contrasts the eternal effectiveness of Christ’s sacrifice with the temporary cleansing previously obtained through the sacrifices of the Mosaic law. The gospel reading from John, which we stand to hear again in English, begins with the death of Jesus on the cross and ends with blood and water flowing from his pierced side. After reading it, Fr. Gabet asks us to be seated.

Before he can deliver his homily, Fr. Gabet always has a long series of greetings and announcements to make. I’ve come to expect that he will repeat the main point of each one at least three times. The first announcement today is about the six children who will be “receiving our Lord for the first time” in Holy Communion. Specifically, though, Fr. Gabet talks about the plenary indulgence that is available to everyone “simply by being assistant and praying for these young people.” He reminds us that the usual conditions apply: “confession, Holy Communion, prayer for the Pope—Our Father and Hail Mary suffice—and then also detachment from all sin.” He thanks the parents of the first communicants, saying how “impressed” he is that their children “know their prayers” and “know everything that they need to know to receive our Lord worthily today.”

Next, Fr. Gabet announces that a second FSSP priest will finally arrive next week to assist with the care of the Latin Mass communities in Fort Wayne and South Bend. The initial benefit of this long-awaited help will be more time for confessions before the priest has to get on the road for the two-hour drive to the other church. “Down the
stretch,” they hope to offer more weekday Masses. “And eventually,” Fr. Gabet says, hedging profusely, “eventually, if there’s enough support—enough prayers, enough financial support—we hope of course, in the future—I’m not talking about tomorrow—but in the future, that we’ll have our own apostolate, our own parish, right here in South Bend.” He concludes by mentioning three times in rapid succession that there will be a potluck breakfast after Mass next Sunday (as there is almost every Sunday) at which this newly ordained priest will be giving first blessings.

Fr. Gabet gestures to a small table set in front of the ambo.

Just a reminder that we have the relics of the crucifix here. This is a very special relic; not very many churches have that. But here at St. Patrick’s, we do have it. The Holy Cross fathers who were here before had left this relic of the Holy Cross—an actual splinter of the true cross. So what we do is we also genuflect in front of that. I ask you to please not touch it, but just [kneel or genuflect] in front of it to ask God’s blessings there too, from this precious relic.

A few weeks ago, when he first discovered the small, gold reliquary in the sacristy, Fr. Gabet made a similar, but much longer announcement.

“Finally,” Fr. Gabet reminds us, “this Wednesday is the Fourth of July.” The holiday will conclude the “Fortnight for Freedom” that the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has organized to protest the “contraceptive mandate.”3 A few weeks ago, Fr. Gabet devoted over fifteen minutes to an announcement excoriating the Obama administration for the mandate—more time than he gave to the homily that followed. Today’s exhortation is shorter.

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3 In February 2012, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services determined that only “churches and houses of worship” are exempt from the Affordable Care Act’s mandate that all employer-sponsored health insurance plans cover the cost of contraceptive treatment. Since then, the bishops have made a very public argument that requiring other Catholic organizations to comply with the mandate violates the right of Catholics to freedom of religious expression.
Hopefully each one of you has been praying for our country and for our religious freedom here. If you haven’t, please, please join in; we need it very much. As you know, the Supreme Court has passed the, uh, Health Care Act. It said that it is constitutional. Therefore the HHS mandate—that might go through as well. We as Catholics might have to pay for contraceptives, for sterilizations, for abortifacients. And you know as well as I do, we can’t do that. We see a train wreck ahead if we don’t pray. What better day to pray than on this Feast of the Precious Blood of Jesus, that has won our salvation? So please, pray for our country, for our leaders, and for God’s help in this matter, that we will continue to have the religious freedom that our forefathers gave us and expressed right there in the Bill of Rights. Especially this Wednesday, the birth of our country, pray for our country.

After this, Fr. Gabet pauses for a solid fifteen seconds while he arranges his homily notes on the ambo. The announcements took a little over six minutes; the homily that follows lasts another fifteen.

Per his custom, Fr. Gabet begins his homily by quoting a thematic verse from one of the scripture readings—in this case, the final line from today’s gospel, which testifies to the blood and water that flowed from the side of Christ. Only after reading this verse does he make the sign of the cross, still speaking in English. For the first few minutes, he talks about what today’s feast commemorates, namely, “all the times that our Lord shed his Most Precious Blood.” He lists the occasions, beginning with Jesus’s circumcision, then skipping ahead to his agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, the scourging at the pillar, the crowning with thorns, and the crucifixion. Jesus, moreover, “has continued daily to offer up that same Precious Blood for nearly two thousand years in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass upon our altars throughout the world.”

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4 Three days prior to this Mass, the Supreme Court issued a ruling upholding the main provisions of the Affordable Care Act.
Fr. Gabet addresses the next ten minutes of his homily directly to the first communicants. Its theological content—a standard Scholastic account of real presence and of the closely related doctrine of eucharistic concomitance—doesn’t attract my attention as much as the way in which he presents his catechesis does. While he offers reasons and explanations, the predominant mode of instruction is the repetition of two formulaic phrases that he introduces right at the start. “First communicants, the consecrated host is all of Jesus that you will receive today. As you told me, it is body, blood, soul, and divinity.” In the remainder of the homily, Fr. Gabet will repeat the words “body, blood, soul, and divinity” no less than seventeen times, and he will say “all of Jesus” nine more times. Though his speaking style is always repetitive, Fr. Gabet seems especially determined that the words “body, blood, soul, and divinity” will irresistibly spring into each child’s mind when they all receive communion for the first time today. He tells them, “Remember when I asked you that: ‘What do you think it is?’ You told me, ‘Body, blood, soul, and divinity of Jesus Christ.’” Fr. Gabet rapidly reviews a series of additional questions. “Will it look like Jesus? No. Will it look like bread? Yes. Will it smell like bread? Yes. Will it sound like bread when Father breaks it over the chalice? Yes. Will it taste like bread? Yes. Will it feel like bread on your tongue? Yes. Is it bread? No. What is it? Body, blood, soul, and divinity of Jesus Christ.” Fr. Gabet tries asking

5 Actually, in one of these nine repetitions, Fr. Gabet says, “all of Christ,” and in another he says, “all of that”—“that” referring to the “body, blood, soul, and divinity” of Jesus.

6 Louis-Marie Chauvet argues, by contrast, “One must no longer say” (of the consecrated host) that “‘this bread is no longer bread.’” To be precise, Thomas Aquinas denied that the substance of the bread remains after consecration, as it is wholly changed into the substance of Christ. Chauvet says, “Such a statement had to be made on the terrain of metaphysical substance,” but “on the altogether different terrain of symbolism…to say that ‘this bread is the body of Christ’ requires that one emphasize all the more it is indeed still bread, but now essential bread, bread which is never so much bread as it is in this mystery.” In Chauvet’s view, this is affirmation is actually more faithful to the Council of Trent’s dogmatic definition.
one of the first communicants to say how he knows that this is true. I can’t hear the
answer, but apparently it’s not quite satisfactory since the priest has to offer a prompt.
“Cause Jesus said so, right?” I’m not sure how the boy responds to this, but it’s followed
by a little laughter from the congregation.

Fr. Gabet moves on to explaining that “all of Jesus”—“body, blood, soul, and
divinity”—is “received in every particle of the host and every drop of the precious
blood.” Thus, “in the extra-ordinary rite,”7 the lay faithful who receive only the host have
“no need to receive the precious blood in the form of wine as well.” On the contrary, Fr.
Gabet claims, it is better that the faithful receive only one species, so that they “don’t get
mixed up theologically, thinking the body is here and the blood is here.” He gestures to
two different places as he says this. Then, allowing himself a little dig, he adds, “Plus,
you don’t have to have everybody and his sister up distributing as extraordinary
ministers.” I know that Fr. Gabet has merely represented the opinion of most Latin Mass
adherents on extending the chalice to the laity, but I can’t help finding it ironic to hear the
practice attacked on the Feast of the Most Precious Blood.

Fr. Gabet returns to the question of how the children (and the rest of us) may be
sure of the truth of these eucharistic doctrines. How do we know that we receive “all of
Jesus”? “Number one, he told us so, at the Last Supper: ‘This is my body,’ he said.”
Secondly, “all of the Fathers of the Church are unanimous in the fact that it is not bread,
but truly becomes the body, blood, soul, and divinity of Jesus Christ.” In the third place,

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7 When speaking about the extraordinary form of the Mass, Fr. Gabet always pronounces
“extraordinary” as if it were two words, and he uses “rite” interchangeably with “form.”
Fr. Gabet mentions “sacred scripture,” specifically citing First Corinthians: “‘He who eats or drinks unworthily, not distinguishing the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, drinks condemnation to themselves.’”

Fourth, there is the constant witness of what “the Catholic Church has always held.” Finally—and Fr. Gabet puts this “at the last place because it’s for those who do not believe”—there are “the eucharistic miracles that have come about through the centuries that have proven this is not bread; this is not wine; this is body, blood, soul, and divinity, our food for our spiritual life.”

Fr. Gabet mentions that the children making their first communion today are “most worthy” to receive this food because they also “received holy confession” for the first time last night, and this has made their souls “pure.” They are also in an ideal state to pray for the rest of the church. “As members of the mystical body of Christ, you’ve been training us all. Yet you’re only six and seven years old. But you are members of the mystical body of Christ… You can help us all by praying for us today.” So Fr. Gabet concludes by asking the children to pray for their parents, their families, and their priests, “who will be bringing Jesus to you, and who will be taking away your sins.” Finally, returning to the theme of his earlier announcement, he asks the children to “pray for our country, that we will be God’s people again, that we will respect him, and that our Catholic Church will continue to have the religious liberty that’s guaranteed us by the Bill of Rights.”

Instead of ending his homily with another sign of the cross, Fr. Gabet blesses everyone in Latin before returning to the altar to replace his maniple and intone the
Creed. The choir picks up the chant and leads the congregation in singing *Credo III* while Fr. Gabet recites it quietly at the altar. When we get to “*et incarnatus est*,” the choir slows down significantly, and the priest and congregation kneel. After “*et homo factus est*,” the congregation stands again briefly while Fr. Gabet walks to his seat. Then they sit down with him until the creed is almost finished. After less than a minute, Fr. Gabet gets back up and walks to the altar, the congregation standing with him just long enough for him to chant, “*Dominus vobiscum*,” and for them to respond, “*Et cum spiritu tuo*.” They sit while he recites the offertory prayers inaudibly. Our little schola is not yet sufficiently confident to request that we be allowed to sing the Gregorian offertory chant, so instead the women chant it on a psalm tone. Then the whole choir sings a four-part anthem with the organ: “*Veni Jesu Amor Mi*” by the Romantic composer Luigi Cherubini. It’s not long enough to cover all of the offertory prayers or even the entire collection, which is taken up by two middle-aged men who always sit toward the back of the church and never wear suits.

When there is incense used at Mass, the congregation stands when one of the servers censes them, but today they simply wait until Fr. Gabet chants “*Dominus vobiscum*” again to begin the preface dialogue. Today’s feast calls for the priest to say the Preface of the Cross instead of the Preface of the Trinity that we hear most Sundays. When Fr. Gabet finishes chanting it, a server rings the altar bells, signaling the congregation to kneel, and the choir sings the *Sanctus* from the Bartschmid Mass. Meanwhile, Fr. Gabet recites the Roman Canon inaudibly. We halt the *Sanctus* before singing the *Benedictus*, even though they are not separate musical movements in this short Mass setting. A brief silence follows until Fr. Gabet reaches the *Hanc igitur*, when
the altar bells are rung again. (The silence, of course, is relative. Restless children and four large floor fans create background noise throughout.) Fr. Gabet hunches over the altar briefly, holding the host as he quietly recites the words of institution. The server rings the altar bells five times, synchronizing them with the priest’s genuflection, the elevation of the host, and another genuflection. He and another altar boy lift the corners of Fr. Gabet’s chasuble slightly as he raises the host above his head for perhaps five seconds. After this procedure has been repeated for the chalice, the choir completes the Sanctus. This doesn’t take more than a minute, but that is almost long enough to cover the remainder of the Canon. Still, when we finish singing, all of us in the choir join the congregation in kneeling. Fr. Gabet chants just the last phrase of the Doxology aloud: “…per omnia saecula saeculorum.” The choir and congregation respond, “Amen,” and stand up.

Fr. Gabet chants the Lord’s Prayer aloud but alone, at least until the final line, “sed libera nos a malo,” which the congregation supplies. We remain standing in silence while the priest fractures the host in half, and then breaks a small particle from one half. Since he continues to face the altar, these gestures are not visible to the congregation, though every hand missal I’ve encountered mentions them. Without turning to face the congregation, Fr. Gabet chants, “Pax Dominum sit semper vobiscum,” making the sign of the cross over the chalice three times with the particle of the host. The congregation responds, “Et cum spiritu tuo,” then kneels. The choir remains standing to sing the Agnus Dei from the Bartschmid Mass. This covers the prayers that the priest says before receiving communion, which are spoken silently in any case. We do hear the altar bells rung at each of the three times that he says, “Domine non sum dignus…” It’s hard to
observe the moment at which he consumes the host, but easy to see him drink from the chalice. Since it will be offered to no one else, he empties the cup by inverting it above his lips.

Ordinarily, the choir descends from the loft after singing the *Agnus Dei* in order to receive communion before the rest of the congregation. Today, however, we will receive last so that that the first communicants can be the first to receive. So we kneel again for a moment while the altar boys finish saying their second inaudible *Confiteor.* Fr. Gabet gives the absolution, then turns to face us, holding up the host and chalice as he says, “Ecce Agnus Dei, ecce qui tollit peccata mundi.” He repeats the threefold recitation of “Domine non sum dignus ut intres sub tectum meum, sed tantum dic verbo et sanabitur anima mea.” Most people here gently strike their breasts each time the priest says this. They don’t say the words aloud with him, though some (like me) quietly mouth them. After this, Fr. Gabet descends from the altar and sanctuary to distribute communion, accompanied by an altar boy holding a paten.

Just for today, a small prie-dieu has been placed at the front of the center aisle for the first communicants to kneel at as they receive the host. There is no communion rail at St. Patrick’s, so the rest of the congregation follows their usual procedure of filing into the first pew on either side of the main aisle, raising and lowering the kneelers as necessary to enter, kneel, communicate, stand, and exit. This takes a while, even though Fr. Gabet moves quickly from one communicant to the next, speaking the Tridentine formula for administering the host quite rapidly. The choir has time to sing three songs. First, there is a short four-part setting of “*Adoramus Te, Christe*” by French composer

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9 See note 6 on p. 196.
Théodore Dubois (1837-1924), which the choir sings year-round, though the text is most associated with the Stations of the Cross. Next, we sing an arrangement of the Corpus Christi hymn, “O Sacrum Convivium,” by Roberto Remondi (1851-1928). Finally, before going to receive communion ourselves, the entire choir sings a simple unison chant setting of “Ave Verum Corpus.” As a rule, the choir sings nothing in English other than the processional and recessional songs, and sometimes even these are Latin hymns.

After we return from communion, our schola sings the short communion chant while the priest finishes his ablutions. The congregation remains kneeling until the post-communion collect, which Fr. Gabet chants aloud while they stand. Turning to face the congregation, Fr. Gabet chants, “Ite, missa est.” We respond, “Deo gratias,” and kneel for the final blessing. Fr. Gabet uses incredibly large and dramatic gestures for this blessing—I’ve never seen anything like it at any other Mass, whether in the ordinary or the extraordinary form. Having turned back to face the altar, he places both hands on it and kisses it. Then, as he exclaims, “Benedicat vos omnipotens Deus,” he thrusts his hands upward and outward before bringing them back together again above his head and then down to his chest, tracing a great circle. It’s as if he’s gathering up all the spiritual fruits of the Mass and distributing them in his next gesture, which is a large sign of the cross made with his right hand while facing the people. “Pater, et Filius, et Spiritus Sanctus.” He swings his open palm from one side of his body to the other as he invokes the Holy Spirit.

Having been blessed in this fashion, we stand again while Father reads aloud the Last Gospel—John 1:1-14—from the card that has been resting on the gospel side of the altar during the entire Mass. Everyone genuflects one last time when he says, “Et Verbum
“caro factum est.” A moment later, the organ begins playing the recessional hymn, “Jesus, My Lord, My God, My All,” by Frederick William Faber, the Oratorian better known for “Faith of our Fathers,” which is also a frequent selection here. So with the exception of the Cherubini piece and the chant, all of today’s music was composed between 1850 and 1920. Fr. Gabet follows the altar boys directly into the sacristy; today there is no procession back down the center aisle.

Many people kneel for a moment after the hymn ends before gathering their things. A few go individually to kneel in front of the relic of the true cross. In the choir loft, Ellen does her best to find out how many voices she will have next week. It’s unclear, with the anticipated arrival of the new priest, whether it will be a High Mass or a Low Mass. If there is to be a schola rehearsal this week, it will be arranged by email. I leave the loft without any firm idea of when we will be singing next, but that’s not unusual. Downstairs, some of the remaining congregants are chatting in the back of the church. Although today’s Latin Mass lasted ninety minutes, people will probably not start arriving for the parish’s ten-thirty English Mass for another half-hour. Fr. Gabet rarely stands at the back door to speak with people as they leave. Ordinarily, he would already be in the confessional again, but perhaps he will be making himself available for photos with the first communicants’ families. Outside, more people are talking in small groups. Most members of this community will probably not see each other again before next weekend, but there is ample time to visit before the heat of this mid-summer day becomes oppressive.
CHAPTER 5
THE LIVING FAITH OF THE DEAD

About six months into my fieldwork, I wanted to discuss my research at a meeting of liturgical scholars. But I still wasn’t sure what to call the group I was studying. Most liturgical scholars tactfully apply labels to the liturgy itself rather than to its adherents. The most “official” designation, which appears in _Summorum Pontificum_, is unwieldy: “faithful who adhere to the earlier liturgical tradition.”¹ I had heard the phrase “Latin Mass Catholic” spoken by some of my consultants, and I had used it without offending anyone. Theoretically this phrase includes those who attend the ordinary form of the Mass in Latin as well as those who attend the extraordinary form. These two groups overlap at St. John’s, where some people who have been attending the parish for several years are more than a little fuzzy on the differences between the two missals.

I prepared a handout explaining the ambiguity of some of these terms and emailed it to Rick, asking him to check it against his experience at St. John’s. In the ensuing exchange of emails, he reflected on what Catholics like him would want to be called.

Nathaniel: Thanks for your phone call yesterday. I’m still working on my presentation for this weekend, so the attached document is not the one promised. Instead, this is a handout that I’ve prepared so that I can avoid wasting time on terminology. Nothing too interesting or controversial here, but if you have a moment, could you look it over and let me know if you think it’s reasonably accurate? Thanks for your help!

¹ SP 1.
Rick: People at Saint John’s always use the terms “Novus Ordo” and “Tridentine Mass,” and are usually suspicious of anyone who says “Extraordinary Form” as it marks them as an outsider.2

“Traditional Catholic” is also a term of choice, as it implies that we’re the ones who are loyal to Tradition and the Bible, not just the Bible like Protestants. It also casts aspersions on the innovations of V2.

Nathaniel: Thanks - I’ll make some adjustments. Am I right, at least, in thinking that “traditional” and “traditionalist” have different connotations, the latter usually being associated with SSPX?

Rick: Yes, there is a difference and you have part of it right: “traditionalist” is ordinarily applied to those who are trying to be “more traditional than the Pope.” The other part is that “traditionalist” implies that one has taken a stand, while “traditional” implies that you’ve been that way all along and that it is others who have changed things.

Rick (again): Y’know what: I like to think of myself as an AUTHENTIC Catholic, EXACTLY as Catholic as the Pope, and that this IS the tradition handed down to us by the Apostles.

Nathaniel: Interesting. For some people, “authentic” means being true to yourself, but not necessarily to a tradition. In your case, would you say it’s both?

Rick: Rather solipsistic to think that I am the definition of “Catholic” isn’t it? By “authentic” I mean that I wish to be in full communion with the Church founded by Christ, so yeah, it means being true to something beyond myself.

And, for the record, I would never define myself as being “basically a good person,” like so many who then go on to define what sort of Catholic they wish to be.

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2 While Rick is probably correct that scrupulous avoidance of “Novus Ordo” and “Tridentine” would seem forced at St. John’s, I believe that he underestimates the speed with which “extraordinary form” has been adopted into the ordinary lexicon of Latin Mass Catholics at St. John’s and elsewhere.
Despite Rick’s readiness to identify himself as an “authentic Catholic,” his quickly typed responses carefully avoid claiming that he has lived up to the true definition of “Catholic.” He \textit{likes to think of himself} as a Catholic who follows the tradition handed down from the apostles, and he \textit{wishes} to be in full communion with the Church of Christ, but his language (here and elsewhere) suggests that he sees himself as a work in progress. The suspicion he casts on Catholics who define themselves as “basically good people” is actually twofold. First of all, they don’t maintain continuity with the traditional lineage that extends “beyond themselves” all the way back to the apostles and ultimately to Christ. Additionally, they deceive themselves and others about their own “goodness,” hiding their inability to live up to the heteronomous standards of the tradition by professing a “solipsistic” and vague personal morality. Essentially, they offend the ideal of authentic selfhood even as they lose contact with the authentic genealogy of Catholic tradition.

Curiously, Rick’s assessment of “basically good” Catholics brings to mind an oft-cited quotation of Jaroslav Pelikan (arguably the most prolific church historian of the twentieth century) that is sometimes used to criticize Latin Mass Catholics and others accused of immoderate attachment to things of the past. “Tradition is the living faith of the dead, traditionalism is the dead faith of the living.”\textsuperscript{3} As an irritated commentator on a blog devoted to liturgy observed,\textsuperscript{4} Pelikan and those who quote him are clearly engaging in hyperbole, especially in the second half of this statement. On the other hand, the

\textsuperscript{3} Jaroslav Pelikan, \textit{The Vindication of Tradition} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 65.

popularity of the phrase—to say nothing of the ire it elicits from living people accused of “dead faith”—epitomizes the urgency and twofold character of a pressing concern for modern believers, which I wish to discuss here under the rubric of “authenticity.” Pelikan implicitly offers two criteria for distinguishing between authentic “tradition” and its inauthentic but misleadingly reminiscent cousin, “traditionalism.” (The fact that anyone would find it necessary to make this distinction indicates that tacking “authentic” onto “tradition” is more than an exercise in redundancy.) First, authentic tradition is “the faith of the dead,” which is to say that its messages, practices, symbols, and behavioral norms are those by which ancestors in the faith lived. Second, authentic tradition is “the living faith,” which is to say that this heritage remains a living source of “insight” only if the heirs “find their own authentic voice” in which to proclaim the same faith with conviction. The dual imperative of authenticity is to be faithful to the ancestors and true to oneself. Pelikan illustrates this by concluding his reflections on tradition with a line from Goethe’s Faust: “What you have as heritage, take now as task; for thus you will make it your own!”

These two criteria of authentic tradition are rarely easy to distinguish in actual evaluations of religious practice, for they form something of a circle. “Heritage” is properly called this only when it is grasped by a living group of heirs who accept it as their own task, and not just that of previous generations. Yet the activity of a group claiming common ancestry is properly called a “task” only when it is teleologically oriented by a heritage that the heirs claim not to have invented and not to control. Why

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5 Pelikan, The Vindication of Tradition, 66.

6 Ibid., 82.
use one word—“authenticity”—to designate what might be thought of as two separate values: “continuity” and “sincerity”? The main reason, as I have suggested, is that these two notions of authenticity as continuity and authenticity as sincerity become intertwined and to a certain extent fused in performance. One “authenticity” may be called upon to stand in for the other at potentially difficult points in learning, enacting, and defending “traditional” liturgy. The habitual ways in which Latin Mass adherents relate these two notions of authenticity will occupy most of our attention for the remainder of this dissertation, beginning in this chapter from the side of authenticity as continuity.

Following the suggestion that traditional religion faces a crisis of collective memory rather than a crisis of collective feeling, we aim to see how these modern religious adherents remember “traditional” liturgy in a way that is normative for the entire group.

**Authenticity Remembered or Reproduced**

There is another reason, however, for preferring “authenticity” as a more precise designation, in both instances, for what we might otherwise call “continuity” or “sincerity.” “Authenticity” uniquely pinpoints the desire to verify the continuity, sincerity, originality, or reality of some entity—to put it to the test by observing the presence or absence of certain authenticating characteristics. In relation to authenticity, continuity and sincerity are not companion or subordinate values so much as they are two different but related objects of authentication. Each object is associated, moreover, with a characteristic approach to authentication. Continuity demands a genealogical inquiry while sincerity requires an investigation of correspondence. Charles Lindholm explains this well:
There are two overlapping modes for characterizing any entity as authentic: genealogical or historical (*origin*) and identity or correspondence (*content*). Authentic objects, persons, and collectives are original, real, and pure; they are what they purport to be, their roots are known and verified, their essence and appearance are one... These two forms of authenticity are not always compatible nor are both invoked equally in every context, but both stand in contrast to whatever is fake, unreal, or false, and both are in great demand.\(^7\)

While Lindholm speaks of just two modes or forms—authenticity by way of origin and authenticity by way of content—these are actually broad categories under which many more specific modes or processes of authentication can be classified. Even within one of these categories, different modes of authentication are not necessarily compatible with one another. On the contrary, competing claims about authenticity based on more or less incompatible modes of authentication are often involved in the most contested areas of modern social life. In identifying authenticity as a characteristically modern value, we are not describing a shared ideal so much as we are locating a common site of controversy.

Noting this, we might recognize a parallel with the concept of sacrality. Like “the sacred,” “the authentic” stands for something both greatly desired and highly contested. Like a discourse of sacrality, a discourse of authenticity confers upon an object (whether a thing, place, person, or event) the ability to resist challenges to its privileged status. It does this, however, by *disproving* any challenges, while a discourse of sacrality *disqualifies* potential challenges, usually before any are openly lodged. The distinction isn’t perfect, for these two kinds of legitimation are by no means opposed to one another.

Sacred relics—whether of the saints or of Christ’s passion—provide an illustration of the way in which sacrality and authenticity are often entangled, but not

\(^7\) Lindholm, *Culture and Authenticity*, 2.
identical. Lindholm discusses the veneration of relics as a medieval phenomenon, but the practice seems alive and well in Latin Mass communities today. For example, when the chaplain of the Latin Mass community at St. Patrick’s Church discovered that the parish was keeping a relic of the true cross back in the sacristy, he made a point of bringing it out every Sunday and setting it in front of the ambo so that the Latin Mass attendees could kneel and pray in front of it after Mass. The Shrine brings out its relic of the True Cross for veneration after praying the Stations of the Cross during Lent, and Canon Talarico devoted an evening lecture to the history and theology of such veneration. The exhibit on the Shroud of Turin at St. John’s is a more unusual case, but a revealing one. The parish did not, of course, receive the shroud itself to venerate, but was instead given a life-size photographic transparency to display on a light board. Additionally, after parishioners wound their way through a long maze of posters presenting the “scientific” case for the shroud’s authenticity, they were confronted with a large crucifix sculpted to correspond in gory detail to the image of the crucified man supposedly preserved by the shroud. Two kneelers were set before the crucifix so that visitors could conclude their examination of the evidence with a few moments of prayer and meditation on the sufferings of Christ. On the one hand, the evidence of the shroud’s authenticity prepared viewers to accept this doubly mediated encounter with the sacred body of Christ. On the other hand, the difficulty of passing by this sacred image without some bodily gesture of reverence favored at least tacit acceptance of evidence that was openly acknowledged to convince few scientists of the shroud’s authenticity. It could not be said that a judgment

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about the image’s sacrality depended on a judgment about the shroud’s authenticity or vice-versa; nevertheless, the two perceptions were mutually supportive.

Why should people who treat any crucifix as a sacred object care about the authenticity of this one’s model? On the other hand, why should people who set stock by carbon-14 testing and x-ray imagery conclude a careful examination of the data by falling on their knees in prayer? In order to understand the values involved in making these judgments about sacrality and authenticity, it’s helpful to introduce some terms used by Walter Benjamin in his influential analysis of modern transformations in art. Benjamin does not speak of an art object’s sacredness, but of its “cult value,” which is determined by the object’s use in ritual—“first the magical, then the religious kind.” In the history of human cultures, ritual was the “original” context in which works of art acquired an “aura” of uniqueness and distance from participants in the cult. In other words, all art was initially “sacred art” in that it was produced for use in cultic ritual. The same cannot be said of art that is produced with a view to the late modern doctrine of l’art pour l’art.


10 Benjamin’s description of “cult value” bears a striking resemblance to Thomas Aquinas’s definition of “sacred.” Thomas states, “A thing is called sacred because it is ordained to the divine cult (sacrum dicitur aliquid ex eo quod ad divinum cultum ordinatur).” ST II-II, q. 99, a. 1. See also ST I-II, q. 101, a. 4; ST II-II, q. 81, a. 5. Joseph Pieper argues that this theological definition is “confirmed by ethnology and philosophy of religion.” He does not, however, allow the definition to stand on its own, but adds that a “sacred action” is “distinct and set apart from the everyday activity and conduct by clear demarcations” in such a way that it “is never simply ‘done’ and ‘performed’ but rather always ‘celebrated.’” Like others who lament “the virus of desacralization” to which Western Christians are “prey,” Pieper is convinced that whatever the “nonordinary manner” of “celebrating” sacred actions may be, it is “self-evident, say, to a Christian of African or Asian culture,” who still possesses the instinctual sense of the sacred that Westerners have lost. However, Pieper does not offer examples of how African or Asian Christians demarcate their worship and set it apart from “ordinary” activity. Nor does he seem to recognize that “a solemn choral Mass at the monastery of Maria Laach” may or may not be “obviously impressive” to these non-Western Christians. Pieper, In Search of the Sacred, 25–27.

11 As Lindholm notes, Benjamin’s association of “aura” with use in cultic ritual resembles Durkheim’s analysis of the “totemic principle” in The Elementary Forms of Religious Life. Lindholm, Culture and Authenticity, 13–14.
Yet Benjamin does not claim that only certain subjects and styles of art are inherently sacred, nor that the modern transformation of art results from a loss of interest in these “sacred” art forms.

On the contrary, it is precisely the desire to get “closer” to objects endowed with cult value that eventually causes the “aura” of all art to decay. The cult image necessarily maintains “the unique phenomenon of a distance, however close it may be,”\textsuperscript{12} because ritual doesn’t claim to offer its participants an exact copy of the original events, persons, or realities to which it refers. Strictly speaking, ritual can’t even replicate its own unique staging; it can only re-present itself by means of a tradition, whose maintenance is usually the mandate and source of authority for a cultic institution. Exhibition of the sacred objects and sacred performances of a cult is limited by the need to initiate, train, and maintain a small cadre of ritual specialists as much as by any desire to hide the sacred mysteries from view. Medieval methods for exhibiting sacred realities to an expanded audience—whether through the veneration of relics, the exhibition of the eucharistic host, or the production of Mass primers—still required the mediation of the church’s ritual experts, and the degree of access gained by laypersons was greatly stratified by social class. By contrast, technical processes (e.g., printmaking, photography, recording, cinema) and social conditions (e.g., mass literacy, urbanization, secular governments, consumer-driven economies) that permit replication and distribution of culturally valuable objects outside of a cultic context have been developing over a long period of Western history. These developments accelerated in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to the point where the “exhibition value” of art

eclipsed its cult value in most Western societies. This affects the performing arts as well as the visual arts, and “sacred” artifacts as much as “secular” works. Although, as Benjamin points out, the symphony “originated at the moment when its public presentability promised to surpass that of the Mass,”¹³ one may now just as easily hear one of Mozart’s Masses as one of his symphonies without ever setting foot inside a church—or a concert hall, for that matter.

While modern technical processes and social conditions greatly expand the possibilities of presenting sacred objects to a large audience, the one thing that can’t be replicated is “the presence of the original,” which is the key to an object’s “aura” in addition to being “the prerequisite to the concept of authenticity.”¹⁴ Thus, aside from the question of whether the Shroud of Turin itself is a fraud, its life-size photographic reproduction on display at St. John’s does not share the unique aura of the original piece of fabric. No one would think to kneel before the photo-realistic copy instead of the somewhat clumsily executed crucifix based on the same image. The anonymous sculptor can’t reproduce the shroud’s aura any more than the camera can, but he or she can represent the personal aura of the man whose image is preserved by the shroud, and do it in a way that is recognized as traditional. This remains true even though the sculpture interposes an artist’s creative interpretation between the original image and its viewers more obviously than the photograph does. A tradition of artistic representation is by its nature “thoroughly alive and extremely changeable.”¹⁵ Art produced for cultic use therefore makes no claim to be identical with the prototype it represents. Its value

¹³ Ibid., 225.
¹⁴ Ibid., 220.
¹⁵ Ibid., 223.
consists in being able to point beyond itself to the original without collapsing the distance between them.\textsuperscript{16} By proclaiming its non-interchangeability with its prototype, the cultic object declines to substitute its own authority for that of the original, whose unique presence and aura cannot be duplicated, but only mediated and memorialized. The aura of the cultic symbol—whether a natural object, human artifact, or ritual performance—is none other than that of its prototype, remembered and represented by way of tradition.

The “age of mechanical reproduction”—which signifies not just the invention of certain technologies but a fundamental change in “the manner in which human sense perception is organized”—sees the value of ritual and artistic mediation overtaken by the value of erasing distance through the exhibition of simulacra, thus “overcoming the uniqueness of every reality by accepting its reproduction.” On the one hand, this liberates objects of cultural value from the vicissitudes of memory and embodied performance, and it allows “the masses” who do not belong to the priestly or artistic castes to approach and manipulate the most valuable products of culture—including religious products—at a much “closer” range than traditional ritual permits. On the other hand, the cost of making a reproduction is to “interfere” with the original’s authenticity, a “most sensitive nucleus.” Authenticity is inseparable from an object’s “unique existence at the place where it happens to be.” Unlike a pristine replica, the authentic object testifies to a history of use, change, and (in some cases) abuse and damage. Mechanical reproduction actually diminishes the aura and authority of the original object, event, or performance by exhibiting a replica that claims to be identical or even superior to the original in

\textsuperscript{16} Benjamin’s emphasis on “distance” in his analysis of cult images closely resembles—and is perhaps inspired by—Christian theological reflection on icons. Jean-Luc Marion draws much of this traditional reflection into his treatment of the concept of “distance” in modern philosophy. Jean-Luc Marion, \textit{The Idol and Distance: Five Studies} (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001).
everything that is essential to its value. This is the most penetrating point of Benjamin’s analysis, as well as the most ironic, for it is precisely when mechanical reproduction threatens to make the concept of authenticity nonsensical that the authentic representation of reality “as it really is” (or was) emerges as an absolute value. Writing in 1936, Benjamin could already declare that “for contemporary man the representation of reality by the film is incomparably more significant than that of the painter.” The subsequent development of “live,” “high fidelity,” “high definition” broadcasts of “reality” confirms the paradox that producers of cultural artifacts pursue an ever more “thoroughgoing permeation of reality with mechanical equipment” in order to offer their consumers a view of reality that appears free of all artifice. In fact, these technologies do not represent reality so much as take its measure with increasing precision in order to produce evidence of how things really are, since a transparent view of reality “is what one is entitled to ask from a work of art.” In other words, people who value having a reproduction close at

17 Benjamin, “The Work of Art,” 220–223. To reiterate, it is important to understand “mechanical reproduction” as something more than a set of technologies. It represents an entire mode of social production, perception, and appropriation of cultural values. The contrast between “mechanical reproduction” and “traditional ritual” as ways of reinforcing and transmitting the central values of a society might be usefully compared to Weber’s distinction between “bureaucratic” and “charismatic” modes of controlling both symbolic and material production. Such binaries lead to vast oversimplifications of social history in the West if the former term in each case is understood to completely displace the latter in “modern” societies. However, it is in line with Weber’s thinking to argue—as Benjamin does and as we are doing here—that “earlier” structures and processes retain their influence in important areas, and that their traces may be discerned in “modern” social life. For example, Weber says, “One can only understand the double nature of what one might call ‘the spirit of capitalism’, and equally the specific features of the modern, professionalised, bureaucratic form of everyday capitalism if one learns to make the conceptual distinction between these two structural elements, which are thoroughly entangled with one another, but are in the last analysis distinct.” Max Weber, Max Weber: Selections in Translation, ed. W. G. Runciman, trans. E. Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 233–34.

18 Benjamin, “The Work of Art,” 234. This mode of appropriating art should not be confused with particular artistic styles such as “naturalism” or “realism.” Benjamin notes that what most excited early filmmakers was the possibility of portraying supernatural and fantastic subjects with as much expressive and persuasive power as natural means could offer. “Natural means,” of course, refers in this dream of filmmakers to the most advanced tools and techniques of mechanical reproduction that human artifice could devise. Ibid., 227–28. To see how authenticity remains a central concern even when all agree that the subject matter of a work of art is completely fictional, one need look no further than the battles which have
hand also expect to be convinced that they see, hear, and feel no less (and perhaps more) than they would in the presence of an original object.

The new expectations and habits created when exhibition becomes the primary value of art do not leave holy objects or sacred rites unaffected. The approach to all cultural artifacts presented as valuable becomes that of “testing,” which, as Benjamin notes, “is not the approach to which cult values may be exposed.”19 This doesn’t mean that close examination necessarily dispersions the aura of all artistic and ritual representations of a tradition’s sacred mysteries. At the level of cult value, people who kneel before a crucifix do not question its ability to place them, by way of memorial, in the sacred presence of the crucified savior. Nevertheless, the presumption of sacrality doesn’t prevent the same people from seeking proof of the reproduction’s accuracy and pedigree, as they would for any other object on display. In a context where cult value and exhibition value are both at play, these two approaches to receiving cultural artifacts are in tension, with veneration at one pole and examination at the other.20 Rituals ranging in scale and complexity from a brief genuflection before a crucifix to a solemn high Mass exploit and reinforce the power of memory to recall an original whose presence and aura cannot be replicated. But technological and historical developments have allowed the Missal of Pius V, no less than the Shroud of Turin, to enter into situations where a

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20 In a footnote, Benjamin suggests that “these two polar modes of reception” can be found in Hegel’s aesthetics, even if their contradiction is never fully recognized or resolved there. “The Work of Art,” 244–45.
memory of its cultic use never existed or has deteriorated. (Of course, the same can be said of the Missal of Paul VI.) Those same developments raise the question of authenticity to a new level of urgency and explicitness, because collective memory offers contemporary adherents less evidence that their present practice embodies the “faith of the dead.”

In this contemporary context, the persistence of a “sacred” aura of unquestionable authenticity may to some degree forestall critical examination of practices that claim to be traditional. Still, if a discourse of sacrality insists that the contents of tradition must not be put to the test, a discourse of authenticity demands that the techniques of tradition be subjected to ever-greater scrutiny. In other words, contests over the “authentic tradition” focus on how the link to the past is preserved, transmitted, and, when necessary, recovered. Traditio, of course, refers to a delivery from one generation to the next of what was received from the previous generation. When it is necessary to explicitly demonstrate that the processes of “traditioning” have preserved an original doctrine or practice in all its authenticity, however, the case will sometimes be made that “breaking continuity” with the recent past is the only way of “saving the essential link with the line of belief.”21 This is not an argument that Latin Mass adherents usually advance, unless they happen to be characterizing the last forty years as the “recent past” of liturgical continuity that must be broken away from in order to return to a more ancient tradition.

More typically, as in the following profile, Latin Mass Catholics will focus on verifying that the methods used to transmit the tradition from one generation to the next

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21 Hervieu-Léger, Religion as a Chain of Memory, 81.
do not alter doctrines and practices in the process of handing them on. For Brian and Joan, who attend the Shrine of Christ the King, the traditional Latin Mass is valuable not only because they believe it’s the “same Mass” that “formed a millennium of saints,” but also because they think it trains believers in the present to prefer continuity to “revolutionary” change in liturgy, doctrine, and morality. In short, they hope to ensure the future of Catholic tradition by rehabilitating the memory of Catholics, making it deeper and more unified. The fact that both are adult converts to Catholicism with no childhood memories of the Latin Mass makes this confidence in memory seem ironic, but it actually confirms the point we’ve been pursuing, that claims to represent “tradition” have their strongest purchase on authenticity when collective memory is weakest.

**Brian and Joan**

Brian and Joan were the first married couple that Canon Talarico suggested I speak with, perhaps because they’ve been coming to the Shrine since it opened its doors and have become very involved there. For me, they became two of the most consistently recognizable faces in the community. Both of them are in their early fifties, and they have two daughters: one in high school who almost always accompanies them to church, and another in college who rarely does. Brian sings in the schola on Sundays and on feast days for which a high Mass is celebrated. Though she was a music major in college, there’s no place in the choir loft for Joan. Like all of the women (and most of the lay men) at the Shrine, her participation during Mass is confined to the pews, where she often helps a younger woman with her baby. She takes a leading role, however, in organizing many of the Shrine’s spiritual and social activities, including the Christmas pageant, the talent show, and classes on how to sing traditional Marian hymns in Latin. She can be counted
on to contribute some dish to the “coffee hour” that follows high Mass every other Sunday. I sat down to speak with them in the rectory basement on one of the alternate Sundays after I had been to just a few Latin Masses.

We didn’t discuss their childhood in any detail, or even how they met one another. It would seem that their families of origin must have been at least nominally Protestant. In any case, their own children were in grade school before Brian began attending church regularly. At the time, Joan was going to a Unitarian church. “I’ve been to confession,” she says as she admits this. Brian didn’t like her Unitarian church, and Joan didn’t like the Congregationalist church that he suggested as an alternative, so they “went church shopping,” trying out Methodist and Congregationalist churches before settling on one where they remained for three years. “We did whatever we could,” Joan says, “Music or Sunday school, adult [or] children—whatever we could.” But in the end, she says, “the liberality drove us out of there.” The last straw, apparently, was a minister allowing two women in a same-sex relationship to bring their daughter to be baptized at a Sunday service. “I’m all for babies being baptized,” Joan declares, “and I’m all for kids being part of that, but not in this case because our daughter actually whispered to [Brian], ‘Where’s the daddy?’ And he said, ‘I don’t know.’ And she knew there were kids whose parents were divorced, so she just let it drop. But I looked at [Brian] when he came home and told me that, and I said, ‘Well that’s it; I’m not going back.’” They hadn’t even considered Catholic parishes when they were “church shopping,” but Joan describes their decision to become Catholic as taking “no thought at all.” Another minister at the church they were leaving commented on their choice of the Catholic Church with some derision: “Oh, the truth is right there, and people don’t have anything to say.”
Brian and Joan were received into the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil in 2002. The parish that they joined had a weekly Latin Mass, which at the time was offered by a priest of the Institute of Christ the King who traveled some seventy miles from the Institute’s oratory in Rockford, Illinois. Brian and Joan were fond of this priest and of the pastor, and they once again became active in the church’s ministries, helping out with music, vacation bible school, and marriage preparation. Brian made it a point to “hear the old Mass” whenever possible. Before long, however, they moved to a different suburb, and the driving time required to attend the Latin Mass increased to an hour one-way. At about the same time, the Institute received possession of the former St. Gelasius, and they started offering Mass in the rectory while repairs on the church began. Brian and Joan visited some other parishes where a single Latin Mass was offered, but they quickly came to prefer the Shrine. The couple’s drive still exceeds a half-hour, but at the end of it is a community devoted exclusively to the Tridentine Mass. “You come here, and it’s all tradition all the time,” Brian says. There’s none of the “disharmony” that they experience at parishes where, say, a youth band starts “tuning up the electric guitars” as soon as the Latin Mass ends.

Initially, Joan and Brian were also attracted to the Shrine by the presence of Monsignor Schmitz—a “wonderful man” in their estimation. Now that he’s “always away,” however, they find themselves “astounded” by the wisdom that Canon Talarico displays in spite of his youth. “It’s the traditional formation,” Brian explains. “Saying the old Mass” is part of this, but the real “charism” of the Institute is the “whole formation” in which its priests are immersed. In various ways, Brian and Joan try to immerse themselves in “traditional formation” too. Brian likes to read a little of the pre-conciliar
breviary every day. “It’s neat because you’re reading it and then here’s St. Gregory the Great commenting on today’s reading. It’s the tradition. It’s unbroken, and to me it’s something that we need to grab onto and hang onto.” Although Brian started studying philosophy at the age of fifteen, he’s “really getting into studying Aquinas” now that he realizes that the “past three hundred years of philosophy” has inevitably fallen into “errors” because it “rejected the true philosophy.” St. Thomas is an indispensable guide for traditional Catholics because he was steeped in tradition himself. “Thomas Aquinas knew the whole bible by memory,” Brian claims, “and I think he memorized most of the church fathers too.” Joan agrees that spiritual study is much more productive when she is able to refer to Aquinas and other traditional authorities.

All my life I’ve been to lots of bible studies—college and everything. And so Protestants just sit through a bible study and they read the—actually you’d end up reading a very small bit of verse. You’d hardly cover anything because you’d sit there and you’d read it and somebody would say, “Well, I read it and I prayed about it and I thought of this.” And the next person will say, “Well, our pastor talked about this recently and this is what he said.” Somebody else will say, “I think the Holy Spirit told me this.” And you just sit there and you try and try and try to figure it out, and you can’t.

So we set up a bible study with [some Catholic friends]… So we’d sit there and we’d read a pretty good-sized section and then one of the guys would go, “Well, St. Thomas Aquinas said this.” OK. And then another, “St. Jerome said this.” And then we’re like, “Oh, OK, let’s read some more.” Because it just makes sense. It just makes sense; it’s not this thing where we have to sit there and scratch our heads and try to figure it out on our own.

Even with respect to understanding the Mass, Joan does not rely on her own reading of the missal, which she often leaves behind. In its place she frequently brings meditations written by Dom Prosper Guéranger. She also prays the Rosary during Mass, starting when the schola sings the Creed and arriving at the beginning of one of her decades at the
same moment when the priest says the “Our Father,” if she times everything correctly. She points out that Monsignor Schmitz encourages newcomers to the Latin Mass to set aside their missals and just “experience” the beauty and reverence of the liturgy. “Truth resonates in the human heart and spirit almost physically,” Joan thinks, so a person doesn’t need to intellectually grasp every nuance of the traditional liturgy in order to become attached to it.

However, Joan does think it’s necessary to make sure that the truth is being presented in all its fullness, because the modern temptation to “throw out so much beauty and so much truth” has infected many members of the church, including those responsible for safeguarding its liturgical traditions. She laments, “I didn’t use to believe evil was a real thing, but boy oh boy oh boy. It’s just destructive, just to tear apart, take the goodness and just break it up and take a little bit of truth and put lots of lies around it.” Brian blames such destruction on a “revolutionary attitude” that values change for its own sake.

It’s kind of pervasive in our society since, you know, like the French Revolution and stuff. Every time that something gets settled, then they think that there’s something wrong with it. “Oh, it’s oppression; it’s bad.” And what happens, once you start this revolution, is it snowballs. It just keeps rolling downhill, getting bigger and bigger. Where does it stop? Where does it end finally?

Neither Brian nor Joan get more specific than this about the “destruction” or “revolution” that has overthrown the traditional Mass, but they clearly view the magnitude of the change as established historical fact. For details, they refer me to Latin Mass apologists like Michael Davies, William Marra, John Senior, and Romano Amerio (all deceased), who can supply “scholarly” evidence that the liturgical reform was a radical change motivated by scorn for tradition.
By contrast, they don’t mind that their own ideas about the origins of the “old Mass”—as they almost invariably call it—are either murky or impossible to verify historically. “There’s no way to prove it,” Joan says, but she has a “theory” that Jesus “set things up” during the forty days between his resurrection and ascension so that his apostles “knew exactly what to do.” Brian says that the old Mass has been “good for two thousand years,” even though he dates the “first written Mass book” to the fifth or sixth century. In any case, they’re less interested in proving that the Mass was given to the church at a very early date than they are in confirming that it has been forming saints for a very long time. Brian says,

The nice thing about the old Mass, you just feel the connection to all that came before. This formed, you know, a millennia of saints. This is the Mass that Teresa of Avila knew; this is the one St. Ignatius said; this is the Mass that St. Benedict said. This is the one Pope Gregory the Great is talking about and—

Joan breaks in with, “This is the one that got my atheist bridegroom singing in the schola.” Brian concludes his list of spiritual heroes by mentioning Augustine. To me, it’s hard to imagine Teresa or Ignatius finding the Tridentine Mass just celebrated in the Shrine perfectly familiar—to say nothing of Benedict or Augustine. But Joan’s remark seems to capture a more fundamental point. The emphasis is not on knowing the same

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22 Until about the eleventh century, there were no “missals” in the sense that we use the term today (a single book containing all of the prayers, rubrics, readings, and other texts necessary to celebrate Mass). If we allow that “Mass book” could refer (and in English has at times referred) to a much more primitive liturgical book, the sacramentary (containing only the prayers needed by the celebrant), then Brian’s estimate is actually not so different from what liturgical historians currently accept as the likely dates of composition for the earliest sacramentaries and their precursors. The “Verona Sacramentary”—actually a partial compilation of Roman Mass *libelli* from the fifth and sixth centuries—is usually dated to the mid-sixth century, while the earliest Gelasian and Gregorian sacramentaries were probably composed in the seventh century. See Eric Palazzo, *A History of Liturgical Books from the Beginning to the Thirteenth Century* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998), 21–56.
texts and rubrics that the saints “knew,” but on knowing how to be formed by the liturgy today in the same way that these ancestors were formed by the liturgy in their day.

Still, if this is true, then why is the Tridentine Mass necessary to “feel the connection” to these spiritual ancestors? Can’t one hope to be formed by the “new Mass” in the way that earlier generations were formed by the “old”? The couple’s preference for the old seems to rest on a perceived difference in what Brian calls “the reverence factor.” Joan also cites “the whole reverence” of the “traditional rite.” It’s a contested category to be sure, but they’re clear enough about what reverence sounds, feels, and looks like to them. They mention Gregorian chant instead of a youth band’s “folderol,” a full twelve-hour fast before communion, and women who cover their hair in church, for example. None of these things are necessarily exclusive to the extraordinary form, and it seems that Brian and Joan could easily add to the list without having to mention anything that an ordinary form Mass wouldn’t allow. Nevertheless, Joan insists, “The more we go to Mass here, the harder it is to pray at a regular Mass. I mean, it’s kind of awful. There’s lots of us here when we go to a Novus Ordo that offer it up. And it’s kind of silly but it’s just amazing. And [Brian’s] Mom was still a Congregationalist—she’s a deacon there—and she came in here and she said, ‘It’s so reverent. It’s just so beautiful.’” Joan and Brian have been to St. John Cantius, and they admit that St. John’s is able to “mix the rites” without a loss of reverence (though the parish actually keeps the two forms quite separate). Yet they think the Tridentine Mass remains a point of reference for reverence. Perhaps this is because it refers them to a past that they remember as “more civilized.” Brian muses,

Less and less seems civilized to me. You know, Joan and I are somewhat older than you, and I can remember so clearly how
things were different in 1962. It was a different world; people were different. And boy, now anytime you watch an old movie or something—there was a different feeling—the way neighbors watched out for everybody’s kids. There was really more of a shared ethic. And people say, “Oh, every age is bad, and everyone thinks the following age is—.” [But] it’s like Pat Buchanan, who’s older than me, he’ll go, “No, it was better then. I was there; it was better. This isn’t as good.”

Brian laughs as he says this, but Joan concurs in his judgment of the not-so-distant past. “It was more civilized.” And what is more, once all memory of that “civilized” time is gone, she thinks, the basis of civilization will have been irretrievably lost.

People don’t realize [that] the good things that are still around—even in their own personalities—has to do with their better upbringing. I was thinking about this last week with a parent of younger kids… We train those kids. I mean you’re teaching them how to talk, how to keep themselves clean, how to of course behave, not clobber each other—just basic things, we’ve got to teach the kids. And we teach them reading, and writing, and hopefully thinking. But there’s nothing good in thinking…that they’re just going to know truth and morality on their own. You don’t say, “Oh, good girl, you went to the toilet; now see if your subconscious can tell you how to wipe yourself.” No way! You know what, you have to teach them all that stuff, and you have to teach them morality. And the world is just going insane about thinking that you know the most important things from your heart. I mean we do to a degree, but you can learn how to recognize it, and if you can just guide people in that, or train them, or teach them, then they have a huge advantage. I mean, civilization is built on civilization.

Brian summarizes, “Civilization is—what it exists for is to train people’s character. The product of a civilization is a good character. That’s what it’s there for, to pass the known truths on.” When the process of handing on the “known truths” from one generation to the next is faltering, it’s not the right time to experiment with a relatively untested form of the Mass. “We’ll let the dust settle over there. Stay here; this has been good for a
couple thousand years now.” Indeed, staying with the traditional Latin Mass “is the only way to add sanity back to this civilization—what’s left of it.” With this goal in mind, Joan and Brian don’t mind having to pray in the bare, uncomfortable confines of the Shrine week in and week out. On the contrary, Brian finds it fitting.

I kind of like this big, fallen down church with charred, exposed timbers and peeling paint and crumbling brickwork because it kind of fits my whole vision of—I just happen to feel that Western civilization is in ruins, and this is what [this building] is. And yet the Church will triumph, and here it is—here’s a church that, you know, was just saved from a wrecking ball by a hair, and it’s all coming back to life.

**Tradition and Memory**

From the way in which Brian and Joan understand the Tridentine Mass as having been “good for a couple thousand years,” it should be obvious that adherents do not verify the authenticity of current liturgical practice using the same techniques and standards that a liturgical scholar writing a history of the same practice would. On the one hand, this unsurprising reality shouldn’t be a problem from the standpoint of liturgical theology. Robert Taft, one of the most productive liturgical historians of any era, has repeatedly emphasized that liturgical practice “is determined not by the past, but by tradition, which encompasses not only past and present, but theological reflection on both.”

Even if it were possible to establish with absolute certainty what was done in the past, neither the practitioner nor the historian could use that knowledge alone to stake a claim on what should be done in the present, for the past considered in isolation from present concerns is neither history nor tradition.

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History is not the past. Rather, it is a contemporary understanding of life in terms of its origins and evolution as seen through the prism of our present concerns. In theology we use the methods of history because we are interested in tradition, and tradition is not the past, but the present understood genetically, in continuity with that which produced it.  

When a community of believers—the church, in Taft’s terms—determines that a present practice is authentically in genetic continuity with the past, it doesn’t ultimately base its judgment on the findings of historians alone, but on its “self-consciousness now of what has been handed on to [it] not as an inert treasure but as a dynamic inner life.” Here we find an echo of Pelikan’s distinction between a living tradition, open to growth and change, and dead traditionalism, mired in a past that has no future. Historians who look at past liturgical practices through the “prism” of concern for the church’s “dynamic inner life” put the methods and standards of historical research at the service of practitioners who wish to deepen their understanding of the present as a living continuation of the past.

On the other hand, the meaning of tradition is that those who claim to adhere to it will understand their present practice “genetically” with or without the aid of historians. While many Latin Mass Catholics, including Brian and Joan, express an interest in liturgical history, their sense of the Tridentine Mass as “traditional” clearly doesn’t depend on the outcome of historical investigations. What is to be done, then, when historical research contradicts practitioners’ self-consciousness of continuity with the past, in whole or in part? Taft, while denying that liturgical history claims a disinterested vantage point on tradition, nevertheless asserts its privileged position as the singular discipline that surveys the entire tradition, looking for its most enduring structures by


25 Ibid., 2. Emphasis in original.
sorting through the vast textual record it has left behind. Since “Christian liturgy is a
given, an object, an already existing reality like English literature,” the liturgical
inheritance of present believers is inscribed in documents that historians are trained to
read and understand, and the more of the past one reads, the more of the present one
understands.26 Yet the analogy is imperfect in a way that has significant consequences.
For while English literature is passed along mainly through the printing and storage of
books, Christian liturgy—insofar as it remains a living tradition—is transmitted primarily
through ritual performances.

It’s true that written prayers, instructions, and accounts form an essential part of
what Christian churches preserve as their liturgical patrimony. However, the traditions of
performance associated with these texts are handed on from one generation to the next as
habits mastered through repeated practice. These “incorporating practices” constitute, as
Paul Connerton suggests, a memory of the past that is not recorded on pages but
“sedimented in the body.” Moreover, while historians usually regard “inscribing
practices” as the most important evidence of what earlier generations intended to pass on
to their descendants, practitioners’ intuitive sense of tradition is more profoundly shaped
by incorporating practices whose origins are not ordinarily reflected upon.

Incorporating practices…provide a particularly effective system of
mnemonics. In this there is an element of paradox. For it is true
that whatever is written, and more generally whatever is inscribed,
demonstrates, by the fact of being inscribed, a will to be
remembered and reaches as it were its fulfillment in the formation
of a canon. It is equally true that incorporating practices, by
contrast, are largely traceless and that, as such, they are incapable
of providing a means by which any evidence of a will to be
remembered can be “left behind”. In consequence, we commonly

26 Ibid., 3.
consider inscription to be the privileged form for the transmission of a society’s memories…

Yet it would be misleading, on this account, to underestimate the mnemonic importance and persistence of what is incorporated. Incorporating practices depend for their particular mnemonic effect on two distinctive features: their mode of existence and their mode of acquisition. They do not exist “objectively”, independent of their being performed. And they are acquired in such a way as not to require explicit reflection in their performance… Bodily practices therefore contain a measure of insurance against the process of cumulative questioning entailed in all discursive practices. This is the source of their importance as mnemonic systems.27

The mnemonic importance of incorporating practices helps to explain why the memory that contemporary adherents have of the Latin Mass is not focused on liturgical texts in the same way that historical research into the pre-conciliar liturgy is. We’ve already seen that many of the practices that Latin Mass Catholics single out as “traditional”—kneeling for communion, celebration *ad orientem*, and even the use of Latin—are neither required by the Tridentine missal nor prohibited by the Missal of Paul VI.28 They associate these practices primarily, if not exclusively, with the Tridentine Mass because they have experienced them there bodily—not because they have read through the Missal of Pius V. By contrast, Patrick Regan’s evaluation of how “traditional” the ordinary and extraordinary forms are in their respective ways of celebrating the feasts and seasons of the liturgical year reaches its verdict in favor of the ordinary form mainly through a detailed comparison of the 1962 and 1970 missals. This


28 Celebrations of the Missal of Pius V in languages other than Latin are admittedly rare, but as Peter Jeffery points out, there are historical examples of such celebrations. Peter Jeffery, “Widening Our Hearts,” *Commonweal*, August 17, 2007, 11.
noted liturgical historian nevertheless concludes that the key to having Catholics embrace
the post-conciliar Mass lies in improving the unwritten *ars celebrandi* (art of celebrating) in parishes that use the Missal of Paul VI.²⁹ It seems reasonable to add to this, as a corollary, that the key to understanding why some Catholics have already embraced the pre-conciliar Mass as “traditional” lies in the *ars celebrandi* that they have encountered in places where the Tridentine missal is used. The case is sometimes made that the *ars celebrandi* in the typical pre-Vatican II Catholic parish were rarely of such quality as to inspire devotion to the traditional Latin Mass. Still, even if many of those celebrations were eminently forgettable, this tells us little about the collective memory of the Latin Mass that current adherents have formed and are continuing to form.

As a helpful image of religious collective memory, Danièle Hervieu-Léger describes a “chain” linking believers in the present with their believing ancestors and ultimately with the founders of the faith.³⁰ It is relatively easy for individuals in “tradition-based societies” to see themselves as authentic heirs of this “lineage of belief” since membership in the group that shares this genealogy is basically coterminous with membership in society. As a result, individual memory naturally reinforces the collective memory of tradition. By contrast, the modern absence of a single dominant tradition of belief and practice suffusing the whole of social life means that individual memories cannot be relied upon to continuously reconstitute the chain of belief. That which can no


longer be assumed must be explicitly verified, and this “paradoxically gives rise to appeals to memory” as the basis of religious authenticity.  

Like the Durkheimian sociologist, Maurice Halbwachs, and the French historian, Pierre Nora, Hervieu-Léger makes the modern dissolution of Catholic parochial life in France the exemplary case of a phenomenon that not only coincides with secularization, but defines it: the loss of “total social memory” that once “provided every individual with the possibility of a link between what comes before and his or her own actual experience.”  

In the French case, despite the steady growth since the Enlightenment of “rationalism instilled by science and technology”—the supposed villains of “desacralization”—there is strong evidence that widespread religious adherence persisted well into the twentieth century. This persistence of belief can be convincingly linked to the simultaneous endurance of the local parish as “the society of memory” in which family life, economic production, and death itself acquired a significance that extended beyond the present moment, backward toward the origins of the faith, and forward toward the fulfillment of eschatological hope. Concretely, the regular gathering of all the inhabitants of an area into a village church surrounded by their buried ancestors “naturally” sustained the image of a “community linked to a chain stretching from past to future.”

It is of little matter that the reality of the life of the parish never corresponded to the way it was thus depicted; its representation lent strength to a vision of religious society sustained by three different sources: (a) a vision of the family incarnating an ideal of local stability and continuity that nurtured the observance of religion in the community; (b) a vision of rural society, centering

31 Hervieu-Léger, Religion as a Chain of Memory, 141.

32 Ibid., 127, 130.
on the image of an ordered world, reconciling earth and heaven, the natural and the supernatural; and (c) a vision of the consolation, which a good life—a life of observance—secured, of the bliss promised in the next world in return for the travails of the present one. Despite the impact of successive political, industrial and social revolutions, the underlying structure of imagined continuity, which allowed and embodied the religious mobilization of collective memory, remained more or less in place until the First World War.  

In fact, as Hervieu-Léger points out, the “loss of social evidence of continuity” only became complete in France in the second half of the twentieth century, as long processes of economic modernization and civic reorganization accelerated in ways that doomed the territorial parish. A preference for small, mobile, emotionally close, but fragile nuclear families coincided with massive relocation for education, work, and retirement. The resulting “loss of local identification” and “loss of lineage identification…finally undermined the two mainstays of the parochial imagination, which in a country such as France were privileged vehicles of the religious mobilization of collective memory.”  

The case of French Catholicism does not, of course, perfectly represent the case of American Catholicism. It’s likely that the immigrant roots and ethnic clustering of Catholics in the United States favored the persistence of a “parochial imagination”—albeit of a different kind—between the wars and even later. Still, the decade of the 1950s represents, in many ways, both the high-water mark and the beginning of the startlingly rapid end of the “devotional parish” that had dominated American Catholicism for nearly a century. The large numbers of Catholics who joined the migration of white Americans out of the city and into the middle class caused a boom in suburban church building but

33 Ibid., 132–33.
34 Ibid., 134.
also severed ties to old ethnic parishes like St. John Cantius (Polish), St. Clara (German), and St. Patrick (Irish/German). Jay Dolan reminds us that the post-war era, though frequently idealized as the period of greatest strength and stability in the American Catholic church, actually involved Catholics in the same unprecedented upheavals in work, family, and civic life that affected their Protestant and Jewish neighbors. In any case, the crisis of religious collective memory brought on by rapid social and economic transformations in the second half of the twentieth century is much broader than a “loss of ethnic identity” among American Catholics, just as it exceeds the “loss of a parochial imagination” among a disappearing French peasantry.

Another example of this relationship between social change and loss of memory is offered by Bernard, a former free-church Protestant who eventually ended up at St. John Cantius after converting to Catholicism. He describes a connection between agricultural modernization and loss of continuity in free-church forms of worship. In the late 1980s, while teaching at a Mennonite seminary, he became dissatisfied with the Mennonite worship services he was attending.

35 The websites for St. John Cantius and the Shrine of Christ the King both have euphemistic ways of talking about the “white flight” that decimated attendance at both churches during this period. The Cantius website explains that after the Kennedy Expressway was built in the late 1950s, “most of the neighborhood’s residents left what was rapidly developing into a ghetto.” Of the former St. Clara, the Shrine’s website says, “Though the church was thriving, a significant change in the neighborhood began to diminish the parish membership considerably, which naturally created difficulties in maintaining the building.” Since our discussion is focused on social memory, it’s worth observing that euphemism, according to Theodor Adorno, is often a pernicious form of strategic forgetting. “The Meaning of Working Through the Past,” in Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords, trans. Henry W. Pickford (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 90. While it would be hard to accuse either church of overt racism in their present activities, it is also hard to identify any clear effort to acknowledge the history of racial struggle and segregation in their respective neighborhoods.

The whole Mennonite subculture was breaking up and changing because of moving off of the farm and the mechanization of agriculture after the Second World War. So they were no longer doing the things the way they had always done them. And they were now having a different form of worship every Sunday depending on what the worship committee planned. And sometimes they’d do something several times in a row… But I could see that with the Mennonites losing their—just the way they’d always done things which was in effect an unwritten liturgical pattern—losing that, there was something missing.

Before giving up on his Mennonite church, Bernard even “wrote them a liturgy” by excerpting texts from a Roman Catholic missal, but he realized that it was unlikely to be used more than once or twice before the pastor and worship committee moved on to something else.

Even the most cautious observers must admit that we are dealing in these cases and in other similar ones with a defining feature of modernity itself, and one that is accelerating. “The most continuous or permanent feature of the modern world,” says Nora, “is no longer continuity or permanence but change.”37 Hervieu-Léger concurs, but unlike many theorists of secularization, she doesn’t claim that belief in eternal, “sacred” certainties appears increasingly irrational or naïve in the midst of rapid social change. Instead, she associates change specifically with the dwindling power of memory to encompass the past, present, and future in a continuous chain of belief.

However wary one may be of making a rigid distinction between societies of memory and societies of change, it is perfectly reasonable to point out how evidence of social, cultural and psychological continuity is eroded through the effect of change. Change, which is a function of modernity itself, has resulted in modern societies being less and less able to nurture the innate

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capacity of individuals and groups to assimilate or imaginatively to project a lineage of belief.\(^{38}\)

The threat posed by modern changes in modes of economic and social life is primarily to the “mode of believing”—the “type of legitimation applied to the act of believing”—and only secondarily to the “content of belief.”\(^{39}\) Believers still look to the “faith of the dead” to authorize and authenticate the “faith of the living.” Yet because modern individuals and groups lack the depth and unity of memory that their ancestors possessed, the reinvention of tradition—precisely as “uninvented” tradition—is more conscious and conflicted than it was in earlier societies. Nora puts the contrast in particularly stark terms.

On the one hand, we find an integrated, dictatorial memory—unself-conscious, commanding, all-powerful, spontaneously actualizing, a memory without a past that ceaselessly reinvents tradition, linking the history of its ancestors to the undifferentiated time of heroes, origins, and myth—and on the other hand, our memory, nothing more in fact than sifted and sorted historical traces.\(^{40}\)

Modern historical sciences—including those of comparative liturgiology—have greatly increased the reliability and reach of such sifting and sorting, which is mainly performed by experts. But “getting the history right,”\(^{41}\) to borrow a headline from one of *Summorum Pontificum*’s critics, is not a sufficient condition for getting contemporary groups to imaginatively project a lineage of belief. This ability, on which the renewal of tradition depends, is primarily nurtured through personal participation in incorporating practices.

\(^{38}\) Hervieu-Léger, *Religion as a Chain of Memory*, 123.

\(^{39}\) Ibid., 74, 76.


Perhaps this is why Bernard, who now teaches church history at a Catholic college, occasionally sends his students to St. John Cantius to attend a Latin Mass in either form and report their impressions. Typically, he says, “they comment on how beautiful the place is—all that stuff,” but that would not have been Bernard’s first impression. He’s not especially fond of neo-Baroque art and architecture, and while he appreciates the quality of the music program at St. John’s, he admits that the one thing he misses from his Mennonite days is the congregational singing. For him, the attraction of the Latin Mass was “the connection with the tradition” and the “knowledge that this is the way Catholics worshipped for centuries.” He also hears this from his college students who, though mostly Catholic, usually have no more personal familiarity with the Latin Mass than he did with any Mass before becoming Catholic. “Again and again, people would say, ‘It was very important to me to sense that I was worshipping in the same way that my Catholic ancestors did.’… That was probably the single most common refrain.”

Among the Latin Mass Catholics I met, this refrain and others similarly expressing a desire to connect with one’s spiritual ancestors are indeed very common. This is the case even among adherents whose recent biological ancestors were not Catholic. Their critics might say that Latin Mass Catholics are not “getting the history right” when they claim that their present way of worshipping is identical with “the way Catholics worshipped for centuries.” A medieval scholar like Bernard must be intentionally vague about many details in order to make such a broad claim about the stability of post-Tridentine practice, to say nothing of the centuries of liturgical development and diversity that preceded Trent. Most of his fellow parishioners probably
lack the historical information to be anything but vague when making this claim about continuity with their ancestors’ way of worshipping.

Nevertheless, as Maurice Bloch argues, the “vagueness” with which most practitioners of religious ritual explain the origins of their practice “offers us a clue to the nature of much human social knowledge and of many learning processes” that pursue truth through “deference” rather than “exegesis.”

A very common experience among anthropologists who ask why someone is doing something in a particular way in a ritual is to be answered by such phrases as “It’s the tradition,” “It is the custom of the ancestors,” “It goes back to early history,” and so on. Now, these apparently frustrating answers are nonetheless interesting in many ways for they combine explicitness concerning deference and awareness of imprecision about who exactly is the originating mind behind the practice…

And when people tell us that they don’t know what such a phrase means, or why such an act is performed, but that it is being said or performed in this way because one is following the customs of the ancestors, they are surely telling us that what they are doing, saying, singing, is above all deferring.42

In other words, the belief that one is worshipping in continuity with the ancestors is primarily verified in the act of deferring to an original intention, however vaguely understood. Seeking clarity about the origins of a practice, though “almost inevitable,”43 is of secondary importance to most believers. In ritual, Stephan Feuchtwang observes,

42 Maurice Bloch, “Ritual and Deferece,” in Ritual and Memory: Toward a Comparative Anthropology of Religion, ed. Harvey Whitehouse and James Laidlaw (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2004), 67, 73, 75.

43 Ibid., 73.
“we submit to what must be done, as it has been done. This is how ritual joins together our various intentions in a shared memory.”

If the legitimation of belief in the context of ritual depends on a shared memory rather than an official history, then it also depends on a shared sense that the performance is motivated above all by deference and submission. The deference with which a ritual action is performed verifies the present performance’s connection to the chain of memory more immediately and more strongly than a historical analysis of the performance’s content does. For many contemporary Catholics, instruction in liturgical history may well increase their sense that what they are doing at Mass is deferring to the original, instituting intention of Christ: “Haec quotiescumque feceritis, in mei memoriam facietis.” But for Latin Mass Catholics like the one we meet in the following profile, a sense of “continuity” depends heavily on the mnemonic influence of submitting to the repeated performance of “external” practices with “reverence” and “dedication to precision.” Michael can’t explain the origins of all the “little bitty pieces of devotion” that he learned growing up with the Latin Mass, but for him they provide a living “link” to Jesus Christ.

Michael

I met Michael at the Shrine of Christ the King after an evening lecture on Pope Gregory VII’s role in the 11th-century lay investiture controversy. He was one of ten men in attendance, along with one woman who had brought her two young daughters. Michael


45 From the Roman Canon: “As often as you do these things, you will do them in memory of me.” See 1 Cor 11:23-26.
looked to be just a few years older than the four young men discerning a vocation to the
Institute of Christ the King, and he apparently knew them and Canon Talarico well. Upon
hearing me talk with Thomas about how my research was going, Michael became very
interested in the project. He was going to Mass at the Shrine or at St. John Cantius as his
intense schedule as a medical resident permitted, but he had been raised as a
“traditionalist” whose family wanted nothing to do with the “indult Mass.” He was my
first consultant under the age of sixty to have experienced only the Tridentine Mass from
his earliest memories through to adulthood. He was eager to talk because he had for some
time been trying to reconcile this upbringing with his decision to start attending
Tridentine Masses and even the occasional post-Vatican II Mass offered by priests
affiliated with the “Novus Ordo church.” By contrast, his childhood parish was
administered by a priest—Michael’s uncle—who had been ordained for the SSPX, but
who left the Society to establish an “independent” Latin Mass Catholic parish.

We found time to chat at a coffee shop after one of his long shifts at the hospital.
Michael speaks with a slight Kentucky drawl that suits his scrupulously polite, serious,
yet warm style of conversation. From the start, he encouraged me to ask him anything—
“I’m not sensitive about this at all”—and he repeatedly expressed the hope that he wasn’t
offending my sensibilities, including by his habitual references to the “Novus Ordo
church.” “If you hear me say that, that’ll be essentially the church from the seventies
on—post-Vatican II. If I say, ‘Novus Ordo church,’ that’s what I mean. That would be
the nomenclature; that’s kind of what we grew up with.” The image of the Novus Ordo
church that he grew up with was “as negative as an evangelical would have thought of
Catholicism.” His family’s complaints about the post-conciliar church—some based on
hearsay, others personally observed—ranged from local “liturgical abuses” to displays of religious “indifferentism” by the pope. “Everything was blamed on Vatican II, and the by-product of it was the *Novus Ordo*, which was essentially an abomination.”

Michael wants to make clear, however, that the overall atmosphere in which he was raised was far from negative.

As far as growing up in it—growing up in the Latin Mass, I mean—it was great. I really say it was. It gave me an incredible foundation for the love of the faith. I mean, just the liturgies and, you know, in our family we lived it every day. In addition to the rosary, my mom was always, [on] a feast day, you know, “This is his feast day, this morning.” And it wasn’t in a way that made it kind of shoved down our throat. I didn’t feel [that way]. I don’t feel that way now. Some things were, but not this. I didn’t feel like it was prudish either. It was more just like, “You’re a Catholic; be proud of your heritage.” And so with that came a great love for the faith and also a very good knowledge of why we were doing what we were doing.

Michael’s education in the faith also included attending a school run by the Latin Mass church. It was so small that it was “essentially a home school.” The grade school and high school had “very strong courses” in philosophy and theology, though the Latin instruction was “kind of a joke.” He feels like he “learned the faith incredibly well” there, but it was the constant presence of prayer that made it clear how much that faith mattered. “We grew up with family rosary every night and Mass every Sunday. And it was three or four Masses a week, whether at night or in the morning. And that was it: that was the most important thing.”

A thing of lesser importance but obviously close to Michael’s heart was swimming. He traveled all over the state for swim meets, which sometimes meant having to drive even further to get to a Latin Mass. Consequently, he finds it puzzling that his
Catholic peers who were brought up with the *Novus Ordo* can’t seem to get themselves to Mass, if their faith is actually as important to them as they say it is.

I still remember coming home from a big swim meet—a championship meet—with my mom, and we drove two hours to go to a Latin Mass at five at night. And we got caught [coming] back in the worst snowstorm of Kentucky’s history in the past fifty years. You know, we made an exquisite effort to get to the Mass, and it’s somewhat disconcerting to see that some of the people my age have twenty Masses to go to a day—or even on Sunday can go Saturday night and all day Sunday to twenty different parishes in the city—and don’t take advantage of it,

Michael earned a swimming scholarship to a large public university not far from his family’s church, so finding a Mass that he could attend wasn’t usually a problem during college.

Still, Michael had begun to feel “less comfortable” about his independent church’s ambiguous relationship with the pope and with the “principles of jurisdiction” in the Roman Catholic Church. “It always bothered me that we would say, ‘We support the pope, we love, we recognize him as the leader,’ but we didn’t really listen to anything he said.” Finally, Michael says, “I was a senior in college. I was like, you know, ‘I’ve got to be my… I’ve got to start making my own decisions.’” He began attending an indul Mass offered by an 85-year-old priest on weekdays. “All through med school,” he says, “that was kind of my nourishment.” Michael listened to the elderly cleric’s “insight” on remaining obedient to the hierarchy through six successive papacies. The promulgation of *Summorum Pontificum*, which he describes as an “excellent” document, also encouraged him to attenuate some of the opposition to the “*Novus Ordo* church” that he had inherited. By the time he left Kentucky to start his pediatrics residency, Michael was willing to
attend a *Novus Ordo* Mass, so long as it was celebrated with “the reverence and the orthodoxy” that he was accustomed to seeing in the Tridentine Mass.

In Chicago, he found an English Mass celebrated by *Opus Dei* priests that was a “good compromise” if he couldn’t make it to Latin Mass or if he was accompanying friends who didn’t care for St. John Cantius or the Shrine. The congregation sang the ordinary chants in Latin, and they could receive communion kneeling and on the tongue, which from Michael’s perspective seems “pretty novel for the *Novus Ordo*.” There are certain things about the ordinary form of the Mass that he has actually come to prefer, such as the additional reading (usually from the Old Testament) and the expectation that at least a short homily will be preached at every Mass. Even at a Latin Mass, he thinks it’s important for the congregation to hear the readings aloud in the vernacular (as at St. John’s) instead of having to read the translation on their own (as at the Shrine). He goes so far as to wish that the *ad orientem* celebration of the extraordinary form Mass could be reversed for the readings. “Would I like to have the priest turn around at the epistle and say the epistle to us, say the gospel to us? Yeah, I definitely would because it’s an instruction, you know. So that part where you are supposed to take from the Mass, would I be okay with that? Yeah.”

At the same time, there are aspects of the Tridentine Mass that he would not like to see disappear, including the prayers at the foot of the altar that the priest says inaudibly at the beginning of the Mass. Though Michael remains silent, he uses these prayers to prepare himself for the rest of the Mass.

You’re about to transition into something big time. Like it puts you in focus, you know? And so I hate to compare it to swimming, but before any of our conference championships or before any national championships, there’s a warm-up and you went and you focused
on what you were going to do, by yourself. And I felt like when you learn about the prayers before the altar, and especially the Confiteor—which I know is said sometimes [in the ordinary form] but not always—[there is] that recognition that I’ve got no business being here, I’ve got no business doing what I’m about to do, but I’m partaking in something very important.

Similarly, Michael prefers the “quiet around the Canon” that comes with the priest reciting the eucharistic prayer inaudibly.

I really do miss it [at an ordinary form Mass]. And I know some liturgists say, you know, you’re not actively participating, but I feel like I’m one hundred percent involved when the priest is offering our Lord. You know, I’m back in the back, I’ve got way less business than him, but in my own little way, I’m offering it too in the prayers for the faithful and prayers for the pope. And so that’s a time for reflection and kneeling down. So I think I’d miss that quiet. Because it’s more time for reflection than there is [in the ordinary form]. Because in the English Mass, there’s always someone talking, I feel like, almost always.

Finally, he still strongly prefers kneeling at the rail to receive communion, and it’s hard to find an ordinary form Mass where this is possible, even though Michael believes that Benedict XVI supports his position. “Kneeling down to our Lord is the way it should be done. I’m convinced of that. That’s the way it should be done. And luckily, the pope’s on my side; that’s something he agrees.”

Echoing the same pope’s letter explaining the reasons for Summorum Pontificum, Michael says that “the old Mass should enrich the new and the new should enrich the old.” He knows that this is hindered by conflict that is “not enriching.” In explaining the “strong, strong distrust among the traditionalists,” he makes what seems to me an almost shocking comparison.

I didn’t really understand it until I was working with a few kids at the hospital that were either verbally or physically abused. And I felt that when you hold on—as I believe my mother has and she did when she was growing up—you held onto these truths so
strong. And then overnight, they’re changed. That must have been not only psychologically devastating, but just betrayal, a sense of betrayal…

Initially, after I started going to the English Mass, my mom was just very angry. And at first, I was very, very upset with her. I was like, “What are you doing? What are you acting like this for?” And then, when it was a really patient interaction, I saw they were essentially abused by something they really loved. It was more of a psychological and mental abuse that’s very real. I mean, some people wouldn’t understand, but if you have a depth of something you believe in for so long, and then all of a sudden that’s turned on its head, then you’re going to be disenchedanted with the people that did it.

Michael knows that other people of his mother’s generation have equally strong feelings to the contrary, but he finds that harder to understand.

Obviously we had an issue with some of the changes, but they had an issue with something they grew up in. You know, what was good and wholesome for priests and thousands of saints for generations is not good now? It just didn’t make any sense to me. When you think of the Church as truth, it doesn’t change; it’s timeless. And that’s one of the great things about Catholicism, that we have this link to our Lord… You know, it cultivated itself—the liturgy did—for years and years and years, and now you’re supposed to look back on it? And I never did understand it, I just never did get it, and to this day I still don’t understand. I don’t understand it completely how there could have been this vehemence towards the old rite when a hundred years ago, two hundred years ago people were dying—in the Irish persecutions they were dying—to go to Mass. I mean, they risked their lives to go to this, and now people are saying, “No, that’s not the way you should practice.” In my opinion it wasn’t Catholic because Catholicism should be—and obviously I’m no one to speak on this—but there should be a continuity of things.

Michael no longer believes—if he ever did—that the *Novus Ordo* is discontinuous in its essentials with what came before it. Unlike his mother, he accepts that the “new Mass” is still the Mass. The discontinuities that he notices relate to what he calls
“externals.” Although these don’t change the essential meaning of the liturgy, they do affect the “devotion” of the people celebrating it.

The externals around [the Tridentine Mass] I thought were, you know, that every little thing was so well thought and has such a significant meaning. I thought that precision and that dedication to some kind of precision was a little lacking [in the Novus Ordo]. It was a little bit more nonchalant; it was less formal. And it’s reflected by, you know, if you go into the Institute of Christ the King before Mass, it’s quiet, people are kneeling down, they’re saying their [prayers]. If you go into St. John’s it’s the same way. But in a different parish on a Sunday, you walk in [and] it’s usually loud, [and] it’s loud right after Mass. And I know those are just externals that don’t affect this certain liturgy, but I think that it somehow flows from it.

Where if there was a dedication to precision—you know, the little things that we were always taught as an altar server: the paten under the chin, and the priest only holds [the host in] these two [fingers]… After he touched the sacred species, he’d flip the pages with other [fingers], and only after the ablutions would he separate his fingers again… Genuflections every time you cross in front of the tabernacle. The priest, after the consecration, genuflects numerous times, makes numerous signs of the cross. Those are kind of all eliminated. And maybe some people would say they’re repetitious. That’s some commentary on the Greek Orthodox Church—the prayers are so repetitious that they should kind of be [made less repetitious]. But, you know, I still think that there are—I’m not sure… My question is, “why?” What was the reason—why lose any of those little bitty pieces of devotion? I don’t know. Those are my questions; that’s what I still wonder.

Michael realizes that the “externals” he values may sometimes remain only external. He admits the “definite possibility”—if the Mass hadn’t been reformed after Vatican II—that Catholics would have “only been paying lip service” to the traditional liturgy. They might have had a “more Pharisee-like faith: forced with your words and
your actions, but your heart’s far from it.”

Nevertheless, he says, “When I go to the Tridentine Mass…when I kneel down next to a person at the Latin Mass, I’m pretty certain they believe about the same things I do.” He doesn’t think that Catholics who prefer the ordinary form of the Mass are necessarily going to believe things contrary to tradition, but he was brought up to think that “if at every liturgy you can put your own spin on everything, then it’s likely that the people are going to actually put their own spin on every teaching too.” Michael immediately adds, “I’m sure there’s certainly thousands, millions of saints out there that are in the Novus Ordo.” But for him, the Tridentine Mass offers a “sense of stability” that is reassuring. “Everything changes, but you kind of want something to hold on to, something timeless, because that reflects what our Lord is. And so from a theological standpoint, I can understand why you keep the Latin or keep the church’s architecture this way. I can appreciate that because when times are tough in life, there’s always one thing you can count on. I can always count on that Mass.”

46 See Is 29:13; Mk 7:6-7; Mt 15:7-9. Michael is referring to Jesus’ criticism of the Pharisees’ hypocritical adherence to the “tradition of the elders,” in which he quotes the prophet Isaiah against them. We will look at this episode more closely in the next chapter.
The Notre Dame campus rests quietly in the fog on a chilly Sunday morning in January. The sidewalks are clear of the snow that fell last week but also devoid of students, who are undoubtedly warm in their beds. Some will make it up in time for Mass at the Basilica of the Sacred Heart, either with the Liturgical Choir at ten o’clock or the Folk Choir at eleven forty-five. Most, however, will attend Mass in their dorm chapels later this evening. I did as much when I lived in Alumni Hall as an undergraduate. One could simply walk downstairs wearing a t-shirt and shorts at 9:59 p.m. and squeeze into a pew. Frequently, though, I arrived a few minutes earlier to practice with “The World’s Most Dangerous Mass Choir,” as we proudly labeled our ensemble of piano, guitars, percussion, voices, and (occasionally) banjo.

It’s strange to be headed to the very same chapel more than a decade later to attend the campus’s only regularly scheduled Tridentine Mass. Evidently, the students who make the effort to show up for this “early” nine o’clock Mass follow a different Sunday routine than I did in college. A door that leads directly into the chapel’s small vestibule has been unlocked for them. Inside the chapel itself, the ubiquitous red booklet missals are available on a table alongside photocopied flyers containing today’s readings.

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1 For a representative scene from the 10:00 p.m. dorm Mass, see Cunningham, The Chapels of Notre Dame, 92–93.
and propers, though many attendees own a hand missal. Inevitably, the pews in the very back of the chapel fill first; the front half frequently remains empty altogether. It’s almost time for Mass to start, but so far there are only eleven people here, so I’m able to take a seat near the back.

It’s easy to see why the chapel in Alumni Hall was chosen to host the extraordinary form Mass. Unlike most of the other chapels on the campus, it has pews with kneelers. More importantly, it’s one of the few dorm chapels that still has a high altar fixed against the wall. Except for this Mass, it remains unused, as a freestanding altar surrounded on three sides by pews was added after Vatican II. Today’s Mass—the first since students returned from Christmas break—is a Low Mass, so just two lit candles flank the crucifix on the high altar. For High Mass, the server lights an additional two candles. The missal is already in place, and three framed cards on the altar give the priest faster access to many of the ordinary prayers of the Mass and to the Last Gospel. Doug, the junior who coordinates the servers for the Tridentine Mass, has no one else to assist him with the preparations today. He sets cruets of wine and water on the credence table and adjusts the presider’s chair so that it faces directly across the sanctuary instead of being angled toward the congregation. This seems superfluous since the priest never sits down during Low Mass and rarely has occasion to do so on the alternate Sundays, when the main thing elevating the celebration to a “High Mass” is the addition of short chants from the *Kyriale.*

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2 As elsewhere, the Alumni Hall community does not restrict the term “High Mass” to a *Missa solemnis* requiring a deacon and subdeacon. As these ministers are never available, every High Mass at Alumni Hall is technically a *Missa cantata.*
Doug returns to the sacristy where Fr. Blantz has been vesting. More people trickle into the chapel. Eventually there will be a total of thirty congregants: thirteen men, nine women, five boys (including two toddlers and a baby), and three girls (including one baby). One man and two women look to be over fifty, but the rest of the adults are younger. At least ten, possibly more, are college-age students. The couples with children are graduate students or younger faculty. One couple with an infant often attends the 7:45 a.m. Mass at St. Patrick’s—perhaps they weren’t able to get there in time this morning. Among the women, only the baby girl and the two older ladies do not wear mantillas, and one of the latter keeps her head covered with a winter hat. Several men and women keep their coats on during the entire Mass. Otherwise, sweaters are popular, with skirts for the women and slacks for the men. People kneel or sit while they wait for Mass to begin.

They stand when they hear the altar bells ring and see Fr. Blantz walk into the sanctuary. He’s wearing one of the regular green chasubles used for all Masses during Ordinary Time in Alumni Hall, and he doesn’t wear a biretta. It’s only a few steps from the sacristy to the foot of the altar, where the Fr. Blantz stands to recite the preparatory prayers. Doug, the lone server today, assumes his position slightly behind and to the left of the priest. He kneels along with the entire congregation. Although I’ve attended Low Mass at the other three churches, I’ve never heard the prayers at the foot of the altar as I’m able to in this chapel. This could be due in part to the small space, but I feel certain that Fr. Blantz also speaks the prayers more audibly than the other priests do—not loudly, but in a normal speaking voice that all can hear. Doug’s responses are similarly audible, though he says them alone. This is not a “dialogue Mass” in which the congregation joins in saying the server’s responses, but it’s easy to follow what the priest and the server are
saying as they say it, if one has a missal. I’ve noticed that most of the people who attend the Alumni Hall Mass do have missals; the college students in particular are diligent about using them during the entire Mass.

From the opening sign of the cross until the gospel, the congregation doesn’t rise from kneeling. After the priest and server antiphonally recite Psalm 42, they take turns saying the Confiteor. Doug bows deeply as he recites it, swinging the upper half of his body toward Fr. Blantz at the words, “et tibi, Pater;” and striking his breast three times at “mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa.” Some in the congregation join him in this gesture and bless themselves when the priest recites the absolution. Fr. Blantz says the two “private prayers” that follow in a lower voice, not loud enough to be heard distinctly but still audible. As this is a Low Mass, there’s no schola or choir to sing the introit, Kyrie, and Gloria, so the priest simply recites them aloud by himself, one after the other. (The server recites every other line of the Kyrie.) Then Fr. Blantz reads the proper collect for today, and less than five minutes after Mass began, we are already to the epistle.

Standing at the epistle side of the altar, Fr. Blantz reads a short passage from Romans, followed by the gradual and alleluia. When he is finished, Doug moves the missal from the epistle side to the gospel side, genuflecting at the center of the altar, and the congregation stands for the first time since Mass began. Many sign their foreheads, lips, and hearts with the cross, but only the server responds aloud when the priest says, “Dominus vobiscum.” The gospel reading from Matthew is more than twice the length of the epistle. Most of the people in the congregation follow along in a missal while Fr. Blantz reads the Latin.

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1 Psalm 43 according to the Masoretic Text numbering used in most contemporary translations of the Psalms.
Ordinarily, the students organizing this Mass do not ask the priest to repeat the readings in English since a translation is available on the leaflets by the chapel doors. Perhaps there were not enough of these today, because Fr. Blantz steps to the ambo after finishing the gospel and reads the epistle again in English. In it, Paul advises his followers to repay injury with kindness instead of vengeance, thereby heaping “coals of fire” on the heads of their enemies. It’s an older translation, employing “thou” and “thy” for the second-person singular. We sit for the epistle, but stand to hear the gospel story read again in English. In it, Jesus heals a centurion’s servant from afar when the centurion tells Jesus, “Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof: but only say the word, and my servant shall be healed.” When “puer meus” (my servant) is changed to “anima mea” (my soul), this verse becomes the last prayer spoken before the priest and the people receive communion in both the ordinary and extraordinary forms of the Mass. For most of my life, I’ve been saying, “Lord, I am not worthy to receive you, but only say the word and I shall be healed”—the official English translation that was replaced with a more literal rendering just a couple months ago. I never made the connection to the gospel until it was pointed out during a lecture previewing the new English translation. I can’t say whether Latin Mass adherents have always been more aware of the scriptural source of this prayer than other English-speaking Catholics, but it seems possible.

We sit again after Fr. Blantz finishes reading the gospel. He delivers his homily in a manner similar to most of the priests I’ve heard preach at dorm Masses in Alumni

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4 Rom 12:16-21

5 Mt. 8:1-13
Hall—which is to say that his homily bears little resemblance to the preaching at most Latin Masses I’ve attended. He doesn’t remain behind the ambo but steps out in front of the freestanding altar and speaks from there without the aid of written notes. There are no announcements, and he doesn’t make the sign of the cross before beginning his homily. He preaches on today’s gospel in a tone that remains conversational despite his occasional use of reverential phrases like “our Lord” (more often he simply says, “Jesus”).

Focusing on the character of the centurion, Fr. Blantz considers how we may profit from the example set by this Roman soldier. “He had a favor to ask of our Lord, and he was successful in getting that favor answered. Each one of us has favors, and requests, and petitions to ask of God in the hope that we are going to be successful also. Perhaps we can learn a little bit from his successful act and request.” The centurion is successful, Fr. Blantz suggests, because of the kind of person he is. “First of all, he is a man of faith. He’s firmly convinced that Jesus can help him.” Second, the centurion is a man of great humility. “The other centurions and the foot soldiers under him must have been laughing and snickering behind his back, that he was coming, and humbling himself, and asking for a favor from this itinerant Jewish preacher.” Third, the centurion is a “man of charity.” He must have loved his servant a great deal to humble himself on his slave’s behalf, for “if the slave had died, then the Roman soldier could certainly have found another one very easily.” Finally, by declining Jesus’s offer to visit his servant in person, the centurion shows that he is a “man of great sensitivity.” In professing his unworthiness to have Jesus under his roof, the centurion recognizes that, as a Jew, Jesus “will be contracting some kind of ritual impurity” by entering the house of a pagan.
Fr. Blantz doesn’t mention the use of the centurion’s words at Mass. Instead, he suggests that we would do well to “imitate” the centurion in asking favors of God. “That God is primarily a God of love,” he says, tying this particular homily into the central theme of nearly every sermon I have heard Fr. Blantz preach. “God wants to come to our assistance. But of course, he never imposes himself on us. He needs us to come and ask him, to ask for a favor, [so] that he can be the God he wants to be, that God of love.” Fr. Blantz urges that we “frequently do come to our Lord and ask for a favor for ourselves or our neighbor.” If we want our requests to be as successful as the centurion’s was, then we should aim to acquire his qualities of character. “Try to each day become more and more a person of faith, a person of humility, a person of charity, a person sensitive to the needs of others.” Then, “bringing our favors and requests to God,” we can be sure of “receiving God’s answer to them.” With this thought, Fr. Blantz ends his homily just four minutes after he began. This is a typical length for him. Most of the homilies I’ve heard at other Latin Masses are between three and six times longer.

Fr. Blantz returns to altar, again without making the sign of the cross, and everyone stands for the Nicene Creed. Only the priest and the server recite it aloud, however. Everyone kneels when they say, “Et incarnatus est,” rising again after they say, “Et homo factus est.” At the end of the creed, Fr. Blantz says, “Dominus vobiscum,” and Doug responds, “Et cum spiritu tuo.” Fr. Blantz continues, “Oremus,” and the congregation sits for the offertory prayers. The offertory chant, which would cover some of these prayers at a High Mass, is instead spoken quietly—almost inaudibly—by the priest. Fr. Blantz says the offertory prayers in the same low voice. Except for the infants, who are making some noise, there is silence for a couple of minutes while most of us read
the translations of these prayers in our missals. I’m not able to keep up with the pace at which Fr. Blantz reads the prayers. I see him washing his fingers with a few drops of water poured by the server before I get to Psalm 25 in my missal ("Lavabo inter innocentes manus meas…"). A few moments later, Fr. Blantz turns toward us, extends his hands, and says, quite audibly, “Orate, fratres.” I’ve never heard another priest say the beginning of this invitation to prayer aloud, though I believe it’s indicated in the rubrics. He says the rest of the words quietly as he turns back toward the altar. The server, not the whole congregation, responds with a prayer that God will accept the sacrifice at the priest’s hands. Doug speaks this response too quietly to be heard. Finally, the secreta—a proper prayer—is spoken “secretly” (i.e. in a low voice) by Fr. Blantz, who raises his voice for the ending, “per omnia saecula saeculorum.” Doug quietly responds, “Amen.”

Without pausing, Fr. Blantz and Doug begin the preface dialogue while the congregation remains seated. Only a few people join Doug in saying the responses: “Et cum spiritu tuo…Habemus ad Dominum…Dignum et justum est.” As Fr. Blantz begins reading the familiar Preface of the Trinity aloud, one man in the congregation stands up, only to sit back down when he sees that no one else has joined him. Everyone finally kneels a moment later when Doug rings the altar bells. He and Fr. Blantz say the Sanctus together while the rest of us listen. Then, we follow along in our missals as Fr. Blantz says the rest of the Canon quietly. He speaks the words of institution, the verba Christi, just a bit more loudly and distinctly. The altar bells accompanying the genuflections and elevations here strike me as the most musical part of this Mass. While the older attendees simply gaze toward the altar during all of this, I notice that the college students in the
congregation bow their heads for the words of institution, raise them at each elevation, and bow them again at each genuflection—gestures somewhat like those of the priest. After the institution narrative, it is quiet again until Fr. Blantz says the last words of the Canon’s doxology aloud: “per omnia saecula saeculorum.” This time, most of the congregation quietly says, “Amen.”

We remain kneeling while Fr. Blantz recites the Pater Noster aloud. Doug alone supplies the ending, “sed libera nos a malo.” Fr. Blantz says the prayers accompanying the breaking of the bread silently before saying the Pax aloud. Then he and Doug recite the Agnus Dei together. The rest of the prayers before and during the priest’s communion are silent. However, Fr. Blantz does say the beginning of the centurion’s prayer aloud. Each time the priest says, “Domine, non sum dignus,” Doug rings the altar bells. Then, after consuming the host and the draining the chalice, Fr. Blantz says the same prayer an additional three times with the congregation. It occurs to me that this prayer expressing both unworthiness and confidence is by far the most extended bit of speaking done by the congregation at this Low Mass.

Excepting the smallest children and perhaps one student, everyone present receives communion. There is no rail, and the first pew lacks a kneeler, so the procedure is to file into the second pew and kneel there. This takes some teamwork, for the pews in the chapel are so tightly crowded that it’s impossible for anyone to enter or exit when the kneeler is down. After going down the line-administering communion on the tongue to one group, Fr. Blantz waits patiently for the next group to get situated. After receiving communion, we return to our separate pews to kneel again.
No chant or song covers communion or the inaudible thanksgiving prayers that accompany the ablutions after communion, so everyone has a few minutes to pray in silence. Eventually, Fr. Blantz reads the post-communion collect aloud. We continue to kneel as he says, “Ite, missa est,” and we respond, “Deo gratias.” Turning toward us, Fr. Blantz gives the final blessing. As he turns back to the card on the altar to read the Last Gospel, the congregation stands. He reads the gospel silently, so we watch for him to genuflect at the proper point in the text and follow his lead. Then, taking the chalice and burse, he bows before the altar and walks back into the sacristy with the server.

At Low Masses I’ve attended elsewhere, the priest almost always leads the congregation in the “Leonine Prayers” before returning to the sacristy, but this is not Fr. Blantz’s practice. Here, a student will sometimes lead the English recitation of three “Hail Marys,” the “Hail, Holy Queen,” and a prayer to St. Michael the Archangel, which accompany a petition for the conversion of sinners and the liberty of the Catholic Church. No one does this today, but it appears that some are reading the Leonine Prayers silently from their missals. Most people kneel again for at least a minute before leaving the chapel. One or two people want Fr. Blantz to hear their confessions, and he soon returns from the sacristy without his vestments, ready to oblige. Just outside the chapel in the vestibule, some of the parents are chatting as their children mill about. The undergraduates who attend this Mass often go as a group to have breakfast in the dining hall afterwards. Curious if any of their fellow students are up yet, I decide to take the long way out through the hallways of the dorm, but encounter no one. Outside, the sidewalks are still unpopulated, but the bells in the tower of the Basilica are ringing to announce that the ten o’clock Mass will begin in fifteen minutes. This week’s Latin Mass
may be over already, but the liturgies that will be celebrated on campus today are just getting started.
CHAPTER 6
LIVING BETWEEN THEATER AND MUSEUM

As we sat surrounded by various products of “Catholic culture” that Fr. Phillips has collected from churches willing to part with their old paintings, statues, vessels, vestments, and furniture, he made a comment that seemed, in his museum-like rectory, oddly ambivalent about the merits of museums. I had asked whether he preferred to think of “restoration of the sacred” as a specific response to a contemporary threat or as something that’s constantly needed in the life of the church. His reply didn’t exactly answer my question, but it seemed to favor the latter interpretation of his chosen motto. “When you don’t take time to educate and constantly teach the faith, it becomes a museum piece. So you have to be able to always refresh, renew on a daily basis. That’s the approach that I’ve taken from the beginning.”

The danger of faith becoming a “museum piece” corresponds, in the terms used by Pelikan, to the peril of “dead traditionalism” replacing “living tradition.” While tradition cannot live without memory, the kind of memory associated with museums portends death and decay, according to Theodor Adorno.

The German word, “museal” [“museumlike”], has unpleasant overtones. It describes objects to which the observer no longer has a vital relationship and which are in the process of dying. They owe their preservation more to historical respect than to the needs of the present. Museum and mausoleum are connected by more
than phonetic association. Museums are like the family sepulchers of works of art. They testify to the neutralization of culture.¹

The most forceful part of St. John Cantius’s claim to be cultivating a living tradition rather than preserving a dead one consists in the assertion that it is no museum, but a functioning—indeed thriving—parish. When the “Patrons of Sacred Music” sponsor a Mozart Requiem, they can announce that the performance will place the work in its “original context”—a Roman Catholic Mass celebrated inside a church—instead of in a concert hall. When the pastor commissions a replica of a 15th-century altarpiece, he expects it to be erected behind an actual altar where prayers are offered—not in an alcove of some museum.

Still, Adorno is quick to point out that modern efforts to reproduce the art of centuries past “in its original form” typically yield nothing but “museum pieces without museums.” The alternatives to this path of “hopeless romanticism” aren’t much better, in his estimation. “Modernizing the past does it much violence and little good. But to renounce radically the possibility of experiencing the traditional would be to capitulate to barbarism out of devotion to culture. That the world is out of joint is shown everywhere in the fact that however a problem is solved, the solution is false.” The problem at hand confronts not only museum curators, but religious institutions as well. Their claim to preserve a traditional faith is unavoidably bound to their success or failure in transmitting the cultural traditions of earlier believers to their present heirs. Especially important are the artistic, musical, architectural, poetic, and performative traditions associated with a church’s official, public worship. The problem is that these cultural traditions, once they

are “no longer animated by a comprehensive, substantial force”—a force such as that represented by Western Christendom—can only be preserved by strategies that risk the appearance of inauthenticity. The “solutions” of romanticizing the past, modernizing it, or renouncing it can, each in its own way, ring “false.”

Tradition, if it is not to become the tomb of a dead faith, requires the renewal of the past in the present. But if the museum stands for the failure to “refresh” and “renew” daily, the theater also looms as a specter portending the death of tradition. At first this sounds odd, for what could be more animated than a “live performance”? Yet the requirement of performance—implied, as we saw in the last chapter, by the incorporated and not merely inscribed character of religious collective memory—raises the possibility that a liturgical rite will be perceived as “a performance.” The pejorative connotation of this term and of a cluster of related nouns, including “play,” “show,” “act,” “display,” and “theater,” is a surprisingly recent development, given their ubiquitous use as metaphors for false pretense. This connotation is related, moreover, to a modern proclivity to question the authenticity of religious ritual as a (mere) performance of prayers that can be accomplished without sincere devotion. Indeed, the word “ritual”

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2 Ibid., 176, 184.

3 It’s worth noting that Benjamin regards the “stage play” as the polar opposite of “a work of art that is completely subject to… mechanical reproduction,” insofar as the aura of a character in a play is inseparable for the audience from the aura of the actor whose personal presence is the instrument of the character’s presence. Benjamin, “The Work of Art,” 229–30.

4 For example, this seems a good place to confess that the idea of undertaking an ethnographic study of contemporary Latin Mass adherents was planted in my mind by a less-than-salutary verbal exchange during a public lecture on Summorum Pontificum given by my teacher, Nathan Mitchell, at the University of Notre Dame in 2007. An undergraduate student who had recently “developed an attachment” to the Tridentine Mass was in attendance. He disagreed with Prof. Mitchell’s argument that the motu proprio precludes the formation of new extraordinary form communities by limiting permission for using the 1962 missal to parishes “where there is a stable group of the faithful adhering to the earlier liturgical tradition” (SP 5). Unable to persuade the lecturer to abandon this position, the student stormed out of the room in protest, declaring, “This is just a show!”
itself may be set alongside the other terms that imply rehearsed, exaggerated, manipulative performance. The modern anthropological concept of ritual as a category of behavior observable in all societies (distinguished from the medieval name for a type of liturgical book, the *rituale*) even seems to have developed in this context of suspicion regarding the authenticity of performance.\(^5\) To criticize the Latin Mass as “dead ritual,” then, is to classify it not only as a museum piece but also as an inauthentically “theatrical” performance—little more than a gaudily pious costume drama.\(^6\)

In order to make progress in understanding contemporary attachment to the Latin Mass, it was necessary to admit that talk about “authentic tradition” expresses more than redundancy. Now, on the other hand, we must consider whether “authentic ritual” is anything other than a contradiction in terms. In doing so, we are shifting from genealogy to correspondence. The broad claim made in this chapter is that any chain of memory linking past, present, and future coincides, in modern social imaginaries, with some bond of sincerity joining an inner self, an external performance, and a social audience. With respect to Latin Mass Catholics, the more specific claim is that they verify this bond of sincerity—and by extension the chain of memory—by assessing the “reverence” of liturgical prayer. Reverence is not defined by a missal so much as it is cultivated through habits of posture, gesture, dress, speech, silence, attention, and aesthetic taste. The

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\(^6\) Particularly sumptuous examples of clerical dress make easy targets for ridicule. During his response to the North American Academy of Liturgy’s 2011 Berakah Award, architectural consultant Richard Vosko displayed a photograph of a Roman Catholic archbishop wearing a full *cappa magna* with a long train, now rarely seen. To the hearty laughter of the liturgical scholars in attendance, he deadpanned, “Some people in some religions, like my own, think that a return to traditional modalities of worship in language, music and ministry, with all of its ceremonial flourishes, will attract and satisfy a remnant. The statistics at this time are not on the side of this argument.” Richard S. Vosko, “The Language of Liturgical Space: Archetypes and Clichés,” *Worship* 86, no. 1 (January 2012): 47.
cultivation of reverence is what allows adherents to perceive the Latin Mass as sincere performance—this in spite of the modern suspicion that habitual prayer and rehearsed reverence are the very essence of “dead ritual.”

The Performance of Prayer

In one sense, suspicion about the sincerity of prayer performed in public is not new. Critique of hypocritical worship is an ancient theme in both Jewish and Christian theology. The roots of this critique may be found in the Hebrew prophets, in which a distinction between external convention and internal conviction already appears.

Speaking through the prophet Isaiah, God complains, “These people draw near with their mouths and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their worship of me is a human commandment learned by rote.” Jesus cites this same oracle in order to turn the tables on the Pharisees who question his disciples’ failure to follow the “tradition of the elders” by ritually cleansing their hands before eating. He demonstrates the bankruptcy of the Pharisees’ piety by pointing out their cynical use of “traditional” temple offerings to avoid honoring their fathers and mothers with support in their old age. “You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition!” Jesus sarcastically declares. Lest they fall into similar hypocrisy, Jesus also

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7 Is 29:13. The critique of hypocritical ritual—especially ritual sacrifice—is a common prophetic motif found also in the poetical and wisdom books. Its goal is to call Israel to moral conversion, usually with an eye to social justice. See also Is 1:10–17; Mic 6:6–8; Hos 6:6–9; Ps 40:6–8; 50:7–23; 51:16–17; Sir 34:21–35:15.

8 Mk 7:1–23. See also Mt 15:1–20. Although it has been argued that Jesus’ quotation of Is 29:13 against the Pharisees is a later Markan redaction, Thomas Hatina shows that Mk 7:5–7 “may well represent an “authentic conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees concerning their different programs of holiness,” in which it is “entirely plausible” that Jesus would have quoted Is 29:13. Thomas R. Hatina, “Did Jesus Quote Isaiah 29:13 Against the Pharisees? An Unpopular Appraisal,” Bulletin for Biblical Research 16, no. 1 (2006): 93–94. See also John C. Poirier, “The Interiority of True Religion in Mark 7, 6–8. With a Note on
warns his followers to keep their own piety secret, whether it takes the form of almsgiving, prayer, or fasting. “Whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

It’s essential to clarify that this prophetic tradition of unmasking the real motives of “pharisaical” worship is not a critique of public ritual prayer as such. It is aimed, rather, at those who abuse the cult of divine worship, using it to conceal their sins instead of submitting to God’s judgment and availing themselves of God’s mercy. As Luke’s parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector illustrates, the privately uttered prayer of self-righteousness still fails to justify, while a sincere prayer for God’s mercy may very well be accompanied by public gestures of penitence. In citing Christ’s warning about ostentatious prayer as the ultimate origin of later critiques, Ramie Targoff is partially correct to say that what “renders public prayer hypocritical” is “its performative nature: the worshipper caters to a visible and earthly rather than an invisible and divine audience.” Performance before a gathered community of earthly worshippers always provides an opportunity for hypocrisy. But the idea that external displays of piety actually encourage dissimulation and constitute evidence of insincere prayer is as foreign to the New Testament as it is to the Hebrew prophets. Far from rejecting ritual worship, the prophetic critique of sterile religion assumes that the public cult is the pre-eminent place

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9 Mt 6:1–21.

10 Lk 18:9–14.

where the people of Israel encounter their God, either to acknowledge their need for conversion and experience salvation, or to stubbornly insist on their righteousness and provoke divine punishment.¹²

Modern criticism of “dead ritual” makes different assumptions about public prayer. Although it often adopts the same tone of moral outrage that characterizes the earlier prophetic critique, the polemic is complicated by a newer and ultimately unresolved tension between inwardness and outwardness in modern conceptions of the self. We need to explore this tension in some detail in order to understand what is distinctive about modern critiques of insincere worship. It’s true that there is a biblical precedent for distinguishing between an interior self that God alone is able to examine and external appearances that can mislead human inspectors. “The LORD does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.”¹³ But this dichotomy is a construct common to many cultural and historical contexts, as anthropologists Saba Mahmood and Marilyn Strathern point out, so the important task in investigating one particular instance or comparing it to another is to ask how the two terms, interior and exterior, are related.¹⁴

In medieval Europe, for example, the boundary between an internal realm of the individual mind and an external space of interaction with society and with the natural

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¹³ 1 Sam 16:7. See also 1 Chr 28:9; Prv 15:11; Jer 17:10; 20:12; Mt 6:1–8, 16–18; Lk 16:15; Acts 1:24.

world was highly “porous,” as Charles Taylor says.\textsuperscript{15} If this tended to constrain “self-expression” to conventionally prescribed behaviors, it also prevented public performances from conflicting with anything like the modern ideal of being “true to oneself.” The illuminating case of the Corpus Christi drama demonstrates that medieval audiences could hardly perceive conventional performances as insincere, for everyone understood that the actors were only “playing” the roles assigned them. There was no question of the actors “really” possessing the thoughts and feelings of the characters they portrayed, for the reality that mattered in the drama was a symbolic reality rather than an existential one. “It played action in a ‘game’—not in ‘ernest’—within a world set apart, established by convention and obeying rules of its own. A lie designed to tell the truth about reality, the drama was understood as significant play.”\textsuperscript{16} This “theater of game” began to be displaced by a “theater of illusion” in the sixteenth century, so that by 1600 successful actors had to master the “art of personation”—the ability to convince audiences that they actually felt the desires, sufferings, and motives of the characters they portrayed.\textsuperscript{17} Not coincidentally, this was the same period in which Christian movements

\textsuperscript{15} See Taylor, \textit{A Secular Age}, 35–43.


of interior moral “Reform” encouraged a new, “buffered” sense of self to emerge.\(^\text{18}\) In public spaces such as the theater, the market, the royal court, and the church, it began to be assumed that one’s inward dispositions could be effectively insulated from the outward representations that one made in order to satisfy the expectations of onlookers. Especially among groups at the margins of social and political acceptability, the sense that one’s “real” or “true” self remained hidden from all but God was protective. In Renaissance England, Targoff observes, Catholic recusants and Puritan resisters assured themselves that “God would privilege their private beliefs over their fraudulent public conformity.”\(^\text{19}\)

The price, so to speak, of this new inwardness was distrust of “theatrical” performance. The “antitheatrical prejudice” in Western moral thought is at least as old as Plato, according to Jonas Barish’s thorough history, and it is strongly expressed in Christian terms by Tertullian, John Chrysostom, and Augustine.\(^\text{20}\) Nevertheless, it is only in the early modern period that “theatrical” becomes an epithet applied to performances outside the theater, where “actors” are criticized not so much for playing a feigned or artificial person as for playing themselves falsely or artificially. Nowhere is this prejudice against “theatrical” exhibitionism more fiercely expressed than in Protestant attacks on the “popish” liturgy of the Roman Catholic Church beginning in the sixteenth century.

From [William] Tyndale onward…popish liturgy is scornfully likened to the theater, and much picturesque invective mustered to drive the point home. Tyndale himself never wearies of referring to

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\(^{18}\) Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 85–88, 134-36. Note that Taylor uses the word “Reform” to indicate both Protestant and Catholic efforts to raise standards of lay piety and shift the primary locus of moral responsibility to individual believers.

\(^{19}\) Targoff, “The Performance of Prayer,” 51.

traditional priestly vestments as “disguises.”… [Thomas] Becon’s whole treatise, indeed, The Displaying of the Popish Mass, amounts to a sustained attack on the theatricality of traditional worship. The detailed contrast between the Last Supper and its liturgical reenactment turns on the claim that by introducing ceremonial costume, ritual gesture, and symbolic decor, and by separating the clergy from the laity, the church has perverted a simple communal event into a portentous masquerade, a magic show designed to hoodwink the ignorant.\textsuperscript{21}

Yet as Targoff convincingly demonstrates, the emerging urge to deny any connection between external displays of piety and real interior devotion stood in tension with a “firm commitment to the authenticity of the body’s physical signs,” both as an indicator of inward dispositions and, crucially, as an effective means of transforming those dispositions. Not only Catholics, but “mainstream Renaissance Protestants frequently imagined performative behavior to have a causal as well as reflective relation to the internal self: according to such accounts, the individual’s assumption of external gestures prompted the corresponding internal conditions.”\textsuperscript{22} Mahmood follows Targoff in locating the Western philosophical roots of this commitment to the “transformative power of practice” in Aristotle’s \textit{Nicomachean Ethics}. Aristotle’s legacy—evident in the thought of Islamic theologians like al-Ghazali and in the systems of Thomas Aquinas and other scholastic theologians—is summarized by the notion of \textit{habitus} (Greek: \textit{hesis}; Arabic: \textit{malaka}).\textsuperscript{23} In the “traditions of moral cultivation” articulated by these thinkers,

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 155–61.
\textsuperscript{22} Targoff, “The Performance of Prayer,” 58–60.
habitus “is understood to be an acquired excellence at either a moral or a practical craft, learned through repeated practice until that practice leaves a permanent mark on the character of the person.” In this logic of personal formation, one acquires the habitus of a pious person, for example, by practicing habits of external piety.24

Applied to ritual performance, this logic doesn’t lead to the same critique of “theatrical” worship that characterized sixteenth- and seventeenth-century attacks on the Mass. Also, as Mahmood emphasizes, confidence in ritual performance as a means to the acquisition of a virtuous habitus contrasts with dominant anthropological theories of ritual, in which the stylized repetition of conventional behaviors is held to have “little to do with what one ‘genuinely’ or ‘truly’ feels.” For those who claim, on the contrary, that the activity of public prayer reinforces their desire for worship, “ritual is not regarded as the theater in which a preformed self enacts a script of social action; rather, the space of ritual is one among a number of sites where the self comes to acquire and give expression to its proper form.”25 In other words, where some modern people see a theatrical display of external gestures void of any “real” inner conviction, other equally modern people may see a means to authentic selfhood. Moreover, these two models of the relationship between performance and subjectivity can exist simultaneously in the self-consciousness of a group or even of an individual. For example, the very same reformers who dismissed the Mass as ineffectual theater could turn and attack the Elizabethan stage for being all too effective in forming the morals of players and audiences alike. Similarly,


25 Mahmood, Politics of Piety, 130–33.
Shakespeare’s Hamlet could claim to “have that within which passes show,” yet still believe that “use almost can change the stamp of nature.”

Thus, the point of these observations is not that some modern believers have progressed beyond needing the “pious theater” of liturgical prayer, nor that others have faithfully maintained a “traditional” understanding of ritual’s formative influence. Instead, the important thing to note is the unresolved tension between ritual seen as an external performance capable of revealing or masking the true motives of a “buffered self,” and ritual seen as a “technology of the self,” capable of working its way through repeated practice into the desires, dispositions, and habitus of the worshipper. Modern people can simultaneously perceive ritual as a deeply convincing activity and a most opportune occasion for hypocrisy and self-deception. It’s this tension that raises the interest in sincere, “authentic” ritual to a fever pitch. The same tension also tends to make those who take different approaches to the cultivation of interior devotion into opponents over the sincerity of external worship. The divisions in this argument are multiple, but a major one separates those who emphasize the role of ritual in channeling the external expression of interior devotion from those who emphasize ritual’s role in acquiring interior devotion through external discipline.

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27 See Asad, Genealogies of Religion.

28 See Seligman et al., Ritual and Its Consequences. These authors argue that ritual and sincerity are always in tension with each other as “modes of understanding the world” that exist in all societies. The “modern” period, in their view, is one in which the sincere mode has achieved a “rare” but not unprecedented supremacy over the ritual mode. I find it more helpful to think of the modern period as one in which the tension between ritual and sincerity is unusually pronounced.
Probably the most widespread contemporary approach to religious ritual—and certainly the dominant view in anthropological studies of religion—is that “ritual activity is where emotional spontaneity comes to be controlled.”

In the context of public worship, external conventions do not shape interior dispositions (i.e. emotions, desires, motives) so much as they channel their expression into socially meaningful forms. Seen in a positive light—as it is, for example, in Victor Turner’s controversial praise for the pre-conciliar liturgy—traditional ritual is understood as “a vehicle for every sort of Christian interiority,” a medium for “deep” communication capable of uniting people with vastly different individual interests in common worship.

Yet the same understanding of ritual more often casts liturgy in a negative light as an oppressive social institution that forces the expression of genuine Christian interiority into a conventional straitjacket.

A classic expression of this critique comes from a man widely acknowledged to be the most important articulator of the modern ethic of authenticity, Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Rousseau’s “Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar” is mainly a defense of “natural religion” against the doctrinal impositions of churches, but his comments on liturgical “vanity” could easily find a place in contemporary admonishments of Latin Mass adherents.

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30 Turner, “Ritual, Tribal and Catholic,” 525. I’m suggesting, of course, that Turner’s praise for the pre-conciliar liturgy and criticism of the post-conciliar reform has caused consternation among liturgical scholars because they overwhelmingly accept his account of what successful ritual should do, even if they vehemently disagree with his assessment of the reform’s results.

31 See Taylor, The Ethics of Authenticity, 27–28; Guignon, On Being Authentic, 55–60; Lindholm, Culture and Authenticity, 8–10; Trilling, Sincerity and Authenticity, 53–80; Ferrara, Reflective Authenticity.
Let us not confuse the ceremony of religion with religion itself. The worship God asks for is that of the heart. And that worship, when it is sincere, is always [already] uniform. One must be possessed of a mad vanity indeed to imagine that God takes so great an interest in the form of the priest’s costume, in the order of the words he pronounces, in the gestures he makes at the altar, and in all his genuflexions. Ah, my friend, remain upright! You will always be near enough to the earth. God wants to be revered in spirit and in truth. This is the duty of all religions, all countries, all men. As to external worship, if it must be uniform for the sake of good order, that is purely a question of public policy; no revelation is needed for that.  

The quasi-fictional priest who utters these words has come to believe that “the true duties of Religion are independent of the institutions of men.” He trusts only reason unaided by any institutionally mediated tradition of revealed knowledge. Provocatively, Rousseau claims that his priest can still offer Mass sincerely and even reverently. It requires of the vicar a concentrated act of will to bring his internal feelings into agreement with the external ritual, which he is determined not to perform out of long habit.

Formerly I said the Mass with the lightness with which one eventually treats the most serious things when one does them too often. But since adopting my new principles, I celebrate it with more veneration… Bearing in mind that I bring to [the supreme Being] the prayers of the people in a prescribed form, I carefully follow all the rites, I recite attentively, I take care never to omit either the least word or the least ceremony. When I approach the moment of the consecration, I collect myself so as to perform it in the frame of mind that the Church and the grandeur of the sacrament demand. I try to annihilate my reason before the supreme intelligence. I say to myself; “Who are you to measure infinite power?” I pronounce the sacramental words with respect, and I put into them all the faith within my power.

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33 Ibid., 479.
Rousseau, not one to advocate “annihilating” reason in order to meet the expectations of society, can only be saying that the external forms and ceremonies of the church make an unreasonable demand on the authentically religious person. That his priest must perform them as a means of livelihood is an injustice, but the man is a hero of conscience for trying to perform them with as much sincerity as he can muster, knowing that the “simple people” are given no other way to express their religious sentiments. Few contemporary critics of the Latin Mass would go as far as Rousseau does in attacking the external “ceremony of religion” generally, but the theory of religious interiority articulated here remains very influential in popular and scholarly understandings of ritual. Rousseau’s “view of the unique privatized subject whose essence cannot be captured in the social conventions of a given society seems to resonate with the conception of ritual action as necessarily devoid of ‘authentic, individualized’ emotions.”

If this conception leaves open any possibility of offering ritual worship sincerely, it is the possibility that one may still discover within oneself some principle, some personal calling or sentiment that allows one to conform without being conformist—to find in the externally given rites an authentic vehicle for one’s particular sort of Christian interiority. In order for this to happen, as Turner explains, it must be possible for the rite to be “performed by the most diverse groups and individuals, surmounting their divisions

34 Ibid., 475–77. Part of what Rousseau contributes to the modern understanding of authenticity is an important (if confusing) reorientation of the telos of the older ideal of sincerity away from others and toward oneself. The attempt to change one’s own feelings or dispositions in order to more sincerely play a role that others have assigned comes to be judged as inauthentic, even if the blame redounds, as in the example of the Savoyard Priest, more to society’s account that to one’s own. See Trilling, Sincerity and Authenticity, 10–11; Ferrara, Reflective Authenticity, 86–87.

35 Mahmood, Politics of Piety, 129 n. 18.
of age, sex, ethnicity, culture, economic status or political affiliation.”  

36 Turner’s argument with liturgical scholars turns on whether the pre-conciliar or the post-conciliar liturgy fits this description better; it has little to do with contrastive understandings of how interiority is shaped by participation in liturgical prayer. In order to be sincere, this participation must move outward, submerging one’s individual motives in those of the assembly and joining one’s interior prayers to the public prayer of the church. Convention and repetition create predictable and socially meaningful channels for this activity, which is ultimately capable of acting back on interior dispositions. There is a kind of interior self-transformation sought here, but one in which the external practices don’t do the work of transformation so much as they set apart a shared space—a “sacred” or “liminal” realm—for “moving participants out of their mundane selves and allowing them to act, think, and feel ‘reflexively,’ that is, by placing their current lives in vital relation to a supremely noble paradigm.”  

37 Ultimately, this is transformation through reflection on experience, not transformation through habituation. Acting out of habit, in this understanding of ritual, would risk returning participants to the realm of the “mundane.” If, like the Savoyard vicar, one nevertheless performs the rite with outward “veneration,” it’s not because one hopes that the habit will lead to greater interior reverence. Rather, one channels the unique feelings and motives that one has developed through interior reflection into external signs that other participants can understand and accept as proof of one’s sincerity.

37 Ibid., 520.
Those who take a more Aristotelian approach to acquiring interior virtue through exterior ritual don’t neglect the sign value of reverence; they too look for a convincing outward display of sincerity. But they tend to see reverence less as a set of cultural codes or constraints than as an ensemble of interior dispositions with external practices, together expressing and effectively inculcating a *habitus*. This is why Barbara, the catechesis director at St. John Cantius, insists that liturgical vestments are not “costumes.” Their true value lies in their ability to help those who wear them to approach the Mass with more interior reverence.

You’ve seen many altar boys in different places: their gym shoes, their sweatpants, their... And then they just put on an alb and they think they’re all done. My son was with a friend, and they were altar boys at someone’s wedding... And they knew they were improperly dressed. You wear dress shoes, you wear black slacks, you wear a white shirt, and then you put your vestments on. And then, the vestments aren’t about who you are at all; it’s about what you’re trying to become. At this wedding, this kid shows up—he’s in high school—and he’s got sandals on and shorts. And I’m like, “Um, do you have dress pants and shoes in your car?” ... And he looked at me like I’m crazy. And his mother came up and she said, “Well, he’s going to put on his costume. It’ll cover it all up.” ... Even the mother of this boy—who was good enough to influence him to be an altar boy and to want to do all these things—still didn’t have the understanding of what all of this means, that it’s all part of a whole, and when you take off part of a whole, you’re missing a piece. When the children don’t understand why they wear vestments, why do you expect [that they would understand]? The parents don’t understand why the priests wear vestments. Part of my class is to teach that each time a priest puts on a different piece [of his vestments], it’s a different prayer for that priest to become a better priest so he can offer the Holy Sacrifice.

In a performative sense, the vestments make the priest or the altar boy. But there is also a *formative* sense in which Barbara believes this to be true, and this is the sense that she and other Latin Mass Catholics emphasize. The practice of prayerfully donning vestments day after day and week after week leaves a mark on the wearer’s conscience. Though the
alb covers everything underneath, one feels “improperly dressed” in sweatpants and gym shoes. More importantly, one perceives the seriousness of the “Holy Sacrifice” and senses one’s inability, in the face of so great a mystery, to offer fitting worship without the assistance of divine grace.

In this understanding of ritual, one becomes a more sincere participant from the outside in. This applies to laypeople in the pews as much as to the priest and ministers in the sanctuary. Many things were “awkward” when Bridget first started attending the Tridentine Mass in Alumni Hall, but receiving communion on her tongue while kneeling was particularly difficult to do without worrying about how she looked. Back home, such behavior always seemed “really ostentatious and kind of weird.” Nevertheless, she agreed to “experiment” with receiving only on the tongue for a period of time at Doug’s suggestion. By the end of the “experiment”—she doesn’t recall exactly how long it took—Bridget had reversed her opinion. Now, receiving communion in the hand feels “awkward” and “looks weird.” She has even become “paranoid” about dropping a crumb when the host is placed in her hand, but she doesn’t mind her changed attitude. “It helps me have a lot of respect for the Eucharist,” she says. Anne, who also grew up receiving communion in her hand but now attends the Latin Mass at St. Patrick’s, likes that kneeling to receive communion on her tongue makes her feel “like a baby bird,” too “helpless” to feed herself.

Anne is not the only Latin Mass Catholic who uses this image to describe kneeling for communion. It’s a good metaphor for the disposition of lowliness and humility that she and they hope to acquire by practicing this and other external signs of reverence. A Mass celebrated in ways that Latin Mass adherents describe as “reverent”
contains numerous external aids that help them take to heart their “unworthiness.” In learning these habits of humble posture, dress, speech, and silence, they also learn the impossibility of achieving worthiness by their own merits. Their simultaneous awareness of sin and of available grace is summarized in the final prayer that the priest and the people recite before receiving communion: “Domine, non sum dignus ut intres sub tectum meum, sed tantum dic verbo et sanabitur anima mea.” The prayer exists in the ordinary form, of course, but the extraordinary form dwells on it with more intensity, both because it is repeated a total of six times and because it may be (as at Low Mass in Alumni Hall) the only phrase longer than four words that the congregation says aloud.

In fact, many of the specific points that Latin Mass Catholics emphasize when describing a “reverent” Mass are not unique to the Tridentine Mass. Kneeling for communion, celebration ad orientem, and the use of Latin, among other things, are all possibilities to which the ordinary form is entirely open. Still, Latin Mass Catholics associate reverence with the 1962 Missal because they have experienced these not as possibilities that might be chosen from time to time, but as rules and conventions that are always followed. For most Latin Mass Catholics, the opposite of reverence is not deliberate “sacrilege,” even if in their more polemical moments they like to relate stories of “desecration” and “abuse” observed at Novus Ordo Masses. Rather, what they find most inimical to the cultivation of sincere, interior devotion is a compulsory informality and exaggerated spontaneity that comes across to them as predictable, banal, and theatrical in its own right. In their view, this kind of insincere prayer results from

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38 Lest we imagine that this assessment is merely that of people who have no significant experience of worship styles that aim for “openness, spontaneity, and lack of formality,” it’s worth noting what Bruce Ellis Benson says about the way that members of “less liturgical churches” often perceive the success of such efforts. “Those in the evangelical tradition know how ‘spontaneous’ prayers can become
avoiding the rote training and formal conventions that allow one to act habitually in the context of ritual performance. As Anne’s thirty-three-year-old husband, Josh, explains, the fear of “stuffy” or “fuddy-duddy liturgy” led his parents and other Catholics of their generation to rely on their personal creativity to make the ritual come alive. “My mom was enthralled by ritual, my dad had grown up with ritual as a Jew, so they liked it. But if it weren’t done with panache and verve, they read it as kind of rote, insincere, mechanical… [My mom] likes solemnity, but she didn’t want it to be rote. It had to have a personal stamp.” For Josh, however, the emphasis on local, on-the-spot adaptation led to liturgy that seemed “contrived,” that “felt like it wasn’t real.” When writing new prayers, inventing liturgical dances, or substituting alternative translations of readings, his parents and the other worship leaders at his childhood parish would explain, “This is how we make a joyful noise,” or, “This is how we experience God’s presence in our lives.” Josh says,

I was willing to accept that in a lot of other things. Like I did transcendental meditation after receiving communion [laughs]… So I was willing to accept that in other respects, but somehow the liturgy, the ritual itself, it didn’t make sense to me to invent things. I liked the idea that the liturgy used to be bad and boring, and then the Council came… But I didn’t like it when Joanie Miller’s worship team—“Lector Team A”—would come up with some alternative text. When I was a lector and I would turn the page for the reading and I’d see somebody had taped something in, it just felt kind of hokey to me. It felt like being in a play. And being in a play and being in a liturgy just seemed like they ought to be different.

To summarize all of this in colloquial yet evocative terms, we might say that Latin Mass Catholics suspect the theatricality of “stuffy” liturgy less than the theatricality rather predictable… Many seemingly nonliturgical churches fall into rhythms that might as well be scripted simply because they vary so little.” Liturgy as a Way of Life: Embodying the Arts in Christian Worship, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 140.
of “hokey” or “cheesy” liturgy. I borrow the last term from Jennifer, the St. John Cantius parishioner that we meet in this next profile, who is the same age as Josh. Unlike Josh, she grew up with very little exposure to Catholic liturgy, but she shares his judgment that many ordinary form parishes try so hard to avoid seeming “conformist” that their rituals come across as “made up” instead. In either case—“stuffy” or “cheesy”—the prayer of the assembly is perceived as theatrical instead of sincere.

Jennifer

I interviewed Jennifer in the parish hall underneath St. John Cantius after the eleven o’clock ordinary form Latin Mass one Sunday. This allowed her two-year-old son to charge around the large, open space, supervised by her friendly but more reserved husband, Kevin. Jennifer is no extrovert herself, and I probably wouldn’t have met her if Rick hadn’t introduced us. Whereas Rick is eager to situate his personal story of coming to the Latin Mass in world-historical context, she remains more introspective.

Jennifer and I were born in the same year, 1978. Although she and her siblings were “not raised religiously at all,” her parents, both Midwesterners, were nominally Christians. She says, “When I was growing up, I knew my Mom was—and I put this in little air quotes—‘Presbyterian,’ but I don’t really think that they went to church. I think my grandfather was like a materialist, and my grandmother was an alcoholic, so that doesn’t leave a lot of room for genuine, earnest churchgoing.” Her father was one of nine children in an Irish Catholic family. He and most of his siblings “fell away from the Church” long before Jennifer was born. Her parents never expressed any opposition to religion; they simply “never talked about God” at home. “I remember talking to my cousins and having this conversation where they were like, ‘You don’t believe in God?’
And I was like, ‘No’—like I don’t even know what that question is. And at that point it was like, ‘Oh, well I guess that’s my identity: I don’t believe in God.’”

Still, it wasn’t until high school, when Jennifer “started developing some spunk,” that she saw her lack of religious belief as an opportunity to “kick it in the face of the man.” She recalls, “I was a feminist, and I was an atheist. I didn’t do a lot of drugs or anything like that…but I just made kind of like political choices that were far to the Left.” She decided to attend a premier women’s college—one of the Seven Sisters—where it seemed that her political views would fit in. Although she embraced the “counter-cultural” lifestyle of her fellow students, Jennifer was “totally miserable throughout college,” and the feeling only worsened after graduation.

There’s nowhere else like (A) a liberal arts college, but (B) especially like a women’s liberal arts college in the real world. It just doesn’t exist. You’re so sheltered, you’re coddled, and you are allowed to think any stupid idea that you want to think… So there was just no traction after leaving for like what I was going to do next. And I had no ambition, so it wasn’t even like I could be careerist… It offered me this identity that was completely unworkable in the real world.

In retrospect, Jennifer thinks the only good thing about her college experience was studying astronomy.

Astronomy to me was like a replacement for spirituality… And I think that without acknowledging this at the time, I knew there was a God because he had created all this insanely amazing stuff going on with the universe… We’d go to Wisconsin in the summer, and we’d look at the stars and I would just feel full of the feeling that we feel when God loves us, is the best way I can describe it. So looking back, I wasn’t dead to this.

Feeling “severely depressed,” Jennifer moved back into her parents’ home for several months after college, but soon got an office job downtown and an apartment in the neighborhood where St. John Cantius is located. She also happened to meet Rick,
whose broad experience of life she could respect even from her “secular point of view.”

At his invitation, she attended his daughter’s baptism and made a few other visits to the church. “I would come in here and be like—not like I’m going to burst into flames—but just feel so uncomfortable here, like everyone knows that I don’t belong here and they’re all staring at me. I don’t like being the center of attention anywhere. I would just be so uncomfortable, but then the music would be so beautiful.” She began to drop by the church occasionally on her own. Riding by on her bicycle one day, she stopped to talk with a young brother in the Canons Regular who was standing out on the steps. He was “the friendliest guy on earth,” and talking with him was instrumental in “sloughing off all of the total awkwardness” involved in going to church at St. John’s.

A “late sleeper” on Sundays, Jennifer began attending the eleven o’clock Latin Mass. Even now, she’s not sure what the differences are between this ordinary form Mass and the twelve-thirty Tridentine Latin Mass. “If you just come,” like she did, “you don’t know what the heck’s happening, because it’s in Latin.” In spite of this—or rather because of it—Jennifer was impressed by the sincerity and seriousness of the priests and the congregation.

I think that having the Latin Mass, it was like, “They’re so serious that I have to read this manual to figure out what’s going on.” And Latin seemed terribly intellectual, you know. And the fact that they were doing Latin seemed terribly earnest. And you can just tell from people’s postures and attitudes here that they’re not— They might be faking it; I don’t know. They could be or couldn’t be; I’m not sure. But they’re not doing things that just seem so of our day and age, I guess—like trying to bend what should be kind of a timeless thing…

Maybe I didn’t know at first, because it took me a really long time to like commit. And at least part of that might have been trying to detect a level of authenticity, I guess. And eventually I could not
detect any inauthenticity here. I really didn’t experiment very much with going to other churches until I was kind of committed.

The other factor influencing Jennifer’s decision to commit to being Catholic was the seeming authenticity of the priest at St. John’s whom she came to with questions about Catholic doctrine.

He would just say what he thought to say… So I felt like I’m coming to see him about the catechism, and I’m asking these questions, and he’s giving me these totally authentic answers that are not polished and are not planned out beforehand. I don’t remember specifically any questions that might have flummoxed him, but I remember there was that general feeling like we were working it out together.

Jennifer’s catechesis culminated in receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation three years after she graduated from college. She continued to prefer the Latin Mass because it required her to work at deepening her understanding of the Mass. Although she usually attended the eleven o’clock Mass, she borrowed one of the red booklet missals produced for the Tridentine Mass by the Coalition in Support of Ecclesia Dei and studied its marginal notes, which give theological explanations of the various parts of the Mass.

“My motivation for going to the Latin Mass was learning something. It was forcing me to learn about what the Mass was doing at every step of the way. So do I understand Latin? No. But I made sure to have that red book.”

Around the same time that she was confirmed, Jennifer met her future husband, Kevin, who was working his way through college as a bicycle courier. Kevin “wasn’t really religious at all,” but he would accompany Jennifer to Mass. She took him to meet the priests at St. John’s, but before they could make arrangements for a wedding, Kevin found a job in Portland, Oregon, and they both decided to move there. Jennifer found a job as a college admissions counselor, but she and Kevin had a hard time finding a
church that they liked as well as St. John’s. “We went around to all these churches, and they just seemed so watered-down.” Finally, they visited a church dedicated to a saint they’d never heard of, knowing only that the parish was Catholic. “We walked in, and they were playing, like, this Arabic music is all I can describe it as. And we sat down and we opened up the booklet, and it was half in Arabic. And we were like, ‘It’s another one of those churches; they think that they can just do whatever they want.’” But the people were “so friendly” and happy to help with the booklet, which was “way more intense than the red one.” The language used in the liturgy was the “most beautiful thing” Jennifer had ever heard, especially when it was sung by the priest. Back at home, Google informed her that they had stumbled across the Maronite Rite, celebrated mainly by Christians of Lebanese extraction. Jennifer and Kevin stood out as the only non-Lebanese people there, and she thought that they ought to look for a “more familiar” church. In the end though, the Maronite church was the only one that she felt was “on the same level of seriousness” as St. John’s had been. The two-hour Divine Liturgy didn’t seem long, “because it’s a great Mass,” and the half-hour homilies that “Abuna” gave were “riveting.” He wasn’t afraid to “yell” at his congregation and “at himself too” about the danger of valuing material things too much—a message, Jennifer notes, that one “rarely” hears preached at St. John Cantius.

Kevin was received into the Maronite church, and he and Jennifer ended up having a Maronite wedding. “It was fun; it was beautiful,” she remembers. Some of their immediate family members and best friends were not excited about spending any time in

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39 Jennifer seems to recall that most of the prayers at this Maronite Divine Liturgy (or “Mass,” as she calls it) were said in “Aramaic” rather than Arabic. More likely, they were in Syriac, a later Semitic language that evolved from Aramaic. Syriac is the ancient liturgical language of the Maronite Rite.
church, let alone hours. Jennifer successfully prevailed upon her father, however, to receive communion at her wedding, and even to go to confession beforehand—he’d last gone when he was a child in Catholic school. A few months after the wedding, Kevin found a job in Chicago, and Jennifer, expecting their first child, was eager to move back. There might have been a time when Portland would have appealed to her as a liberal’s paradise, but now the people seemed “so strange.” It didn’t help that she was preparing to be “just a housewife” while her college friends were busy getting “Ph.D.’s and $100,000 jobs.” She’s not sure what her feminist college friends think of her decision to stop working. “I don’t even want to know,” she says.

Back in Chicago, the expectant couple found a home in the suburbs, but not a parish that could survive the scrutiny of Jennifer’s “sensitive schmaltz detector” in the way that St. John Cantius can.

There’s nothing schmaltzy about this place at all. You know what I mean? There’s no guitar Mass; there’s no “let’s turn to the left and share Jesus’s handshake” or something totally made up and bizarre. Like [at] almost any suburban church, I just have this moment of, “Ughh,” like it’s so cheesy. You don’t have to make things cheesy to make people come to church. That’s the entire exercise of St. John’s: you just have to be real.

In order to attend a “real” Mass at St. John’s, Jennifer and Kevin now make the half-hour trip into the city most Sundays. Jennifer still likes the eleven o’clock Mass best, but the time meshes poorly with her son’s nap schedule. Consequently, they usually attend the nine o’clock Mass in English. She misses having to “work to follow the Latin Mass,” though she wonders if the added distraction of a toddler would make following the Latin Mass too difficult. “I guess I don’t want to become complacent,” she says, having “noticed” that people who
“know the English Mass by heart” demonstrate in other ways that they don’t take what happens at Mass seriously. To her, the most visible indicator of this is their approach to receiving the Eucharist. “What I really hate in the ’burbs is that it’s always communion in the hand. I feel like a filthy creature like scarifying it out of my hand like it’s a cracker and not the Body of Christ… That just really disturbs me.” Still, if other Catholics don’t feel disturbed by receiving communion in the hand or by having laypeople assist in distributing it, Jennifer is not out to change their minds. “I don’t believe in making waves to try to change the congregation if that’s what everybody else wants the congregation to be.”

Rather, the kind of congregation that Jennifer wants is one in which she and other laypeople have neither the freedom nor the responsibility to make such decisions about how Mass will be celebrated. “I’m much more comfortable when the decisions are being made from the top and going down because I’m probably just a big, fat conformist.” She applies this label to herself seriously but laces the description with sarcasm, knowing the scorn that an earlier version of herself would heap on her present, “conformist” attitude. In a way, though, conformity has become for her an aid rather than an obstacle to greater self-awareness. The clear restrictions on how she may participate in the Mass at St. John’s remind her that a decision to participate at all involves a real choice about the kind of life she intends to live. Even as she has been conditioned to feel uncomfortable handling the consecrated host, she has become convinced that “living a sinful lifestyle” contradicts receiving the Body of Christ as spiritual food. If Jennifer knows that she’s “not in a state of grace,” she won’t take communion until she has gone to confession and
resolved to change her behavior. “That’s just the way it is, people. You have to make your choice, you know. I don’t want the Church to change, so…”

The availability of multiple priests to hear confessions is, therefore, a major reason why Jennifer still attends St. John’s. “If you’re going to be serious, you’re going to have to go to confession on a regular basis because you’re going to end up doing something and you’re going to need to.” It’s hard for her to take Catholics who never go to confession seriously. “They think that you can just do that ‘I’m sorry’ and ‘It’s okay’ thing instead of actually doing the hard thing of spilling your guts to someone and feeling like crap.” Of course, Jennifer doesn’t want her experience of the sacrament to be “unpleasant,” but she also doesn’t want the false comfort of a priest who shows no “conviction” about the harmful effects of sin. The ideal confessor is one who “pierces to the heart of the matter,” because nothing is so “motivating” as having to confront one’s own behavior honestly.

“In a nutshell,” St. John Cantius appeals to Jennifer more than other parishes because she suspects that “people are a little more serious” there about their Catholic faith. “I don’t want to waste my time going somewhere where people could go either way, you know. And I don’t think it’s because I narcissistically need people to recognize me as a serious person or something, or else I wouldn’t be wearing this.” Jennifer points to the jeans that she wore to Mass this morning. There are more meticulous dressers and more exclusive partisans of the Latin Mass at St. John’s, but Jennifer feels that she can trust them with her true self.

I feel more valued here than anywhere else. I trust people here more than anywhere else. I don’t trust my college friends. I tell you, if I was like, “I said the Rosary for the unborn children that are victims of abortion,” they would probably drop me as a friend,
and so I cannot be honest with them. Maybe I’m not giving them enough credit, but I’ve seen crazier things happen personally. And I don’t feel like people here think I’m just some sort of baby-maker. I find that really sad that people think that, you know, but I also know what it was like to be that person, so I empathize with them, I guess.

But in order to be the person that she is now, and in order to become the person that she wants to be, Jennifer needs a church that’s “not going to start baby-stepping towards chaos.” The availability of the Latin Mass at the parish promises this, if only because it makes perfectly clear what is not going to be available there. “Like a tambourine at Mass—I can get that anywhere, really.” By comparison, a place like St. John Cantius is a rarity. “So maybe it’s like a supply-and-demand factor. What they’re supplying here is in high demand, because almost no one else does.”

**Real Participation**

It can be shown that authenticity as sincerity (not just continuity) was one of the central motivating concerns in the liturgical reform proposed by the Second Vatican Council. If this isn’t immediately obvious, it may be because the problem of sincerity is usually addressed under the rubric of “full, conscious, and active participation”—perhaps the single most characteristic concern of Sacrosanctum Concilium. 40 “Active participation” (participatio actuosa) often stands for the whole ensemble, and its meaning is among the most hotly contested questions in debates about how the liturgy constitution’s call for reform has been implemented. Martin Stuflesser gets to the heart of the matter by asking how we are to understand the relationship between “interior

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40 See SC 11, 14, 19, 21, 27, 30, 41, 48, 50, 113, 121, 124.
participation” and “exterior participation.” He argues that the kind of relationship proposed in SC is “a tension-laden unity” in which “neither meaningless actionism nor pure interiority” are thought to define *participatio actuosa*, which he thinks is best translated as “real participation.” Noting that SC’s description of the relationship between interior and exterior participation borrows a figure from the Rule of Benedict, Stuflesser cites SC 11: “In order that the liturgy may be able to produce its full effects it is necessary that the faithful come to it with proper dispositions, that their minds be attuned to their voices, and that they cooperate with heavenly grace lest they receive it in vain.” The faithful’s participation in the liturgical action, which is fundamentally the action of God, becomes “real” or “actual” when they internalize the external ritual—or, to use an expression that appears repeatedly in SC, when they become “imbued with the spirit of the liturgy.” The theological meaning of participation is nothing less than being made “part of” the body of Christ, and through Christ, part of the Son’s eternal self-offering to the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit. “Through its concrete participation in the body and blood of Christ (the ritual level) the community receives participation in the saving action of God (the spiritual level).” Referring specifically to the Mass, SC


42 Ibid., 109–113, 118–19. Stuflesser also suggests that the German translation, *tätige Teilnahme*, is a more “successful” rendering than the English “active participation” because the German captures the Latin’s sense of “being internally filled with something; in this case, with activity.” On the other hand, he thinks that the church in the United States has been more successful than the German church, on the whole, in making this infusion of consciousness by liturgical activity a practical reality.


44 See SC 14, 17, 29, 127.

45 Stuflesser, “Actuosa Participatio,” 95. See 1 Cor 10:16.
summarizes the relationship between “taking part” in the ritual offering and being “made part” of the spiritual offering.

When present at this mystery of faith, Christian believers should not be there as strangers or silent spectators. On the contrary, having a good grasp of it through the rites and prayers, they should take part in the sacred action actively, fully aware, and devoutly. They should be formed by God’s word, and be nourished at the table of the Lord’s Body. They should give thanks to God. Offering the immaculate victim, not only through the hands of the priest but also together with him, they should learn also to offer themselves. Through Christ, the Mediator, they should be drawn day by day into ever more perfect union with God and each other, so that finally God may be all in all.46

The worry that “silent spectators” were not being drawn into more perfect union with God did not, of course, first surface at Vatican II. Yves Congar discusses the problem at length in an essay published some fifteen years before the Council. Moreover, he claims that he is simply following traditional sacramental theology in granting the place of first importance to the faithful’s internalization of what they participate in externally.47 In the analysis suggested by Augustine and systematized by Aquinas and other scholastic theologians, the union of Christian believers with God and with each other is the res (or more precisely, the res tantum) of every sacrament. It is the inward reality that constitutes the ultimate fruit of sacramental signs.48 Without this real fruition in the souls of the faithful, manifest “not in the offering of anything external but rather in

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46 SC 48.
48 See ST III, q. 66, a. 1.
believers’ offering their very selves,” observation of the rules for valid and lawful administration of the sacraments has no real purpose and no true meaning.\(^{49}\)

Conversion to the deepest Reality is a movement of conversion from the outside to the inside, from sense experience to spiritual reality, from signs to the Truth itself…

Every “sacrament” exists for the sake of its res, which is a spiritual reality \textit{in the believer}. Therefore liturgy, rituals, and the church, which is itself the Great Sacrament, have to find their fulfillment and their verification \textit{in the persons who live out their meaning}. So to be “real,” then, means to arrive at this reality, to become one’s true self—a reality and a truth which have become a spiritual fruition in believers themselves. Put another way, for sacraments to be “real” means for them to achieve their res, the fulfillment of their spiritual reality, which is light and grace in the consciousness of a spiritual person.\(^{50}\)

Congar believes that the external forms of sacramental celebration must change if they are not bearing “real” fruit in the lives of Christians. “A ‘real’ liturgy is one adapted to being internalized, to producing its res—its spiritual effect—in the souls of the faithful, to being received and personalized in people’s awareness. As long as what occurs is merely \textit{something special happening} that remains exterior to the hearts of the faithful, what we still have are sacrifices of the kind criticized by the prophets.”\(^{51}\)

Congar’s criticism of the Tridentine Mass, then, is that it is \textit{not} well adapted to being internalized in the souls of the faithful. Language is the first obstacle, since none of the lay faithful understand prayers and readings spoken in Latin “and almost nobody wants to be bothered to try to follow them.” Similarly, “ritual gestures that require a complicated historical explanation in order to make sense are not adapted to the spiritual

\(^{49}\) Congar, “‘Real’ Liturgy, ‘Real’ Preaching,” 4. See also SC 11.

\(^{50}\) Congar, “‘Real’ Liturgy, ‘Real’ Preaching,” 4–6. Emphasis in original.

\(^{51}\) Ibid., 6. Emphasis in original.
needs of our contemporaries.” On the contrary, “a ceremony that is artificial and uses language that is uncommon” ends up becoming “nothing more than a ritual” that “adds nothing and changes nothing even in the lives of those who still practice it.” Congar’s assessment of the state of “real” participation in the liturgy is essentially the same as the one that Sacrosanctum Concilium would express fifteen years later in its dismay over “silent spectators” at Mass. That it has remained the consensus view of the pre-conciliar liturgy among many post-conciliar theologians may be seen in the description of the pre-Vatican II Mass provided in a recently published and warmly received handbook guide to the council documents.

The average Catholic’s experience of the Mass prior to Vatican II was of a sacred ritual that was at the same time mysterious and mechanical. Prayers were in Latin. And for much of the Mass, the priest had his back to the congregation. This tended to separate the laity from what was going on at the altar. (Except for angelic-looking altar boys dressed like priests, the laity did not enter the sacred space beyond the communion rail.) Before the Council the faithful took part in an array of devotions outside of the liturgy—ranging from benedictions and holy hours to novenas and the rosary. But at Mass they were largely passive, watching a ritual done for them but not by them.

For supporters of the liturgical reform, then, the antithesis of active participation was and remains the kind of “dead ritual” exemplified by the Tridentine Mass. We have seen various negative descriptors applied to it—mechanical, theatrical, external, pharisaical—but the common theme is suspicion of inauthentic performance. Congar, in a book that helped to lay the groundwork for the council’s understanding of “authentic” ecclesial reform, identifies “a passion for authenticity” as both a “current attitude” of

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52 Ibid., 7–8, 10–11.

contemporary people and a theological orientation of permanent value. Throughout *True and False Reform in the Church*, Congar uses “sincerity” as a synonym for “authenticity.” On the other hand, he distinguishes “authenticity” from “truth,” because “objective truth, the rights of which are not called into question here, does not say everything about the authenticity of the gesture of some particular person.”54 While the authenticity of a person’s gesture is precisely subjective, it is nevertheless objectively demanded by “the very reality of being Christian—the truth about the religious relation of the human person with God.” One might be tempted to dismiss such a modern turn to the subject as a superficial “itch to call into question received customs,” but in fact, Congar argues, “the taste for authentic gestures is also a taste for the authenticity of Christian reality.”55 The liturgy is the place where the church can least afford to ignore this taste for authenticity.

The wish for authentic self-expression means just what it sounds like. This has always been a requirement of genuine Christian character, but it is now an irrepressible need in the light of modern sincerity—especially with respect to worship, which is our relation to God.

People want an altar that is really an altar, not a flower stand or a pedestal for statues… People want a Mass that is genuinely the praise and the self-offering of a community united in faith, not just a ritual that goes its own way page after page as people, who may or may not follow the Mass, watch. Here’s the point: too many things have become “rituals” for us, “things” that exist in themselves, ready-made. We are preoccupied to carry out the ceremony, meet the conditions for validity, but without being concerned whether these rituals are the actions of real living persons.56

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55 Ibid., 47.
56 Ibid., 45-46.
Again, we find the difference between an authentic expression of the tradition, on the one hand, and “just a ritual,” on the other, described as the difference between life and death. In Congar’s account, authentic worship must maintain fidelity to the “living principle of tradition” even if that “requires letting go of the forms that [the principle] has taken at times.” Fidelity that “exists only at the level of articulated forms and formulas” is condemned to deteriorate into “mere routine” as forms that no longer express the principle grind on (though only for a time) by mere force of “habit.” For Congar, “habit” is mainly an obstacle to sincerity and to authentic fidelity, though he admits the danger—confirmed by modern psychology as much as by Aristotelian and Thomistic ethics—of making large and rapid changes to practices that have become habitual. He believes that a greater contemporary threat is presented by habitual conformity masquerading as fidelity to tradition—often without adherents’ full awareness of their own inauthenticity.

Most people don’t live Christianity at the level of principles but at the level of habits. Such habits are less personal choices than the custom of a sociological group, behaviors belonging to a cultural milieu. Practically speaking, they confuse received ideas with tradition. Imagining that they are maintaining fidelity to principle, in fact people cling to a simple translation of said principle into the language of a cultural period.

Still, as Congar’s attribution of a “passion for authenticity” to contemporary people attests, his own suspicion of habit belongs to a certain cultural milieu—that of late Western modernity. As further evidence of this, it’s worth noting Congar’s frequent and

57 Ibid., 155-56.
58 Ibid., 151.
59 Ibid., 154.
decisive references in *True and False Reform* to Charles Péguy,60 the poet and essayist whose distinctly modern “itinerary to the Faith” Charles Taylor details in *A Secular Age*.

A crucial distinction for Péguy lay between a life dominated by fixed habits, and one in which one could creatively renew oneself, even against the force of acquired and rigidified forms. The habit-dominated life was indeed, one in which one was determined by one’s past, repeating the established forms which had been stamped into one. Creative renewal was only possible in action which by its very nature had to have a certain temporal depth. This kind of action had to draw on the forms which had been shaped in a deeper past, but not by a simple mechanical reproduction, as with “habit,” rather by a creative re-application of the spirit of the tradition…

A crucial concept for Péguy was *fidelité*, a faithfulness to the tradition which precisely excluded just going back. Going back was a betrayal, because it replaced a creative continuation of the past with a mechanical reproduction of it. That is what we do when we act habitually, and there is no point trying to replace today’s habits with those of yesterday.61

If it’s “not hard to recognize in Péguy some of the themes which became central to the reforms of Vatican II,” it is because “much of the crucial theological writing that laid the groundwork for the Council…emerged from a milieu of Catholic thought and sensibility which had been marked by Péguy.”62 Of course, Péguy’s concept of *fidelité* was not his own invention, but a reflection of broader cultural currents. The same can be said of

60 There are as many references to Péguy by name, for example, as there are to Thomas Aquinas. See Congar, *True and False Reform*, 374–75.


ressourcement (return to the sources), the neologism coined by Péguy.\textsuperscript{63} Ressourcement became a guiding principle of the twentieth-century liturgical, patristic, biblical, and ecumenical renewal movements.\textsuperscript{64}

It’s no exaggeration to say that the documents that emerged from the Council share with Péguy—and with the theologians he influenced—a concept of fidelité that prefers “creative renewal” to “repeating the established forms which had been stamped into one” by habit.\textsuperscript{65} Congar says, “Péguy gave us a sort of phenomenology of emerging life: the freshness and youthfulness of life become transformed into hardened routines, petrified memories…and then aging.”\textsuperscript{66} It’s true that one ultimately fails to find in SC any hint that the liturgy can be returned to some pristine condition that the early church supposedly enjoyed. Nevertheless, its tenor is one of restoring freshness, youthfulness, and “vigor” to the church’s prayer, whether by recovering “parts which were lost through the vicissitudes or history” or by omitting “useless repetitions” and “duplications made with the passage of time.”\textsuperscript{67} Although SC implies that the liturgy must contain some

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{64} For an overview of how ressourcement was understood within the liturgical movement, see Keith F. Pecklers, “Ressourcement and the Renewal of Catholic Liturgy: On Celebrating the New Rite,” in Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology, ed. Gabriel Flynn and Paul D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 318–32.
\item \textsuperscript{65} Massimo Faggioli makes a strong argument that the first document to emerge from the Council, Sacrosanctum Concilium, holds the “key to understanding Vatican II” as a whole, largely because it “received from the preconciliar movements of renewal the principle of ressourcement like no other council documents did,” with the possible exception of the constitution on revelation, Dei Verbum. True Reform: Liturgy and Ecclesiology in Sacrosanctum Concilium (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012), 19–22.
\item \textsuperscript{66} Congar, True and False Reform, 135. Ellipses in original.
\item \textsuperscript{67} SC 4, 34, 50. Keith Pecklers suggests that these statements at SC 34 and 50 are the constitution’s clearest and most explicit statements of the intended “scope of the liturgical reform.” “Ressourcement and the Renewal,” 327–28.
\end{itemize}
useful repetitions, it remains silent about what these might be. Perhaps the architects of Vatican II were more worried about the potential for repetitive rites to harden into unconscious routines than they were hopeful about the ability of repetition and habit to deepen the consciousness with which a liturgical action is performed.

Of course, the liturgical reforms that followed Vatican II hardly eliminated every instance of repetition or duplication in the texts and rubrics for Mass. It’s impossible, moreover, to charge Péguy—or any of the theologians who shared his concerns about the petrification of tradition—with disdain for ritual, repetition, and habit. On the contrary, repetition is a hallmark of Péguy’s poetic and prose styles, and no admirer of his writing could fail to recognize that Péguy predicates growth in holiness on repeated practice. The entire Christian life is nothing but repetitions saved from uselessness only by the theological virtue of hope, which Péguy personifies as a little girl who “fools” the tired grown-ups into following her down the same, worn-out road time and again.

In God’s sight nothing repeats itself. Those twenty times that she made us take the same trip to get to the same point Of futility. From the human perspective it’s the same point, the same trip, the same twenty times. But that’s the deception. That’s the false calculation and the false reckoning. Being the human reckoning. And this is why it doesn’t disappoint: Those twenty times are not the same. If those twenty times are twenty times of trial(s) and if the route is a path to sanctity Then along the same path the second time doubles the first And the third time triples it and the twentieth time multiplies it twenty-fold…
…On Earth we erase our own tracks twenty times
And we tread twenty paths on top of each other.
But in heaven, they don’t fall on top of each other. They are placed
end-to-end. And they make a bridge
That brings us to the other side.  

Eschatological hope “deceives” the Christian into reckoning each repetition of the
“same” prayer, the “same” sacrifice, and the “same” service as something new and
different each time. But the real deception is to refuse to be deceived by hope in this way.
The ultimate self-deception is to accept the “human reckoning” that there is nothing to be gained from making the same trip two, three, or twenty times.

Catholics who adhere to the Latin Mass believe, no less than Péguy did, that each Mass is not, in God’s truth, just another iteration of a tired routine. Each celebration of the Eucharist is itself a genuine ressourcement, a return to sources of Christian life where God “gladdens the youth” of the faithful.  
Yet other heirs of Péguy clearly believe that authentic ressourcement demands giving up some of the “hardened routines” and “petrified memories” of the Latin Mass. These sibling rivals part ways over the question of how the youthfulness of liturgical participation—its living, hope-filled spirit—is renewed in repetition. On the one hand, as Bruce Ellis Benson has recently explained, “a feeling of being fresh and authentic” can come from granting permission to be creative and even “spontaneous” in public worship, in the recognition that “the very repetition of the liturgy is always improvisational” since “we are creatures embedded in multiple and ever-changing historical and cultural milieus.” On the other hand, “spontaneity is only


69 See the Latin version of Psalm 42 [MT 43] included in the prayers at the foot of the altar in the 1962 missal. Thomas, the young man at the Shrine discerning a vocation to the priesthood, connects this psalm to the idea of the traditional Latin Mass as a “fountain of youth.” See above, p. 224.
possible when one is well prepared,” that is, when repeated practice has internalized a *habitus* capable of regulating one’s improvisations on a traditional theme, which is reverently received as the communal legacy of earlier improvisations.70 If difference is essential to authentic repetition, it is equally true that repetition is the condition of authentic difference. Rejuvenating *ressourcement* is distinguished from sterile iteration by the combination of difference and repetition, not by one or the other in isolation.71 But where the liturgical reform encourages communities to invigorate the repetition of the traditional rites with the freshness that comes from being shaped in ever-changing cultural and historical circumstances, people attached to the pre-conciliar liturgy emphasize the freshness that becomes accessible only after repeated practice makes it possible for them to enter into the rite more deeply.

The men in the chant schola at St. Patrick’s, for example, were eager to begin repeating proper chants that we had learned the previous year, not simply because familiarity would lead to fewer mistakes the second time around, but because the chance to sing a well-rehearsed piece presented an opportunity for a more profound and ultimately more faithful performance. The memorization of pitch and rhythm would allow us to focus on dynamics and phrasing, and on matching the “sentiment” of the music (as our director, James, would call it) to that of the text, which had also become more familiar. Moreover, as less effort was required to recall the meanings of individual words, it became possible to attend to the sense of an entire prayer—a hymn of praise, a

70 Benson, *Liturgy as a Way of Life*, 76, 140.

71 For an explanation of the contrast in Péguy’s thought between *itération* and *ressourcement*, see Jean Onimus, “Péguy, la différence et la répétition,” *Revue d’Histoire littéraire de la France* 73, no. 2/3 (March 1, 1973): 470–490.
confession of sin, or a plea for assistance—both in the context of the liturgical action and in relation to the other readings and prayers of the day. Each performance of the chant is necessarily a different musical embodiment of notes and text than the previous performance was. But the difference consists mainly in things that have become habitual, even routine, through repeated practice. This means that the previous performances have not been left behind so much as they have been incorporated more deeply with each repetition into one’s memory and habits. Together, they form a *habitus* that allows the present performance to be “fresh and authentic.”

Participation in the Mass as a whole may be seen in the same light. John, my fellow schola member, admits that Latin Mass adherents can learn a lot about “the nature of participation in the liturgy” from the way in which the ordinary form of the Mass is celebrated. But he and his wife, Elizabeth, also believe that by raising their children in a Latin Mass community, they are providing them with “a solid foundation and formation” for a lifetime of growth in participation. Some aspects of the Latin Mass will be difficult for them to understand now, and they’ll have to “learn as they go.” In the long run, though, the “formation of their imagination” that this entails will enable them not only to “love the Latin Mass,” but to appreciate what Vatican II “was trying to accomplish with the liturgical renewal.”

**John and Elizabeth**

Elizabeth and John have four young children to manage at church. In spite of this, John has taken increasing responsibility for organizing and directing the schola for the Latin Mass at St. Patrick’s. This is probably good for the longevity of the group since he is the only member who is not a student likely to move away in the next year or two. He’s
finishing up a clerkship in a federal courthouse, but he recently landed a job with a law firm that should keep his family in the area. I’ve watched him become more confident singing the chant, and he has started to add hand signals that keep everyone together, even if it’s not yet the chironomy of an experienced director. He usually leaves the loft after the Gloria in order to help Elizabeth with the kids, returning to sing after receiving communion. Lately, he’s been bringing one of his sons up to the loft, where there are usually a couple toddlers walking around anyway.

John and Elizabeth are both transplants from the Northeast. Born in the late seventies, they both grew up in Catholic families that went to Mass every week. For Elizabeth’s family, that was more or less the extent of their involvement in parish life, though she also attended a parochial school until second grade and went to “CCD classes” after switching to public schools. She thinks of her childhood as having lacked much “formation” in the Catholic faith, yet she has vivid memories of her father taking her into Catholic churches that they happened to pass in order to light a candle and say a prayer. This ensured that she had “lots of nice experiences surrounding lots of churches.”

John, on the other hand, attended only Catholic schools and was accustomed to being involved in multiple activities at his family’s parish. He sang in the parish choir. They rarely performed Gregorian chant, but “the music was pretty good as far as church music goes, pretty reverent—the standard St. Louis Jesuit repertoire, but well done.” His experiences of church were also positive, but by the time he began college, he had “kind of fallen away from practicing at all.”

Elizabeth and John met each other at a Jesuit university on the East Coast, though they didn’t start dating until after they had both graduated. They both became more
committed to Catholic practice during college, but by somewhat different paths. In John’s case, an RA who was involved in evangelical Protestant outreach on campus suggested that he might be interested in the Latin Mass, since he was a classics major. She had in mind a local Novus Ordo Mass offered in Latin, but John, unaware of the distinction, mistakenly went to a church that offered the Tridentine Mass. He says he was “hooked on it pretty quickly.”

I’m not entirely sure whether it was the aesthetic experience of it or just…something about the realization of what had changed. I had never really thought about it. It had never been on my consciousness about the changes following the Second Vatican Council—liturgical changes—what liturgy was like before.

It was “difficult to follow” the Latin Mass at first, and he now thinks it’s better for a first-time visitor to avoid getting “lost in the details” of the “red book” (the ubiquitous Coalition in Support of Ecclesia Dei booklet missal). But the “basic memory” he has is of “being impressed with the difference and wanting to learn about the differences.” John’s “first traditionalist period,” as he now calls his college years, didn’t go down especially well at home. His parents, like other Catholics of their generation, “lived through and took sides in the liturgy wars,” and their side was “definitely” not the side taken by conservatives (as John found out when he brought home an issue of The Wanderer). By contrast, John was meeting traditionalists who considered The Wanderer a “liberal rag,” and he often went to Masses offered by the Society of St. Pius X.

Meanwhile, Elizabeth was coming around to a more active practice of her faith through a combination of experiences, some fairly ordinary and others more esoteric. Her first-year roommate had grown up going to daily Mass, so Elizabeth would accompany her a couple times a week. Out of curiosity, she attended a campus visit by a woman
reported to have received the stigmata, and during eucharistic exposition after Mass, she had a “really profound experience of Christ—like seeing Christ—and fell down.” A class taught by a prominent expert in psychology and Catholic spirituality got her enthusiastically learning about the life of St. Thérèse of Lisieux. Elizabeth got to know John during a year-long study abroad program in Belgium when they were both juniors. She never joined him at the SSPX Mass that he usually attended. They did attend a Mozart Mass in Vienna together—not a Tridentine Mass, but in Latin and “super long,” according to Elizabeth, who was “annoyed” that she was “not understanding any of it.” A volunteer trip to Mexico in her senior year made a more positive impression. She says, “It just was really informative for me to kind of understand the Catholic social teaching, which I had never understood.”

After graduation, Elizabeth took a job as a third-grade teacher and began dating John, who stayed at the university to work in the information technology department. By this time, John had “soured a little bit on the Latin Mass and Latin Mass communities” because he felt “cut off from the world and from the church,” especially in SSPX communities that had their own “schools, and retreats, and men’s groups, and women’s groups” separate from those of the mainstream church. He mostly went with Elizabeth to the parish near her new home, attending the Latin Mass only “sporadically,” especially after they got married and had their first child. For several years thereafter—through a move to South Bend for John to attend law school and then to Washington, D.C., where they had their second child—they generally joined the parish to which they were “supposed” to belong based on where they lived. “I’d decided to be committed to the notion of a territorial parish and geographical parishes,” John says. “Parishes are not
going to get any better if everyone who cares anything about the liturgy and the quality of parish life goes and finds a parish where there’s already better liturgy and already better parish life.”

But the church near their home in D.C. was a “dying parish” with few opportunities to meet other young families and with liturgies that frequently left much to be desired, in John’s opinion.

I started thinking about the kids as I would go to Mass every week and vent by complaining to Elizabeth about the music or whatever… Having been to the Latin Mass, having had good liturgy other places, I had a frame of reference and could kind of compare. But the only comparison my kids got were if they overheard my griping to Elizabeth about it, so a very negative sense of comparison. And just starting to think more about how even at an early age— and not necessarily on an intellectual level— how the aesthetic experience of beauty forms and shapes the children’s imagination, and wanting to steep the children’s imagination, especially at a young age, in the Latin Mass.

For the time being, at least, John thinks that his children’s “primary experience of the Mass” is “sensual” rather than “intellectual,” and “whatever they experience is going to become normative for them.” Consequently, he wanted their “normative experience of the liturgy to be the Latin Mass.”

Elizabeth was tired of hearing John complain about Mass. Moreover, she says, “I felt like all these years he was going to the new Mass mostly for me.” So when they moved back to South Bend for John’s clerkship, she agreed to give the Latin Mass at St. Patrick’s a try, knowing that some friends with children went there. She admits that she “wasn’t happy about it for a while,” though she liked “all the bells and smells” and was “moved to tears” by the music—especially the eucharistic hymns—even though the words were in Latin. “The words were so real, you know, and the music. And in each
song that was sung, there was a layer deeper than music I had encountered before.”

Elizabeth refuses to blame the Latin for preventing her, for a while, from appreciating the rest of the Mass.

I think I was just stubborn and didn’t want to put effort into it. So I was just allowing myself to experience—like the positives were the music, the positive was the surrounding, the positive was the community, the positive was father’s homilies. But having three kids, to devote any time, I would have to come home and study the Mass kind of aside from that. And John was always encouraging me to do that, but the best I could do was just get to Mass.

Gradually, though, Elizabeth learned a lot from the explanations of Mass given in the margins of the “red book,” and she began to see the effort that she had to put in just to follow along as something beneficial.

Now, kind of despite myself, I really like going to the Latin Mass. We’ve needed to go to a couple of the other parishes in town, just for baptisms or whatever. And I’m like, “Wow, this doesn’t feel quite at home anymore. It’s not as rich.” Like I know it all comes down to the Holy Eucharist, but yeah. So now I would say I have a lot to go in terms of learning more about the Latin Mass and following it and learning the Latin, but I am enjoying going to Mass… There’s so much that brings up living our life more fervently for the Lord there than I’ve experienced in the newer Masses.

Elizabeth takes her children to daily Mass in English “just to have them comfortable” with it when they’re older, “if they need the easy way out and want to go with their friends.” The ordinary form is an “important piece” of their spiritual formation, but the Latin Mass “feels” more like it fits the traditional Catholic experience that Elizabeth and John are trying to give their children. She says, “I didn’t get hardly anything growing up, and now that I’m learning about all this, it’s like, ‘Great, let us teach our kids all of this, and all the richness, and all the saints that are included, and calling on the guardian angels, and all this stuff now and let them learn as they go.’” John
agrees. “In some ways the experience that we’re trying to give our children, it’s beyond the Mass as well—in terms of traditional devotions.” Their daily family prayers include the Angelus (John sets his phone alarm for six o’clock) and the rosary or else “bits and pieces of Compline” before bed. Like Elizabeth, John doesn’t feel that they are raising Catholics who will only attend the Latin Mass, though it’s a “pleasant thing” for him to think that they would “love the Latin Mass.”

In my mind, at least, the goal of exposing children primarily or significantly to the Latin Mass is less about hoping that when they’re adults, they will take their family to the Latin Mass, and more about their formation, the formation of their imagination. So less about what their liturgical preferences are as adults, but more about the way that they view the world and the way that they view everything from literature to seeing beauty and tradition.

I’ve never heard John stridently criticize any aspect of the liturgical reform, and in fact, he believes that attending the pre-Vatican II Mass has made him more aware than most Catholics of his generation of “what the council was trying to accomplish with the liturgical renewal.”

You go to a traditional Mass and, as someone coming from the new Mass, it’s easy to come up with a quick list of things that I would change. It’s like, “Oh, I can see this, this, this, this, and this should change.” Even that experience of being able to see—it helps as a traditionalist to understand some of the impetus for change, to be able to go back and see how it was.

Changes in the way that Mass is celebrated are not only possible; they are historical reality. But significant changes require careful “change management” at the level of personal formation, which in John’s view means different things for different generations of Catholics.

Our parents’ generation had, in many ways, a solid foundation and formation—and especially our grandparents’ generation—and then felt that they could experiment in certain ways, but still have roots
or ties in the way that they were raised and catechized and learned the faith. And the problem is the next generation that grew up without that grounding, that lacks that tether to the tradition, doesn’t experience… You know, somebody who grew up, like my father did, grew up serving in the Latin Mass…his normative experience when he was a child was the Latin Mass. So his experience of liturgy, of Mass, is shaped by that, regardless of what he sees later on in life. That’s not how I was shaped in the liturgy. I was shaped with, you know, your typical, banal, suburban liturgy. Part of what I want to give to my children is that perspective. So even if they’re at [an ordinary form Mass], their understanding of what the Mass is and what is happening at Mass is rooted in the traditional understanding of the way it was handed down for hundreds of years prior to the changes.

At the same time, John thinks that Latin Mass adherents “who have kind of been in a bunker since the 60’s” have something to learn from people “who grew up in the new Mass and have a certain experience of liturgy” that emphasizes, among other things, “active vocal participation of the congregation.” In many parts of the pre-conciliar missal, such participation has “always been indicated,” though a person who has “always resisted the new Mass” is likely to think it’s forbidden. If Latin Mass Catholics could overcome their “hermeneutic of suspicion” toward the contemporary church enough to “approach the 1962 liturgy as suggested by the [Vatican II] documents,” then they “might have a very different experience of the liturgy than most people had in 1962”—an experience from which they might begin to appreciate some of the reasons for revising the missal itself.

In the meantime, recognition of the 1962 missal as an extraordinary form of the Mass helps keep its adherents from withdrawing into a “siege mentality.” John believes that many Latin Mass Catholics who lived through the “liturgy wars” still bear a “memory of persecution,” but he’s also aware that other Catholics who remember the pre-conciliar liturgy continue to associate the Latin Mass with a church that “isolated and
alienated many people.” This makes any sort of rapprochement between the two sides difficult. “The hope for the future,” he says, is that “with every council and every event in the life of the church you need at least a generation to pass where you no longer have people who were so invested on one side or the other.” But if the anger and suspicion of the past need to be forgotten, the way that Mass used to be celebrated as well as the reasons for reforming that celebration should be remembered. “The new Mass—and even the way the new Mass is celebrated—has a lot to teach traditionalists about the nature of participation in the liturgy,” just as the “traditional Mass” can teach Catholics that they “don’t have to be saying something” in order to be participating. Consequently, John says, “there’s a value in the two forms existing side by side and, if not rubrically informing the other, at least informing the other in terms of a sense of what the Mass is.”
CONCLUSION
AUTHENTIC MODES

Contemporary adherence to the Latin Mass may be understood from multiple perspectives. Over the course of these pages, we’ve seen at least two perspectives that prove unsatisfactory in the final analysis. We might call the first of these the “sacrality” paradigm and the second the “dead ritual” paradigm. To summarize, those who view attachment to the Latin Mass from the perspective of sacrality see in its recovery an opportunity to combat the loss of the sacred in the modern world. But a sense of the sacred is not a natural or universal experience evoked by all “authentic” religious ritual. Rather, the authentication of sacrality depends on cultural codes that are always open to transformation, not least of all through the symbolic destabilization that characterizes prophecy and the proclamation of the gospel. On the other hand, those who view attachment to the Latin Mass from the perspective of dead ritual see in its stubborn persistence an obstacle to the living growth of the church’s tradition of liturgical prayer. But a living tradition is not one that is “authentically” embodied only in practices liberated from habit, repetition, and convention. Rather, the authentication of tradition depends on habits and dispositions incorporated into the personal memories of believers and, by extension, into the collective memory of the church. There is nothing wrong with asserting the importance of a “sense of the sacred” or the necessity of a “living tradition.” But when these formulas are used in isolation to attack and defend specific historical
forms of liturgical prayer, they reify multiple social processes of authentication, turning different modes of cultivating sincere, traditional prayer into opposing claims to incontrovertible authenticity.

As we have seen, the argument from “sacrality” has been one of the main polemical weapons wielded by supporters of the Latin Mass and of the 1962 Missal specifically. The argument from “dead ritual” is a favorite of those who think that encouraging the use of that missal as an extraordinary form of the Mass is a mistake. As opponents, these groups speak past one another by employing their preferred perspectives exclusively. In such a climate, can there be any hope that the two forms of the Mass will be “mutually enriching,” as Pope Benedict proposed when he issued *Summorum Pontificum*, or as John suggested at the end of the last chapter? The answer depends on how one chooses to approach the question, and in this respect the question is very similar to one posed by Charles Taylor toward the end of *A Secular Age*: “What should we make of the reform of Vatican II?”

Now there are two clear perspectives in which this can be seen. On one hand, we can postulate that what is at stake here is the ultimately and totally right understanding of Catholic Christianity. Then the issue is, who got it right, Vatican II or Trent, and/or in which respect… [In this case,] we describe backgrounds and perspectives…as epistemically privileged or deprived, as good or bad vantage points to discern some single truth.

The second framework…postulates that what is at stake is complementary insights. Neither is simply right or wrong about a single issue, but each brings a fresh perspective which augments and enriches our understanding. The issue is to see how these different insights fit together, and for this purpose filling out the

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1 Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 752. Taylor says that this is “ultimately the same question” as “what we are to make of the kind of challenge which Péguy made to an established Catholic tradition.”
background, the social/intellectual/spiritual context from which an insight comes can be very illuminating.²

The purpose of filling out the background of contemporary attachment to the Latin Mass through the kind of ethnographic inquiry that we have pursued here is to see if there are places where we can adopt this second framework. Are there any insights of Latin Mass adherents that can “fit together” with the insights that led to the reform of the pre-conciliar liturgy?

Certainly there are ways of articulating support for the Latin Mass or opposition to it that misconstrue what is at stake, as I have tried to demonstrate. Some opinions are “simply wrong,” such as the claim that the mere presence of a woman in the sanctuary profanes that sacred space, or the claim that saying a rosary during Mass constitutes willful refusal to participate in the prayer of the church. More generally, the view that the liturgical reform should be rejected because it “desacralized” the Mass mistakenly substitutes sacrality for sacramentality. In Schmemann’s terms, it replaces the “antinomical ‘holding together’ of the reality of the symbol, and of the symbolism of the reality” with “an almost magical incrustation into time and matter (the ‘natural’), by the ‘supernatural.’”³ On the other hand, the view that attachment to the pre-conciliar Mass must be discouraged because it can only result in “dead faith” misinterprets repetition as lack of progress and mistakes habit for stunted growth. It forgets that ressourcement is not fundamentally a retrofitting of old forms of worship for more sincere contemporary use, but a deepening of sincere worship through hope-filled repetition. As Péguy says, “It is through a steady apprêtsisement of our heart along the same path, and not through

² Ibid.
any kind of development, that we have rediscovered what it is to be a Christian.”

Such approfondissement (deepening) does not demand that external forms of worship remain unalterably closed to “development,” but it does require trusting that “paths to sanctity” worn down by previous travelers and by one’s own habitual use can still lead to new life. Both of these more polemical views fall short mainly by refusing to accept the riskiness of ritual prayer in one way or another. The ordinary, post-conciliar form of the Mass cannot promise to prevent tradition from ossifying into empty gestures any more than the extraordinary form of the Mass can promise to protect the sacred from profanation. And in any case, neither a reanimation project nor a re-sacralization project is compatible with a faith that entrusts the memory of Jesus Christ to ritual, embodiment, and history.

If the liturgical reform, on the one hand, and continued attachment to the Latin Mass, on the other, bring “complementary insights” that can be “mutually enriching” to our understanding of Catholic Christianity, then we need to look for them elsewhere. By way of conclusion, I wish to suggest one area in which mutual enrichment may be found. Latin Mass Catholics may offer insight into the formation of an authentic human subject of liturgical prayer, and this insight may complement some of the principles of the liturgical reform in a way that doesn’t simply contradict the shape that the reform has taken. In speaking of the formation of an authentic subject of prayer, I mean to address the concern raised by Romano Guardini in the now-famous open letter he penned during the period between the approval of the liturgy constitution and the appearance of the new

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Order of Mass. How can modern people learn to perform an “integrated liturgical act” that is fully traditional without being “fussy” and fully alive without being “theatrical”?5

**Inhabiting and Habituating**

My suggestion is that the ordinary and extraordinary forms appeal to two different modes of authentication, inasmuch as they offer two different ways to approach the ritualized cultivation of an authentically Christian habitus. A greatly simplified portrait that may nevertheless illustrate the contrast can be drawn in the following way. In accordance with the decree of the Second Vatican Council, the Mass of the Roman Rite was “revised carefully in the light of sound tradition” in order to give the rites “new vigor to meet present-day circumstances and needs.”6 The ordinary form of the Mass that emerged from this process of revision thrives on the “vigor” that comes from inviting the faithful to actively inhabit the liturgy. They are not, indeed, permitted to alter the ritual according to their likes and dislikes; nevertheless they are encouraged to use the technical and artistic riches of their own time and of their diverse cultures to equip and adorn the liturgy in ways that help their contemporaries recognize it as a living source of faith. Inhabiting the rite, in the sense that I am suggesting here, should not be mistaken for mere self-expressionist “theatricality,” even if this is the charge that more than a few Latin Mass Catholics would nail to the doors of most ordinary form parishes. Inhabiting the liturgy does imply an active extension of oneself in order to join one’s own prayers to those of all the saints. But the goal remains the internalization of what one participates in externally. If the ordinary form of the Mass encourages the faithful to make themselves at

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6 SC 4.
home at the wedding feast of the Lamb,⁷ it is so that they may be incorporated into the
body of Christ, the communion of saints, and the eternally self-donating life of the
Trinity.

On the other hand, the extraordinary form of the Mass asks the faithful to
receptively and obediently habituate themselves to the liturgy. By extension, Latin-
language celebrations of the ordinary form of the Mass make the same demand insofar as
they look to some collective memory of the Tridentine Mass as a guide to the ars
celebrandi. In either case, a reflexive verb describes what adherents are called to do
better than a passive verb does, because contemporary Catholics expect to put a great
deal of personal effort into becoming accustomed to the Latin Mass (in either form). The
effort does not cease, moreover, just because one has learned when to kneel, how to
respond in Latin, and how to use (or not use) a missal. On the contrary, the work of
interior renewal only increases as the external behaviors become more automatic and
more incorporated into one’s bodily memory. “I don’t think external participation
automatically brings about internal or [that] non-external participation necessarily
produces internal,” says Bernard, the college professor and former Mennonite. “I think
it’s a matter of your own state of heart and soul and the effort you put into it internally or
externally.” Thus, habituating oneself to the rite should not be mistaken for an effortless
mouthing of memorized lines and reproduction of stylized gestures. It aims for deeper,
more sincere, and more reverent participation through practice and repetition. If the
extraordinary form of the Mass encourages the faithful to get used to accepting “things

⁷ See Rv 19:9.
too wonderful” for human understanding,\textsuperscript{8} it is so that they may humbly but consciously join their personal offerings of prayer and thanksgiving to the eternal “sacrifice of praise” that the church is “continually” offering to God through Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{9}

I have avoided identifying the approach of “inhabiting the liturgy” with the ideal of “active participation” and the approach of “habituating oneself to the liturgy” with the ideal of “reverence,” though the pairings seem obvious at first glance. Is it a contradiction to think that contemporary worshippers might cultivate reverence by making themselves more at home in the liturgy? Can active participation be encouraged by asking worshippers to get used to aspects of the celebration that seem awkward? I believe that neither scenario is necessarily contradictory. There will be times when Catholics attached to the ordinary form of the Mass in all of its local variety will be called to participate more actively by getting used to some things that they might prefer to change. Likewise, there is a need for Catholics attached to the extraordinary form of the Mass to recognize that there are situations in which more reverent participation requires adapting the external forms of the liturgy to different ways of expressing truth and beauty. Indeed, Catholics and other Christians involved in the current “clash of perspectives on right celebration which the church now harbors” might find much to value in their contrasting approaches to liturgical formation if they can accept that both “sides” want a liturgy that is not theatrically performed but authentically lived.\textsuperscript{10}

\textsuperscript{8} See Job 42:3; Ps 139:6.

\textsuperscript{9} See Heb 13:15.

\textsuperscript{10} The quoted description of the current state of affairs is from Power, “SC to GIRM and Beyond,” 1.
Bending

A more explicitly sacramental way of expressing what is *shared* in both of these approaches to the formation of an authentic subject of liturgical prayer employs Augustine’s famous injunction to all who receive the Eucharist. Like many of their critics, Latin Mass Catholics are hoping to become what they receive: the body of Jesus Christ, sacrificed on behalf of sinful humanity, but risen and alive in the body of the church.11 Real, authentic participation in the Mass involves the whole person. Even for Latin Mass adherents, there is no *participatio actuosa* that remains exclusively interior. “God has given us an ability to know him through the liturgy, and if we know God, we will love God. If we love God, we will love others.” So says Bridget, the Notre Dame junior who attends the Latin Mass in Alumni Hall. “We cannot go to Mass—any form of Mass—without being compelled to do something to make the world a better place and to be more loving toward others.” If we aren’t compelled to act lovingly toward our neighbors, then “we are not participating fully in the Mass.” Jim, a parishioner at St. John Cantius, expresses a similar idea by using an adage familiar to liturgical theologians.

You know, what’s the old saying? What we pray is what we believe. *Lex orandi, lex credendi.* I guess that’s part of our faith life, but it seems to me that it would also translate into our actions too. The way we pray is the way we act. At least it should be. And the way we think. At least it should be, again. So yeah, it would certainly make sense that if you’re concerned about the way that you pray and that you pray properly, that’s going to carry over…

If you’re starting from the Mass, praying the Mass reverently, that’s going to be the source of the grace in your soul that you’re getting. And then from there, that’s going to flow out into your actions and you’re going to hopefully then, if you’re praying the

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right way, reverently, then you’re going to think reverently, you’re going to act reverently.

If “acting reverently” describes the mission into which the Mass sends Catholic Christians, then it should also apply to the way that Christians are called to behave toward one another when they disagree about what constitutes “authentic” liturgical prayer. The importance of explaining these disagreements as different ways of cultivating a *habitus* instead of as opposing worldviews, for example, lies in the ability of embodied habits to *bend* in a way that disembodied ideologies cannot.12 Scholars will search in vain for a mediating discourse that convinces Latin Mass Catholics and those who are deeply attached to the ordinary form of the Mass to acknowledge the sincerity and faithfulness of their co-religionists. But Christians can bend their habits out of reverence for Christ in their neighbors. Indeed, in archaic English, “reverence” is sometimes a verb. It means, of course, to make a gesture of reverence—to bow or to “bend”—in the presence of another. This kind of reverence, it seems, is not only a path to authenticity, but also a way to perfect the ethic of authenticity through an ethic of hospitality. From the earliest conflicts over communal rituals in the church, “building up the neighbor” has served as a criterion of authentic imitation of Christ that avoids allowing either personal conviction or cultural convention to “put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of another.”13

This is why I am heartened by stories of Latin Mass adherents who changed their habits for the sake of other Catholics—and by examples of bending in the other direction. A young man who grew up attending the Tridentine Mass decides that an ordinary form

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12 On the pitfalls of emphasizing “worldviews” over “social imaginaries” carried in practices, see James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009).

13 Rom 14:1–15:13. See also 1 Cor 8:1–11:1; 14:1–33.
Mass offered in English but at which he can kneel for communion is a “good compromise” to attend with a friend who has never been to a Latin Mass. A young woman decides not to wear her chapel veil to ordinary form Masses, not because she feels pressure to conform, but because she doesn’t want to be a stumbling block for other women. A priest who hasn’t celebrated a Latin Mass in forty years commits to offering it weekly when students born long after Vatican II ask to have it. A wife perseveres through two years of confusion at the Latin Mass in order to give her husband’s preferred style of worshipping a chance. A mother trains her children in the English Mass, though she prefers the Latin Mass herself, so that they will know that “the Mass is the Mass” in either form, in any language, and in all of the many styles in which they find it offered later in life. It’s true that I have not encountered a lot of these stories in which someone bends a bit, but they are uniformly beautiful stories, and it makes me wonder whether we should not be looking for authentic beauty and truth in the bending as much as in the holding fast.
APPENDIX A

ETHNOGRAPHIC CONSULTANTS

St. John Cantius Parish

Alexei M 31-35
Angela F 61-65
Barbara F 56-60
Bernard M 56-60
Bill M 56-60
Carl M 46-50
Ed M 66-70
Emily F 31-35
Fr. Phillips M 61-66
Grace F 61-66
Jennifer F 31-35
Jim M 31-35
Joe M 66-70
Rick M 46-50
Tom M 31-35

Shrine of Christ the King Sovereign Priest

Brian M 51-55
Canon Talarico M 26-30
Cy M 51-55
Jane F 21-25
Joan F 51-55
Michael M 26-30
Peter M 46-50
Roger M 41-45
Thomas M 21-25
### Mother Theodore Guérin Latin Mass Community at St. Patrick Church

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Anne</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>31-35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellen</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>56-60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>26-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>31-35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josh</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>31-35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>36-40</td>
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### Alumni Hall Chapel at the University of Notre Dame

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doug</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fr. Blantz</td>
<td>M</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
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<td>21-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Beth</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>21-25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Irwin, Kevin W. “Which Liturgy Is the Church’s Liturgy?” *Origins* 38, no. 37 (February 26, 2009): 581–89.


