

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

Mark Searle's Vision for "Pastoral Liturgical Studies":  
Liturgy as "Rehearsal of Christian Attitudes"

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Faculty of the  
School of Theology and Religious Studies  
Of The Catholic University of America  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
For the Degree  
Doctor of Sacred Theology in Liturgy Studies

©

Copyright

All Rights Reserved

By

Stephen Sullivan Wilbricht

Washington, D.C.

2010

Mark Searle's Vision for "Pastoral Liturgical Studies":  
Liturgy as "Rehearsal of Christian Attitudes"

Doctorate of Sacred Theology in Liturgical Studies

Director: Kevin W. Irwin, S.T.D.

Mark Searle (1941-1992) left a lasting mark on both the study of liturgy and its reform by his contribution of "pastoral liturgical studies." His method serves to supplement classical theological and historical approaches to liturgical study with empirical research, hermeneutical analysis, and critical evaluation. The benefit of Searle's system is the scrutiny of cultural attitudes that threaten the very survival of corporate worship.

To counter the perilous influence of American ideals such as individualism and privatization, Searle proposed that the liturgy be understood as the "rehearsal of Christian attitudes." For him, the liturgical assembly is the sacramental encounter with the attitudes of Christ. In order to rehearse the worldview of Christ, ritual forms must be respected, integrated, and practiced again and again. In other words, through regular and repeated engagement with liturgical gestures, movements, and words, individual identity is overshadowed by corporate identity in Christ.

This dissertation explores Searle's lens of "rehearsal of Christian attitudes" in his writings throughout three important stages of his academic career. The first stage, the early years of Searle's writing, encompasses his interest in initiation and justice and demonstrates the inseparable connection between liturgy and life. The second stage, Searle's development of "pastoral liturgical studies," involves the interpretation of empirical data gleaned from the Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life and justifies his starting point for "pastoral liturgical studies" as the living, breathing assembly steeped in those cultural attitudes

precisely at odds with liturgy. Finally, the third stage, the last several years of Searle's life, includes his honing of interdisciplinary acumen and his call for a new liturgical movement that reorients assemblies in the skills of "full, conscious, and active" participation.

The conclusion of this project suggests that Mark Searle was a pioneer who vigorously critiqued the direction of liturgical renewal for its failure to lead the Church into the deeper levels of participation. In his abbreviated academic career, Searle proved himself as a modern-day mystagogue who upheld surrender to disciplined rehearsal of trusted ritual patterns as the gateway for contemplation of corporate belonging in divine life.

This dissertation by Stephen Sullivan Wilbricht fulfills the dissertation requirement for the doctoral degree in Liturgical Studies approved by Kevin W. Irwin, S.T.D., as Director, and by Dominic E. Serra, S.L.D., and Margaret M. Kelleher, O.S.U., Ph.D., as Readers.

---

Kevin W. Irwin, S.T.D., Director

---

Dominic E. Serra, S.L.D., Reader

---

Margaret M. Kelleher, O.S.U., Ph.D., Reader

# Table of Contents

<u>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</u>	vii
<u>INTRODUCTION</u>	1
<u>Overview of Mark Searle's Life and Academic Career</u>	2
<i>Early Years</i>	2
<i>Graduate Studies and Seminary Formation</i>	3
<i>Career at Notre Dame</i>	5
<i>Heralding Semiotics and Launching a New Liturgical Movement</i>	8
<i>Confronting Cancer</i>	11
<u>Overview and Aim of this Project</u>	12

## PART I

### Foundational Themes in Searle's Early Writings

<u>CHAPTER I</u>	<i>LITURGY AS "REHEARSAL OF CHRISTIAN ATTITUDES"</i>	16
	<i>Mark Searle's "Ritual" Approach to Liturgy</i>	20
	<i>Susanne Langer's Ritual Theory</i>	26
	<i>Searle's Definition of Liturgy as "Rehearsal of Christian Attitudes"</i>	33
	<i>Conclusion</i>	38
<u>CHAPTER II</u>	<i>CHRISTIAN INITIATION AND FAITH DEVELOPMENT</i>	41
	<i>Searle's Early Contributions to the Debate</i>	49
	<i>Searle's First Major Book</i>	51
	<i>Conversion and the Growth into Faith</i>	56

	<i>Theology of the Child</i>	59
	<i>Theology of the Family: “Household of Faith”</i>	67
	<i>“Ethos” of Conversion</i>	73
	<i>Conclusion</i>	78
 <u>CHAPTER III</u>	 LITURGY AND IMAGES OF GOD’S JUST KINGDOM	 84
	<i>Image One: “Belonging to a People”</i>	93
	<i>Image Two: The “Holy Grail”</i>	98
	<i>Image Three: The “Kingdom of God”</i>	105
	<i>Liturgy as Critique</i>	116
	<i>Conclusion</i>	128
 <b>PART II</b>  A Groundbreaking Contribution to the Study of Liturgy		
 <u>CHAPTER IV</u>	 “PASTORAL LITURGICAL STUDIES”	 133
	<i>Setting the Stage for Searle Vision of “Pastoral” Liturgy</i>	140
	<i>Searle’s Method for “Pastoral Liturgical Studies”</i>	144
	<i>The Empirical Task: “What Is Going On?”</i>	151
	<i>The Hermeneutical Task: “What Does It All Mean?”</i>	161
	<i>The Critical Task: “Who Is Doing What to Whom and How?”</i>	179
	<i>Conclusion</i>	187
 <u>CHAPTER V</u>	 OBSERVING PARISH LITURGY	 190
	<i>Searle’s Dedication to Parish Liturgy</i>	198
	<i>“Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life”</i>	202
	<i>Utilizing the Notre Dame Study in “Pastoral Liturgical Studies”</i>	218
	<i>Conclusion</i>	243

## PART III

### Searle's Academic and Pastoral Responses to the "Crisis" of Liturgical Reform

<u>CHAPTER VI</u>	<i>SEMIOTICS APPLIED TO THE STUDY OF LITURGY</i>	247
	<i>Liturgy and Semiotics</i>	250
	<i>A Sabbatical Year for the Study of Semiotics</i>	259
	<i>Semiotics Applied to Ritual Units</i>	267
	<i>Semiotics Applied to Prayer Texts</i>	282
	<i>Semiotics Applied to Church Architecture</i>	293
	<i>Conclusion</i>	305
<u>CHAPTER VII</u>	<i>LAUNCHING A NEW LITURGICAL MOVEMENT</i>	309
	<i>A "Crisis" in Liturgical Renewal</i>	311
	<i>Liturgy as a Social Critique</i>	325
	<i>A "Community of Memory"</i>	333
	<i>The Americanization of Participation</i>	338
	<i>Searle's Final Manuscript: "The Evidence of Things Not Seen"</i>	347
	<i>Conclusion</i>	362
<u>CONCLUSION</u>		364
	<i>A Corpus of Breadth:</i>	
	<i>From Scholarly Media to Sacred Mystagogia</i>	366
	<i>A Methodical Career:</i>	
	<i>The Framework for "Pastoral Liturgical Studies"</i>	368
	<i>An Imperative, Present-Day Contribution:</i>	
	<i>The Future of Liturgical Participation</i>	373
	<i>A Death of Willing Surrender:</i>	
	<i>Searle's Final "Liturgical" Rehearsal</i>	376
<u>APPENDICES</u>		
Appendix 1	<i>Mark's Searle's Chronological Bibliography (1966-2006)</i>	379
Appendix 2	<i>"Pastoral Liturgy" Course Syllabi</i>	387

Appendix 3	<i>Instruments for Interpreting Liturgical Data</i>	389
Appendix 4	<i>Proposals for Notre Dame's Center for Pastoral Liturgy</i>	400
Appendix 5	<i>Handouts on Semiotics</i>	406
Appendix 6	<i>Grant Proposal</i>	414
Appendix 7	<i>Australia/New Zealand Lecture Tour</i>	417
Appendix 8	<i>Guide to Mark Searle's Files</i>	419
 <u>BIBLIOGRAPHY</u>		 432



## Acknowledgements

I am most grateful to my *Doktorvater*, Monsignor Kevin W. Irwin, Dean of the School of Theology and Religious Studies and holder of the Walter J. Schmitz Chair in Liturgical Studies at the Catholic University of America, for his patient guidance and keen insights in the writing and revising of this dissertation. I am also indebted to Drs. Dominic Serra and Margaret Kelleher for their close reading of these pages, for their helpful suggestions, and most especially for their support of my work. I also wish to extend heartfelt thanks to Dr. Catherine Dooley, who served as a reader for much of the process until beginning a new assignment at Dominican University.

I would also like to thank Anne Koester for assisting me in the initial stages of preparing a dissertation topic and for making important contacts on my behalf. Among these, the most significant is Dr. Barbara Searle, to whom I owe the utmost thanks for providing me with Mark's files and for fueling my energy through her excitement of this project. I will forever be indebted to you for your kindness and your trust, Barbara.

To my confreres in Holy Cross, who supported me with lively community life, to my parents, David and Sue Wilbricht, who always encouraged me to keep the end in sight, to Christine Taylor, who helped me catalogue the Searle papers, to Lyn Feeney, who labored patiently to format the final manuscript, to my friends, Daniel Cebrick, James Sabak, Michael Woods, Patrick Kennedy, Tony Tomelden and Stephanie Coleman, who all made this dissertation-writing journey with me, please know of my deep gratitude for your presence in my life.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, I give thanks to God for the gift of his servant Mark Searle, whose wisdom has given me the courage and insight to dream for new possibilities in liturgical reform and in whose spirit I often implored a word of confidence or a prayer of hope. I am quite certain he has given hosts of angels a lesson or two on how to participate more fully in the heavenly liturgy!

# Introduction

In the course of a much-abbreviated teaching and writing career, spanning less than twenty-five years, Mark Searle (1941-1992) provided a worthy contribution to the study of liturgy. When his life was cut short in the summer of 1992, ending a fifteen-month battle with cancer, Searle had published nearly a dozen books and more than eighty articles, in addition to numerous book reviews and video-taped lectures.<sup>1</sup> The breadth of Searle's liturgical interests and his desire to integrate a wide range of academic areas (anthropology, sociology, and semiotics to name just a few) with the study of liturgy mark this scholar as a gifted thinker and author, arguably a pioneer.

This dissertation seeks to trace the development of Searle's unique contribution to the field of what he labels "pastoral liturgical studies." A particularly helpful way of approaching this project is to target a key theme that appears consistently throughout the corpus, namely Searle's portrayal of liturgy as "rehearsal of Christian attitudes." It is with this insight that he applies the human sciences to the study of liturgy, specifically rooting his attention in the cultural realities of the praying assembly. From this perspective, Searle argues time and again that the success of ongoing liturgical reform depends more upon the contemplation of ritual activity than upon the desire for creativity.

---

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix 1 for Mark Searle's complete chronological bibliography.

## Overview of Mark Searle's Life and Academic Career

### *Early Years*

Mark Searle was born on September 19, 1941, to Paul and Eileen Searle of Bristol, England.<sup>2</sup> The first-born of eleven children, Searle was baptized several weeks later (October 12, 1941) at the neighborhood church, St. Bonaventure, where his parents had been married a year earlier. This parish would prove to be an influential locus of Searle's education and Christian formation. Because his father served as a medic in the Second World War, Searle's initial nurturing was provided largely by his mother as well as by both sets of his grandparents.

As a young boy, Searle attended St. Bonaventure's parish school, where he proved himself to be an avid reader and a budding artist. At age eleven, Searle enrolled at St. Brendan's College in Clifton, where he developed an interest in the study of foreign languages, specifically Latin and French.<sup>3</sup> Clearly influenced by the Franciscans at St. Bonaventure's,<sup>4</sup> Searle completed his education at St. Brendan's by announcing his wish to

---

<sup>2</sup> Most of the details of Searle's biography are taken from the *Searle Family History* compiled by his father, Paul Searle. This information has been supplemented by an interview with Barbara Searle, Mark's wife, on April 19, 2006. See, also, the "Chronology" in Anne Y. Koester and Barbara Searle, Eds., *Vision: The Scholarly Contributions of Mark Searle to Liturgical Renewal* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2004) 255-257.

<sup>3</sup> See Barbara Searle, "Acceptance Speech Given in Response to the Presentation of the Michael Mathis Award to Mark Searle, Posthumously, June 17, 1993." Ruminating on her husband's early childhood, Barbara writes, "There was a man came to us from another land. He grew up amid castles and cathedrals, many of which were built before this country was discovered. From his mother he inherited a heart of gold and a love for things ordinary; from his father a keen intellect and a love of travel. As the eldest of eleven children he assumed a natural leadership and learned at a young age the lessons of give and take. He received a classical English education and began to specialize in languages and literature."

<sup>4</sup> See Mark Searle, "Grant Proposals: Lilly Endowment Faculty Open Fellowships 1988-89 Application," 4-5 in Mark Searle Papers (hereafter MSP), Private Collection, Notre Dame, Indiana, Folder "Matthew." Here, Searle comments on the role of tradition and "historical memory" in his own religious upbringing: "I grew up in a country where Roman Catholics were not only a minority but were in a minority which laid particular claim to historical memory. English cathedrals and village churches, all 'once ours' we believed, bore silent testimony to our tradition. A mere thirty miles away from my home was Glastonbury where, according to legend, Christianity in Britain had all begun. My own parish was staffed by a community of Franciscans, with their

pursue a vocation in religious life. Regarding this decision, Paul Searle writes, “He had for a long time cherished the thought of becoming a priest, and after he had successfully completed his final exams, he stated his desire to become a Franciscan.”<sup>5</sup> Thus, in 1958, before his seventeenth birthday, Searle entered the Franciscan Novitiate at Chilworth, where he was formed in the history and the manner of prayer particular to the Franciscans. After his simple profession in 1959, Searle spent the next six years at St. Mary’s Friary in East Bergholt, the theologate for the English Province of Franciscans, where he received the requisite philosophical and theological training for ordination to the priesthood.<sup>6</sup>

### ***Graduate Studies and Seminary Formation***

Searle was ordained in 1965 and celebrated his first Mass at his beloved St. Bonaventure. Immediately after his ordination, he was assigned to begin graduate studies in Rome, where he chose to pursue an education in liturgical studies rather than canon law.<sup>7</sup>

---

medieval dress and rule and their rich liturgical celebrations. My teachers, too, for the most part, played into this sense of continuity, this sense of more-than-nostalgic reverence for the past, this sense of a tradition that, despite everything, still lived.”

<sup>5</sup> Paul Searle, *Searle Family History*, 57. Barbara Searle suggests that her husband was someone who could be labeled as “naturally religious,” and because “he was very close to the world of the Spirit, joining the Franciscans provided a fitting container for his gifts.” (Interview with Barbara Searle, April 19, 2006). Note also that Barbara Searle and Anne Koester dedicated their volume of Searle’s scholarly essays to the Franciscans who formed him; the dedication reads: “To the Order of Friars Minor, English Province, who prayed with and supported Mark Searle in the spirit of St. Francis, who educated him in the spirit of St. Bonaventure, and who freed him for service to the wider Church” (A. Koester and B. Searle, *Vision: The Scholarly Contributions of Mark Searle to Liturgical Renewal*, iii).

<sup>6</sup> In reference to these six years of academic training, Barbara Searle states: “He often referred to those as great years. . . . That is where he really grew up. It was an important time in his life.” (Interview with Barbara Searle, April 19, 2006). In a conversation with Barbara Searle on September 22, 2008, she clarified this observation, stating that his entrance into the Franciscans marked a time of overall development in Searle’s life: “Physically he matured, emotionally he matured, and intellectually he matured.”

<sup>7</sup> See Barbara Searle, “Acceptance Speech Given in Response to the Presentation of the Michael Mathis Award to Mark Searle, Posthumously, June 17, 1993.” See also Mark Searle, *Eight Talks on Liturgy* (Private circulation, 1974) 9. Regarding the choice between canon law and liturgy, Searle comments: “As anyone would have done in those days, I chose liturgy because to be a liturgist in 1964 was really to be a ‘guru’ in the Church, a Master in Israel.”

During his time in Rome, Searle was clearly influenced by the intellectual environment of the city, which was enlivened by the closing of the Second Vatican Council. Concerning this, he once wrote:

But the teacher that had the greatest influence on me in my formative years was undoubtedly the Second Vatican Council, whose closing session coincided with my first year of graduate studies in Rome. It was, to me, a massively impressive demonstration of the catholicity of the Church and of the vitality of the Christian tradition, gearing for the future by returning to its sources.<sup>8</sup>

With his thesis entitled “The Sacraments of Initiation in the Catechesis of St. Cyril of Jerusalem,” Searle was awarded a Licentiate in Sacred Theology (S.T.L.) from the Pontificio Ateneo di S. Antonio in 1966. During his short time of study in Rome, Searle became well grounded in both systematic theology and historical liturgical studies.

Continuing doctoral studies under the guidance of Balthasar Fischer, Searle spent the next three years in Trier, Germany, where he wrote a dissertation entitled “The Communion Service of the Church of England, with particular reference to the experimental Order for Holy Communion, 1967: a study in ‘comprehensive liturgy’.” However, before completing this degree, Searle decided to spend several months, in late 1968, studying at the Institut Supérieur de Liturgie in Paris, France. Albeit extremely brief in duration, this period would play a major role in his future work in liturgical studies. Searle writes:

In response both to the academic ferment in France and to the new situation in the Catholic Church, the Paris Institute was looking to supplement its established programs in history and theology with courses in anthropology, religious psychology, semiotics and other aspects of the “human sciences.” These were intended to provide ways of taking into account, as the initial phases of reform had not, the cultural conditions governing liturgical celebrations and the possibilities of liturgical change.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Searle, “Grant Proposal: Lilly Endowment Faculty Open Fellowships 1988-89 Application,” 5.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 5-6.

He continues by describing the role this time in France played in forming his own understanding of the need to apply the “human sciences” to the study of liturgy, namely that “it sufficed to lodge firmly in my mind the importance of attending not only to the texts of the rites, but to the ritual performance as a whole, and of paying attention to the rooting of ritual in the human condition.”<sup>10</sup>

After earning both a doctorate of theology and a diploma in liturgical studies from the Liturgisches Institut in Trier in 1969, Searle returned to England where he lectured at the Franciscan Studies Center in Canterbury, England until 1977. During this period, from 1969 until 1975, he also served his religious community as the director of post-novitiate formation. While working in a seminary did not allow him the freedom to pursue academic research intensely, the experience taught Searle the need for finding new ways of teaching liturgy, ways that challenged the traditional historical and theological approaches. As he himself wrote: “Teaching in a seminary, as I did for the next eight years, only heightened my sense of the need to develop new approaches to the teaching of liturgy, but offered little or no opportunity for research or experimentation.”<sup>11</sup>

### ***Career at Notre Dame***

Seeking a respite from the rigors of teaching, formation, and provincial leadership, Searle came to the heartland of the United States in the fall of 1975 to begin a sabbatical year as a visiting instructor at the University of Notre Dame and as a consultant to the Notre Dame Center for Pastoral Liturgy (then the Murphy Center for Liturgical Research). He

---

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. It is worth noting that, during his time as lecturer at Canterbury, Searle was invited to teach a course on liturgy to native Franciscan catechists in South Africa. This experience was informative because it allowed him to observe the implementation of liturgical renewal in a part of the world where the Church was still taking root.

returned to England the following year and there began questioning the direction of his life. Searle's brief exposure to the United States had excited him about the possibilities for liturgical renewal—something that he had not experienced in his own homeland. In the words of Barbara Searle, “He had been deeply moved by the American Church’s response to the Council’s mandate for liturgical renewal; he sensed there was great promise here.”<sup>12</sup> Thus, in 1977, he returned to Notre Dame to test the desire to live and work in new ways. After a great deal of soul-searching, he parted ways with the Franciscans and resigned from active ministry as a priest. Also, he accepted a job to teach at Notre Dame and to serve as the Associate Director of the Notre Dame Center for Pastoral Liturgy, a position he held from 1978 until 1983. Through his work at the Center, especially in his role as editor of its publication *Assembly*,<sup>13</sup> Searle began to pave what would be a lasting contribution to the work of liturgical renewal.

Stepping aside for a brief moment from Searle's academic biography, it is important to note the life-changing decision to marry Barbara Schmich, which he did on May 18, 1980. Also significant was the role he would take on as father, as he participated in the birth of three children: Anna Clare in 1981, Matthew Thomas in 1983, and Justin Francis in 1985. Undoubtedly, Searle's intellectual pursuits were now combined with his duties as husband and father, a reality that only served to enhance his writing and perspective on liturgy. Interestingly enough, Searle's bibliography bears testimony to the fact that, rather than pull him away from his writing and academic research, his family would actually help to increase his energy for his research and writing.

---

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Barbara Searle, November 2, 2006.

<sup>13</sup> This journal was formerly published under the title *Hucusque*. Under its new name, *Assembly*, the journal identified its mission as fostering liturgical renewal; its subtitle read: “for those who want to enter into the spirit of the liturgy.”

Recognized both within and outside the confines of Notre Dame, Searle quickly became popular as a lecturer and as a professor. For instance, from 1982 to 1983, Searle served as the vice president and subsequently as president of the North American Academy of Liturgy. In the summer of 1983, he was invited to teach at St. John's University in Collegeville, Minnesota. That fall semester, he was granted tenure as an Associate Professor in Notre Dame's Department of Theology, while also being appointed Director of the M.A. program in theology and the coordinator of the graduate program in liturgical studies. Finally, that same year (1983) Searle began his association with the Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life, serving as the associate director for the liturgical component. The wide range of positions he held at Notre Dame during his early years at the university provided the opportunity to broaden his pedagogical lens, as he began experimenting with the application of the human sciences to liturgical studies.<sup>14</sup> Barbara Searle writes: "Mark's intellectual history of these years can be seen in his bibliography, how he easily moved between the rigors of the academy with its need to define a scope and methodology for this new science of pastoral liturgy, and the demands of an authentic contemporary mystagogia."<sup>15</sup>

Searle's desire to incorporate the human sciences into the intellectual study of liturgy clearly came to the forefront in two articles published in 1983. In the first, "Liturgy as a Pastoral Hermeneutic," Searle asserted that "pastoral" liturgy requires studying the liturgical

---

<sup>14</sup> Searle, "Grant Proposal: Lilly Endowment Faculty Open Fellowships 1988-89 Application," 6. Searle writes: "It was only after I had come to Notre Dame, and particularly in working with graduate students, that I had the opportunity to take up the matter (role of the 'human sciences' in the study of liturgy) again and to try to develop for myself a satisfactory way of posing the problem. I did so by reading widely and by introducing in my courses, on the experimental basis, models from the social sciences which would help students to see that the theological meaning of the rites could not be viewed in isolation from their broader human significance."

<sup>15</sup> Barbara Searle, "Acceptance Speech Given in Response to the Presentation of the Michael Mathis Award to Mark Searle, Posthumously, June 17, 1993."



event on the basis of the social (psychological, economic, etc.) reality of those who enact it.<sup>16</sup> For Searle, this task requires asking the following question: “In what sense, and under what conditions are the liturgical event and the human situation mutually illuminated to the point where a new avenue of praxis is opened up for the participants.”<sup>17</sup> Later in 1983, in an article entitled “New Tasks, New Methods: The Emergence of Pastoral Liturgical Studies,” Searle continued to posit his belief that a method must be developed that takes into account the “multidimensionality” of the liturgical event, which he contended stems from the mystery of the Incarnation itself.<sup>18</sup> In other words, the study of liturgy must be solidly rooted in an appreciation and the contemplation of the “fleshly” reality of all those taking part in a specific liturgical celebration.

### ***Heralding Semiotics and Launching a New Liturgical Movement***

Beginning in the latter half of the 1980s, Searle’s academic career was marked by two passionate interests. First, he articulated the need to develop and hone an academic expertise in an area outside the realm of liturgy that could be used as a starting point for “pastoral” liturgical studies. Thus, before the close of the fall semester of 1987, Searle pursued seeking

---

<sup>16</sup> See Mark Searle, “Liturgy as a Pastoral Hermeneutic,” in *Theological Field Education: A Collection of Key Resources*, vol. 4, *Pastoral Theology and Ministry*, Eds. D.F. Beisswenger and D.C. McCarthy (Association for Theological Field Education, 1983) 141. Searle’s vision for the study of liturgy through a “pastoral” lens is as follows: “*pastoral* hermeneutics I assume to be the project of relating the liturgical event and the situation of the participants in such a way that they mutually interpret one another and thereby open up new horizons for Christian living. In other words, the import of the adjective ‘pastoral’ is such as to relate the hermeneutics to Christian praxis rather than simply to the enlargement of Christian understanding, such as would be the case with fundamental or systematic or historical theology.”

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> See Mark Searle, “New Tasks, New Methods: The Emergence of Pastoral Liturgical Studies,” *Worship* 57 (1983): 307. With regard to the relationship between the mystery of the Incarnation and liturgical studies, Searle writes: “As pastoral liturgical studies develops, then, more and more data concerning the actual worship of the church should become available for reflection, as well as a whole range of theological problems relating to the anthropological, sociological and psychological structures and preconditions which constitutes the ‘flesh’ in which the mystery of grace is incarnated in the worship life of contemporary communities.”

funding for a sabbatical the following year that would allow him to move his entire family to The Netherlands, where he would concentrate on the study of semiotics with Gerard Lukken and members of a study group entitled “Semanet.” Semiotics (most basically defined as “the study of signs”) had long captured Searle’s imagination, as he believed this science could effect liturgical renewal, in the sense of turning the examination of meaning from a question of “what” to “how” with regard to liturgical texts and celebration. Searle writes:

Semiotics has been an intermittent interest of mine ever since I read Ferdinand de Saussure, Roland Barthes and Pierre Guiraud in the late sixties. In attempting to account not so much for *what* texts mean as for *how* they mean, semiotics offers the possibility of studying how ritual works without singling out any one aspect of it—be it sociological, psychological or theological—for privileged status. This is precisely the direction I see the need to take as I enter the second half of my career as a teacher.<sup>19</sup>

In his attempt to supplement liturgical studies, Searle saw semiotics as providing a route by which the study of liturgy could move beyond the text to a level of describing and analyzing liturgical events themselves. Admitting that semiotics is a “field notorious for its jargon and the opacity of its concepts,” Searle nonetheless proposed to develop a “simplified and less technical methodology” that would be accessible to students of liturgy.<sup>20</sup> Personally and professionally renewed from his time spent in The Netherlands, Searle returned to full-time teaching in the Department of Theology at Notre Dame in the fall of 1989, with the plan to incorporate the fruits of his sabbatical into his graduate seminars.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> Searle, “Grant Proposal: Lilly Endowment Faculty Open Fellowships 1988-1989 Application,” 7.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>21</sup> See Mark Searle, “Semiotic Study of Liturgical Celebration: A Report Submitted to Lilly Endowment, Inc.,” 1989 in MSP, Folder “Matthew.” Commenting on the effect of the sabbatical on his teaching, Searle writes: “Here perhaps the first thing to be remarked is that, after a year’s break, I am rediscovering the joy of teaching, the joy I had once known but had gradually forgotten over the long years since I first began. This is all the more remarkable because I so enjoyed the sabbatical that I was afraid I would resent having to return to the classroom!” (3).

However, Searle's passion for studying semiotics and his desire to make the field available to students of liturgy was accompanied by his pursuit of another interest in the latter part of the 1980s. Searle's work with the Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life (1983-1985) had left him with the burning need to critique the direction of liturgical renewal in the United States and to call for a "new liturgical movement." Searle's major concern was the issue of liturgical participation, as he believed what was being lost in the implementation of the principles of Vatican II reform was basic training geared to lead people into the depths of the mystery of liturgy. From his perspective, too much emphasis was being placed upon creativity rather than upon internalizing the established rhythm of liturgical prayer. And so, in a 1988 article that appeared in *Commonweal*, entitled "Renewing the Liturgy—Again. 'A' for the Council, 'C' for the Church," Searle wrote:

Clearly, we are far from realizing the hopes which the council placed in the liturgical renewal. . . if it was a major weakness in the reform that it was not adequately prepared from below, then it must be at the grassroots level that the renewal of the liturgy must begin again. *The time has come, surely, to relaunch the liturgical movement.*<sup>22</sup>

Searle's enthusiasm for the topic of inaugurating a new liturgical movement was apparent in several other publications during this time and was the focus of a six-week lecture tour of Australia and New Zealand in the summer of 1990.<sup>23</sup> Also, by this time, Searle was hard at work on a manuscript on liturgical participation. Although unpublished upon his death in 1992, Searle's "manifesto,"<sup>24</sup> *Called to Participate: Theological, Ritual, and Social*

---

<sup>22</sup> Mark Searle. "Renewing the Liturgy—Again. 'A' for the Council, 'C' for the Church." *Commonweal* (November 18, 1988) 621.

<sup>23</sup> For example, see Mark Searle, "Ritual and Music: A Theory of Liturgy and Implications for Music," *Assembly* 12:3, 314-317 (Reprinted in *Church* 2:3 [1986] 48-52; Reprinted in *Pastoral Music* 11:3 [1987] 13-18). See also, Mark Searle, "Trust the Ritual or Face 'The Triumph of Bad Taste,'" *Pastoral Music* 15:6, 19-21.

<sup>24</sup> This description comes from Barbara Searle in an interview on November 2, 2006.

*Perspectives* (published posthumously in 2006 by Barbara Searle), represents his primary conviction that surrendering to the demands of the liturgy is a forgotten attitude that must be relearned for the liturgy to truly be renewed.<sup>25</sup>

### ***Confronting Cancer***

Less than two years after Searle and his family returned from The Netherlands, he was diagnosed with cancer in June of 1991. In addition to professional medical treatment, he and Barbara quickly educated themselves about the disease and attempted to confront it through a radical change in diet and exercise. Searle was granted a medical leave for the fall semester but returned to teaching in January of 1992. After a year of promising results, he was able to journey to England to visit relatives and friends. Upon his return to the United States, Searle's health rapidly deteriorated. Yet despite increased levels of pain and decreased levels of energy, he taught his final class in the summer school program of 1992, immediately prior to his last few days of life. Barbara Searle describes these final days as ones of surrender:

He must have made many surrenders along the way, but it was in the last week of his life that they were most dramatic. On the Sunday before his death, he could no longer drive the car. On Monday, he could no longer work at the computer. On Tuesday, he could no longer bathe and dress himself. On Wednesday, he could no longer eat by himself. On Thursday, he could no longer sign his name. On Friday, he could hardly walk. On Saturday, he was completely silent. But through all these surrenders, there was a tangible peace and joy in him, so much so that we felt God had come very close to us in him.<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> See Mark Searle, *Called to Participate: Theological, Ritual, and Social Perspectives*. Eds. Barbara Searle and Anne Y. Koester. (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2006). See especially page 13: "Perhaps instead of asking what will engage the assembly, we could begin to ask what the liturgy demands. Instead of asserting our ownership of the liturgy, we might ask how we can surrender to Christ's prayer and work. Instead of asking what we should choose to sing, perhaps we could start imaging how we might sing in such a way that it is no longer we who sing, but Christ who sings in us."

<sup>26</sup> Barbara Searle, "Acceptance Speech Given in Response to the Presentation of the Michael Mathis Award to Mark Searle, Posthumously, June 17, 1993," 3.

Surrounded by his wife, two sisters, his mother and father, Searle died in the early hours of the morning on August 16, 1992. Just two days earlier, this same group was joined by Searle's children, colleagues, and family friends for the celebration of Viaticum, after which he repeated aloud the Lord's words: "I shall not drink wine again until I drink it in the Kingdom."<sup>27</sup>

In the end, Searle's struggle with cancer became a testament to what he had studied and taught so well, namely, that to celebrate the liturgy is to rehearse for that life which triumphs over death, to learn the Christian attitude of surrender. As Searle wrote shortly before his death: "Liturgy would deliver us from this futile and self-defeating campaign of self-justification by offering us an alternative: that of dropping the illusion we cling to, rehearsing the trust that will enable us to let go in the end to life itself and surrender ourselves one last time into the hands of the living God."<sup>28</sup>

### **Overview and Aim of this Project**

The objective of this dissertation is to trace the development of Searle's concept of liturgy as the "rehearsal of Christian attitudes" through three critical stages in his academic career in order to determine how he furthered the emergence of a specialized field called "pastoral liturgical studies." It will become apparent that he rooted this study in the cultural realities of the praying assembly, and thus, he advocated broadening liturgical research through the application of the human sciences.

Thus, the first stage of Searle's career constitutes his early years of teaching and lecturing in England as a Franciscan friar (1969-1977). From very early on in his writing,

---

<sup>27</sup> See *Searle Family History*, 63.

<sup>28</sup> Searle, *Called to Participate*, 40.

Searle adapts philosopher Suzanne Langer's definition of ritual, "rehearsal of attitudes," for his understanding of liturgy as "rehearsal of *Christian* attitudes." Consequently, the opening chapter introduces this term and seeks to explain its inclusion in Searle's liturgical theology. Chapter Two applies this theme specifically to Searle's interest in Christian Initiation and faith development (particularly as it relates to infant baptism). Chapter Three seeks to do the same with the topic of liturgy and justice.

The second stage of Searle's academic career begins with his employment at the University of Notre Dame and his work at the Notre Dame Center for Pastoral Liturgy (1977) until his sabbatical year in The Netherlands (1988). It is early in this period that he articulated his method for "pastoral liturgical studies." Thus, Chapter Four concentrates specifically on Searle's agenda of studying liturgy with the help of the social sciences rather than simply from the viewpoint of theology and history alone. Chapter Five explores conclusions gleaned from his work with the *Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life*, in particular, the effects of individualism upon liturgy.

The final stage of Searle's career encompasses a twofold dedication to the study of semiotics and a passion for relaunching the liturgical movement, his facing cancer, and his final surrender to God in August of 1992. Thus, Chapter Six delves into Searle's work with Gerard Lukken in the area of Semiotics, which resulted in several published writings applying Semiotics to liturgy. Finally, Chapter Seven employs Searle's own method of dependence upon findings from the human sciences and provides an overall synthesis and critique of his contribution to the agenda of liturgical reform in the United States. This critique necessarily engages those sources in ritual studies and in the social sciences that influenced Searle's thought.

It was Mark Searle's basic conviction that liturgy is composed of fundamental Christian attitudes which its participants are called upon to rehearse. So much more than an expression of feeling, liturgy represents the basic commitments of the Christian community. As he states: "Liturgy will not leave us on an emotional high because that is not its purpose. But regular, persevering participation and growing familiarity with liturgy's images and gestures will eventually shape our attitudes, our thoughts, and even our feelings."<sup>29</sup> Often quoting Romano Guardini, who once suggested that the essence of liturgical renewal rests upon the work to "recapture lost attitudes,"<sup>30</sup> Searle demonstrated consistently in his writing that, through the rehearsal of "lost attitudes," the Christian community would recognize anew the meaning of liturgical participation as the Body of Christ.

---

<sup>29</sup> Searle, *Called to Participate*, 62.

<sup>30</sup> See Romano Guardini, "A Letter from Romano Guardini," in *Herder Correspondence* (August 1964) 237.

# Part I

Foundational Themes in  
Searle's Early Writings



# Chapter I

## ***Liturgy as “Rehearsal of Christian Attitudes”***

The Fathers at the Second Vatican Council decreed in *Sacrosanctum Concilium* that the Church desires “to undertake a careful general reform of the liturgy in order that the Christian people may be more certain to derive an abundance of graces from it.”<sup>1</sup> The same document suggests repeatedly that reform of the rites is inseparable from a renewed understanding of the general nature of liturgy. For example, Number 5 states that liturgy is the sacrament of Christ’s “work of human redemption and perfect glorification of God.” This is reiterated in Number 7 which asserts that liturgy is “an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ.” Perhaps most well-known is the description of liturgy found in Number 10, namely, that it is the “summit toward which the activity of the church is directed” and the “source from which all its power flows.” Such theological assertions as these reveal the *Constitution’s* aim to promote the understanding that “exterior” changes in prayer texts and rubrics must always be accompanied by an “interior” spiritualization of the liturgy.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 21 in Austin Flannery, Ed., *The Basic Sixteen Documents: Vatican Council II Constitutions, Decrees, Declaration* (Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Company, Inc., 1996).

<sup>2</sup> See for example the address by Paul VI to a group of Italian bishops on April 14, 1964, in *Documents on the Liturgy, 1963-1979, Councilar, Papal, and Curial Texts* (hereafter cited as *DOL*), International Commission on English in the Liturgy (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1982) 87. In advocating liturgical reform, Paul VI states: “The liturgical reform provides us with an excellent opportunity in this regard (the place of religion in life): it calls us back to the theological view of human destiny that the action of grace, and thus of the life of the sacraments and prayer, has primacy. The liturgical reform opens up to us a way to reeducate our people in their religion, to purify and revitalize their forms of worship and devotion, to restore dignity, beauty, simplicity, and good taste to our religious ceremonies. *Without such inward and outward renewal there can be little hope for*

At the time of the Council, various “methods” of studying the nature of liturgy were popularized that served to enhance the Church’s almost exclusive reliance upon theological and historical perspectives alone.<sup>3</sup> One particular method that became widely-recognized was what may be called a “ritual studies” approach to liturgy.<sup>4</sup> Acknowledging that “ritual studies” was only taken seriously as an academic discipline beginning in the mid-1970s, American sociologist Ronald Grimes writes:

The study of ritual is not new. Theologians and anthropologists, as well as phenomenologists and historians of religion, have included it as one of their concerns. What is new about ritual studies is the deliberate attempt to consolidate a field of inquiry reaching across disciplinary boundaries and coordinating the normative interests of theology and liturgics, the descriptive ones of the history and phenomenology of religions, and the analytical ones of anthropology.

---

*any widespread survival of religious living in today’s changed conditions.”* Emphasis mine. Therefore, it may be understood that inward renewal involves deciphering the nature of liturgy, while outward renewal involves the work of promulgating liturgical texts and rites.

<sup>3</sup> For example, one widespread entry point into liturgical study was to focus on the etymology of the word “liturgy.” In this approach, the Greek word *leitouria* is broken apart into its constituent parts: *érgon* (“work”) and *laós* (“people”). In what could be interpreted as a reaction against worship as the exclusive action of the priest, liturgy was thereby heralded as the “work of the people.” See for example James White, *Introduction to Christian Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1980) 23-24. White states: “Liturgy, then, is a work performed by the people for the benefit of others. In other words, it is the quintessence of the priesthood of all believers in which the whole priestly community of Christians shares. To call a service ‘liturgical’ is to indicate that it was conceived so that all worshipers take an active part in offering their worship together.” See also Cypriano Vagaggini, *Theological Dimensions of the Liturgy: A General Treatise on the Theology of the Liturgy*, Trans. Leonard J. Doyle and W.A. Jurgens (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1976) 19. Concerning the interpretation of liturgy as “work of the people,” Vagaggini writes: “Unanimity has not yet been achieved among the liturgists themselves concerning the true technical, precise definition of the liturgy.” He continues in a footnote: “The word ‘liturgy,’ from the Greek *leitourgia*, *leiton ergon*, indicates a work which concerns the whole people in the sense that it is undertaken in the interests and for the welfare of all, and thus: public work, originally of a political and technical nature, then also of a religious and cultural nature.”

<sup>4</sup> For a broad overview of the meaning of ritual, see Evan M. Zuesse, “Ritual,” in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol. 12, Ed. Mircea Eliade (New York: Macmillan, 1987) 405-422. See especially 406 where Zuesse writes: “In ritual, people voluntarily submit to their bodily existence and assume very specific roles with highly patterned rules—rules and roles that conform the self to all others who have embodied these ‘typical’ roles in the past. To contact reality, in short, the conscious self must sacrifice its individual autonomy, its freedom in fantasy to ‘be’ anything.” See also Jack Goody, “Religion and Ritual: The Definitional Problem,” *British Journal of Sociology* 12 (1961) 142-164. Here Goody provides a survey of the different scholarly attempts to define ritual behavior.

As a result of this goal, the discipline of ritual studies is less a method one applies than a field one cultivates.<sup>5</sup>

While ritual studies certainly takes into account written texts and rubrics, its starting point lies in the observation of human behavior and communication.<sup>6</sup> Applied to the study of the liturgy, this means that basic components of “ritualization”<sup>7</sup>—such as the expression of movement and gestures in the liturgy, the interaction between priest and people, and the social cohesion achieved (or lack thereof)—are examined in order to arrive at meaning. In other words, a “ritual studies” approach strives to find significant data for interpretation in the liturgical act as a whole.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> Ronald Grimes, “Ritual Studies,” in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol. 12, Ed. Mircea Eliade (New York: Macmillan, 1987) 422.

<sup>6</sup> See Ronald Grimes, *Ritual Criticism: Case Studies in Its Practice, Essays on Its Theory* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1990) 9. Grimes states: “Although ritual studies may include textual analysis, it pays primary attention to performance, enactment, and other forms of gestural activity.” For Mark Searle’s own critique of this book see *Worship* 65:4 (1991): 376-378. See also Aidan Kavanagh, “Introduction,” in *The Roots of Ritual*, Ed. James Shaughnessey (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1973) 7. Kavanagh argues that ritual surpasses the interpretation of being “mere ecclesiastic ceremonial” and instead is a “basic human language.” He writes: “In religious circles, where one would have expected to find particular concern with the demands and possibilities of ritual as a genre of behavior and communication, little formal attention has been given the matter. This is astonishing, considering the extensive work Christian churches have done during the last decade in reforming and redeveloping their worship traditions. Such reforms have been instituted for the most part on the basis of theological and historical methods—methods that were primarily those of liturgical and pastoral studies in the past. The result has been generally good reform, but it may be argued that adaptation and development of Christian worship traditions of the past into new cultural dimensions cannot be well served by theological and historical methods alone.”

<sup>7</sup> “Ritualization” is a technical term that refers to the way in which ordinary human behavior is elevated gradually to the more stylized behavior of formal ritual. See for example Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992) 74. Bell states that ritualization “is a way of acting that is designed and orchestrated to distinguish and privilege what is being done in comparison to other, usually more quotidian, activities.” See also Bells description of “ritualization” in *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) 81-82. She writes: “A practice approach to ritual will first address how a particular community or cultural ritualizes (what characteristics of acting make strategic distinctions between these acts and others) and then address when and why ritualization is deemed to be the effective thing to do.” See also Ronald Grimes, *Beginnings in Ritual Studies*, rev. ed. (Columbia, SC: The University of South Carolina Press, 1995) 43. “Ritualization includes the patterned and the random (the repeated and the idiosyncratic, the routine and the nonpragmatic, the habitual and useless) elements of action and interaction.”

<sup>8</sup> See for example Aidan Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1992) 100-101. His description of liturgy in terms of “rite” suggests that even the “liturgical act” has a broader context than the arena of a particular experience of prayer: “Rite can be called a whole style of Christian living found in the myriad particularities of worship, of laws called “canonical,” of ascetical and monastic structures,

Although “ritual studies” gained both momentum and credence in the years immediately following the Second Vatican Council, such a shift away from an exclusively “classical” approach to the study of liturgy would not happen overnight. The Scholastic method of studying sacraments according to “matter” and “form” and liturgy according to ceremonial rubrics would prove to be a venerable tradition resistant to change. As Kevin Irwin writes:

It was especially after the Council of Trent that a clear separation developed between the liturgy and sacramental theology. In the wake of the Tridentine concern for rubrical precision in the doing of the liturgy, demonstrated by the printing of rubrics in the Roman Missal and Ritual, liturgy became equated with the external performances of the Church’s rites. . . . The divorce between the *lex orandi* [what the Church prays] and *lex credendi* [what the Church believes] was exemplified in the division of what had been a single area of study into two: liturgy and sacramental theology. Thus what resulted was a rather legalistic understanding of liturgy with sacramental theology assigned to dogmatic tracts.<sup>9</sup>

The study of liturgy prior to the Second Vatican Council, a pursuit almost exclusively undertaken by men preparing for ordination, could be considered the learning of rubrics and the mastering of ritual gestures. All of this was seen as secondary to the primary theological and historical study of sacraments.

---

of evangelical and catechetical endeavors. . . . A liturgical act concretizes all these and in doing so makes them accessible to the community assembled in a given time and place before the living God and for the life of the world. Rite in this Christian sense is generated and sustained in this regular meeting of faithful people in whose presence and through whose deeds the vertiginous Source of the cosmos itself is pleased to settle down freely and abide as among friends. *A liturgy of Christians is thus nothing less than the way a redeemed world is, so to speak, done.* The liturgical act of rite and the assembly which does it are coterminous, one thing: the incorporation under grace of Christ dying and rising still, restoring the communion all things and persons have been gifted with in Spirit and in truth. A liturgy is more than an act of faith, prayer, or worship. It is an act of rite.” Emphasis mine.

<sup>9</sup> Kevin W. Irwin, *Context and Text: Method in Liturgical Theology* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1994) 17-18.

### ***Mark Searle's "Ritual" Approach to Liturgy***

It was this form of “classical” training that Mark Searle received in preparation for priestly ministry in the years immediately prior to the Second Vatican Council.<sup>10</sup> However, it would not be the approach he would adopt in his career as a professor of liturgy; rather, he believed that a more complete study of liturgy—one which would help to reunite the execution of liturgical rubrics with theological and historical study—is best rooted in a “ritual” approach.<sup>11</sup> “To study liturgy as ritual,” Searle writes, “is to study liturgy, whether

---

<sup>10</sup> See Mark Searle, “Description of Proposed Study” in MSP, C19, Folder “Ritual, Definitions of.” Searle argues the point that liturgy needs to be studied from a ritual perspective and states the following about his seminary training in liturgy: “My own interest in the study of ritual is longstanding, but the methods in which I was trained—the methods which have almost exclusively dominated the study of ritual in theology and religious studies—were historical and theological. Over the years, however, I have become increasingly aware of the limitations of these approaches, namely: a) they are almost exclusively text-based and thus overlook the most characteristic feature of ritual, viz. that it only really exists when it is performed; b) they have tended to ‘explain’ rites by studying their origins and historical development; c) they give privileged status to ‘normative’ meanings (those proposed by leaders and commentators) at the expense of the actual meanings conveyed to participants in the performance of the rites; d) they generally study rites in their ideal form (as they are meant to be celebrated) instead of studying the form they take in actual practice.” See also Mark Searle, “Developments in Roman Catholic Celebration of the Eucharist: 1960-1970” in MSP, C14, Folder “Since Vatican II.” Here he provides an interpretation of the evolution in liturgical scholarship since the Second Vatican Council and declares that the “enduring value” of the transformation of liturgical training surpasses even the reform of the liturgy itself (7).

<sup>11</sup> See Searle, *Eight Talks on Liturgy*, 1. Searle writes: “Today liturgy has lost much of its esoteric character. It is no longer a purely academic branch of historical theology, but an integral part of the pastoral life of the Christian community. . . . This profound change in the position of liturgical studies owes its origin to the conviction, first aroused and later strengthened by historical and theological researches, that *liturgical celebration is rooted in and expressive of the life of the believing community*.” Emphasis mine. See also Ronald Grimes, “Modes of Ritual Necessity,” *Worship* 53 (1979) 139-141. Here he critiques how the failure to study ritual in the process of studying liturgy is problematic. Chief among his criticisms is the lack of observing meaning as the ritual is enacted rather than in its preparation: “Classical Christian liturgics is a normative discipline responsive to a specific set of institutions and texts. One major problem with it has been its repeated failure to recognize that effective prescription must follow, not precede ritual studies. We cannot say what people ought to be doing and expect to be genuinely, that is, somatically, heard until we know what they are, in fact, doing. Liturgists sometimes think the meaning of ritual consists of the thoughts theologians and pastors think as they design them. But ritual meaning consists just as surely of the random thoughts and gestures that occur during a ritual. In practical terms this means that more serious attention must be given in seminaries to the anthropology of ritual and to comparative liturgics if we are to find the skills and methods for performing such tasks” (130-140). Furthermore, see Mark Searle, “Modes of Ritual ‘Necessity’” in MSP, C19. Here Searle proposes that a “quantitative study” could be conducted on liturgical celebrations involving Grimes’ five categories of “ritualization”: decorum, ceremony, liturgy, magic, and celebration. He writes: “When a researcher wants to get at the data, i.e. when he wants to do the empirical work of pastoral liturgy, he can come to the ritual event seeking which of these three modes (he condenses the “modes” to decorum [inter-personal necessity], ceremony [social necessity], and liturgy [realm of ultimates]) of necessity are being orchestrated and how the necessities are being manipulated, i.e. what the style of dealing with the necessities would be.”

in history or in the present, in its empirical reality as a species of significant human behavior.”<sup>12</sup> While such an approach may not have been the intention of the reformers at the Second Vatican Council, retrieving the requirement for the active participation of all worshipers would necessarily introduce the issue of “human dynamics” in the examination of liturgical celebration. Thus, Searle states:

Since the 1960s, however, there has been a new interest in ritual both among liturgists and in the human sciences. For liturgists, the mixed results of the reforms introduced by the Second Vatican Council prompted new attention to the human dynamics of the liturgy. By 1968, it was becoming apparent that the implementation of the reform was raising problems to which historical and theological studies alone could give no answer: problems raised by negative reaction to the reforms and even more by the rash of radical “experiments” which they unwittingly unleashed. *What was needed, it seemed, was a more profound understanding of the human dynamics of liturgy as ritual behavior.*<sup>13</sup>

However, Searle recognized that, like the realm of liturgy, the meaning of and methodology involved in understanding the nature of ritual itself was still a field in its infancy stages. Therefore, he was convinced that greater attention must be devoted to probing and identifying the various dimensions of ritual behavior.<sup>14</sup>

For Searle, the greatest challenge offered by a “ritual” approach to the study of liturgy could be found in the fundamental shift away from an almost singular interest in liturgical

---

<sup>12</sup> Mark Searle, “Ritual,” in *The Study of the Liturgy*, rev. ed., Eds. Cheslyn Jones et al. (London: SPCK, 1992) 52. Regarding the popularity, or lack thereof, of a “ritual” approach to the study of liturgy, Searle writes: “This is an approach to liturgical studies which has remained largely unexplored until very recent times, perhaps because the very idea of ritual was somewhat suspect.”

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 53. Emphasis mine.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 54. Searle writes: “Since the definitions of ritual differ, the application of any given definition to liturgy needs to be made with adequate recognition of the particular values with which the definition may be freighted.” With that said, he identifies three basic categories of definitions for ritual: 1) formal (behavior that is “repetitive, prescribed, rigid, stereotyped, and so on”); 2) functionalist (behavior that serves as a way of “maintaining social cohesion and cultural coherence”); and 3) symbolic (behavior that “conveys meaning”). Searle acknowledges that each of these definitions will apply to liturgy: “Because of its essential polyvalence, it seems more discreet not to attempt a single definition of ritual, but to acknowledge that there are different kinds of ritual and that the liturgy of the church will often employ several of them in a single celebration.”

books and rubrics contained therein to the observation of liturgy as it is actually performed.

“Liturgy,” Searle contends, “is uniquely a matter of the body: both the individual body and the collective body.”<sup>15</sup> He continues:

In liturgy, the world is encountered *in sensu*, and reveals itself as sacrament through an almost experimental acting out of the ritual, through an exploratory assumption of the prescribed words and gestures, whose meaning is revealed in the doing. This is perhaps why liturgy has survived—in the case of the Roman liturgy, for centuries—in a hieratic language unintelligible to most participants, and why neither in the 16<sup>th</sup> nor in the 20<sup>th</sup> century did translation into the vernacular have the immediate hoped-for effect. *While ritual is subject to discursive analysis and theological evaluation, it is always more than words can tell.*<sup>16</sup>

For Searle, breaking through the barrier of a predominantly theological and historical study of liturgy demands a reawakening of symbolic imagination. In other words, a community’s belief is not simply contained in the verbal expressions of vocalized prayer; belief is also expressed in “ritual doing.” However, even the “doing” of ritual will more likely yield a greater sense of contemplation than it will produce meaning. “Ritual will always be more than doctrine-in-action,” he writes, “as encounter will always be more than its description.”<sup>17</sup>

Although the meaning of ritual will always be polyvalent, meaning is nevertheless conveyed in the act of performance. Searle suggests that ritual meaning is found in the expression of “attitudes, emotions, and relationships.”<sup>18</sup> Ritual develops and takes on an

---

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 57. Emphasis mine.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 58. Searle continues by revealing the great challenge this poses for modern liturgy: “Today a ritual studies approach to liturgical practice has continually to bear in mind the question raised by Romano Guardini in the 1960s about modern people’s capacity for symbolic activity (*Liturgiefähigkeit*). Moreover, this question of the modern capacity for symbolic modes of thought and thus for ritual cannot be dealt with apart from broader questions about the nature of modern society as this affects ritualization.”

<sup>18</sup> See Mark Searle, “Christian Initiation” in MSP, C38, Folder “Ritual: Experience, Feelings, Emotion.” Searle writes: “Ritual fulfills a basic human need to express and give an added meaning to man’s attitudes, emotions

established form when “what previously was a spontaneous *expression* of attitudes, emotions and relationships now becomes an activity aimed at *eliciting* such attitudes etc.”<sup>19</sup>

Furthermore, in the sphere of established Christian ritual, the “eliciting” of attitudes is aimed at realizing and expressing the attitudes God has for creation.<sup>20</sup> As Searle writes:

It [Christian ritual] expresses the attitudes which are those of God himself towards his creations and serves to arouse an echo of acceptance and response in the hearts of the participants. The relationships which it mediates are those between God and men and between men themselves in the light of their relationship to God, inaugurating, deepening, changing, renewing them. These rituals demand and express a commitment which goes beyond what is merely intellectual and which claims the whole man. Since what a man is, even to himself, is more than he can put into words, we can speak of Christian liturgy as having a role in eliciting and expressing appropriate emotion: but this is far more than is suggested by the term “emotionalism” which, in current usage, seems to suggest a merely partial and even superficial involvement.<sup>21</sup>

It is important to underscore the wisdom of Searle’s thought here, namely, that the ritual activity we call liturgy is an expression of God’s attitude toward all of creation. The worldview that is mediated in the celebration of liturgy is nothing less than the perfection of all things dwelling within the Kingdom of God.

---

and relationships. Man meets this need by symbolizing his attitudes, emotions and relationships either in word or gesture or in a combination of both.”

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 4. To suggest the objective of ritual is to realize God’s attitudes toward the world is to say that ritual is an act of divine revelation. Searle writes: “Since the Church is a human community, however, her most expressive and significant activity is, as is the case for all communities, her ritual actions. These point to what is truly sacred in human experience. They express and reveal the deepest meaning of human existence itself, insofar as they ‘reveal the deepest truth about God and the salvation of men [which] is made known to us in Christ’ (*Dei Verbum* 2).” Similarly, Kevin Irwin writes: “From the outset it is important to set a proper perspective on liturgy, prayer and spirituality (in fact on all aspects of the Christian life) by exploring the dynamic of our search for God and God’s prior and unceasing search for us in the gifted relationship of faith. . . . The priority of God’s initiative will serve to illustrate that the foundation of all that we do at worship and of all that comprises spirituality for us is God’s prior and constant search for us. The place of the liturgy as the means of experiencing the mystery of God until we come to know him in the kingdom will be emphasized.” See Kevin Irwin, *Liturgy, Prayer and Spirituality* (New York: The Paulist Press, 1984) 25.

<sup>21</sup> Searle, “Christian Initiation,” 4.



Perhaps it should be no surprise that a man trained as a Franciscan would come to the study of liturgy from a perspective of divine love for all creation. From his earliest published work, Searle held to the belief that liturgy can only be defined in terms of God's action upon the world. For example, in a 1972 piece entitled "The Word and the World," Searle defines liturgy as a "happening," an event that, in its entirety, is nothing less than the Word of God. He writes:

In this assembly, in its words and actions, the Word of God finds its most explicit utterance in the world of men, calling them to faith, deepening their faith, revealing their true identity and purpose, inviting them to work for the fulfillment of the destiny of man, for the completion of that future which was both revealed and inaugurated in Christ. *Consequently, the liturgy as such, and in its entirety, is the Word of God in the World.*<sup>22</sup>

Here, Searle's definition suggests that liturgical celebration, from beginning to end, is God's self-revelation to the world. Every aspect of this celebration—from the proclamation of scripture to the performance of gestures to all that comprises the liturgical environment—is the means by which God confronts the Church, and thus the world, with the truth of his Word. Furthermore, Searle's notion of liturgy demands that the liturgical assembly must not only receive God's Word, but must also be challenged to *be* God's Word—there can be no separation between liturgy and life. "The holiness of the Christian people," Searle contends, "is demanded not because the liturgy is apart from the world and *thus* holy, but because it declares the world to be holy, the place of God's presence among men."<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> Mark Searle, "The Word and the World," *Life and Worship* 41 (1972) 5. Emphasis mine.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 8. Searle also writes: "If the liturgy really is the celebration of the ultimate meaning of our life in the world of men, the divorce between that life and the liturgy will be healed when our lives as individuals and as a community are themselves manifestations of that same meaning. As members of the Church and active participants in her liturgical celebrations, we have the responsibility not merely to hear the Word, but to *become* the Word."

Therefore, the very project of liturgy may be defined in terms of the Church becoming the Word for the world; this is the purpose of liturgical prayer, a task which is pursued by the Christian community together. Because liturgy is an act of divine revelation, Searle's "ritual studies" approach seeks to ask questions regarding effective communication in every aspect of the liturgical celebration. He writes:

We need to appreciate how much the sacramental celebration depends, at least for its subjective effectiveness, or fruitfulness, on far more than valid matter and integral recitation of the words of the form. Everything which happens in a liturgical assembly contributes to the effectiveness of the communication of God's Word to men—or distorts it. It is as well, therefore, when planning a liturgy, to be aware of the need to ensure that everything in the liturgical assembly contributes to the effective proclamation and hearing of the Word. Here again, the Word is not simply the spoken word, but the total celebration as such: so that everything which belongs to that celebration or affects it in any way—atmosphere, order, sounds, light, movement, vesture—all form part of the whole and affect the process of God's self-communication to men.<sup>24</sup>

Searle argues that what is crucial to the study of liturgy is a twofold inquiry regarding communication: what makes God's Word evident and available to the world, and what contributes to its being muted? He will go so far as to say that "relevance" in liturgy is only a factor insofar as attention is devoted to the accessibility of "hearing" God's Word.<sup>25</sup>

Such is the central theme of a short piece by Searle entitled "What Is the Point of Liturgy?" that appeared the following year (1973) in *Christian Celebration*. It is the opening words of *Gaudium et Spes* that reinforce for Searle the meaning of relevance in liturgical celebration:

---

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 8. Searle writes: "The quest for relevance in the liturgy is thus of paramount importance, for it is a matter of facing our responsibility to the Word of God in the world and ensuring that everything is done to allow the Word to reverberate in our world with all possible clarity and vigour."

The joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts. For theirs is a community composed of men. United in Christ, they are led by the Holy Spirit in their journey to the Kingdom of the Father and they have welcomed the news of salvation which is meant for every man. That is why this community realizes that it is truly and intimately linked with mankind and its history.<sup>26</sup>

Searle believes that this vision of the Second Vatican Council will go unrealized as long as Christians fail to understand liturgy as the place where the Word and the world are intimately joined, as long as liturgy is seen as a brief escape from the affairs of the world.<sup>27</sup> “When we celebrate the Eucharist,” Searle writes, “we celebrate the intervention of God in a human, historical way in the life of our community.”<sup>28</sup> Once again, the dynamic of effective communication—i.e. the care given to the revelation of God’s Word in every dimension of liturgy—attends to the theological vision that liturgical prayer expresses God’s “attitudes” toward creation.

### ***Susanne Langer’s Ritual Theory***

It is clear that Searle wanted to ground the study of liturgy in the examination of ritual behavior in general. It is also apparent that he did not develop his understanding of ritual action as the expression of “attitudes, emotions and relationships” without prior influence; in fact, it was the writing of philosopher Susanne Langer that captured his imagination with

---

<sup>26</sup> *Gaudium et Spes* 1, as quoted in Mark Searle, “What Is the Point of Liturgy?” *Christian Celebration* (Summer 1973) 26.

<sup>27</sup> See Searle, “What Is the Point of Liturgy?” 27. He writes: “Centuries of individualistic spirituality have rendered commonplace such notions as ‘the presence of God’, ‘vocation’, ‘submission to the divine will’. What we have forgotten is that the liturgy is the celebration of the presence of God in the community of men and its affairs, of the fact that God calls communities as well as individuals, of the fact that communities, groups, families, even nations, must *as such* seek his will and submit to it.”

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

regard to the meaning of ritual.<sup>29</sup> More specifically, it was Langer's definition of ritual as "rehearsal of right attitudes" that became paramount to Searle's own understanding of Christian liturgy. Therefore, in order to better understand Langer's impact on Searle's thought, it will be helpful to briefly introduce her contribution to the field of ritual studies.

Susanne Knauth Langer (1896-1985) studied under the guidance of Alfred North Whitehead at Harvard University and was considered a leading thinker in the area of aesthetics in the 1940s and 1950s.<sup>30</sup> Her major work, *Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite, and Art*, was published in 1942 and had sold more than 500,000 copies at the time of her death in 1985.<sup>31</sup> The primary contribution of this work is Langer's thesis that humans have a fundamental need for symbolization.<sup>32</sup> Langer contends that with the scientific revolution came the end of an "exhausted philosophical vision," in

---

<sup>29</sup> Although the first published appearance of the definition of liturgy as "rehearsal of attitudes" does not appear until a 1979 edition of *Assembly*, Searle was employing this definition in his class lectures in Canterbury (1969-1977). It seems likely that he first encountered Langer's work while studying at the Institut Supérieur de Liturgie in Paris (1968-1969). For example, see Searle, "Christian Initiation," 1. Here he begins his description of ritual with a quote from Susanne Langer's *Philosophy in a New Key* as it is found in Thomas F. O'Dea, *The Sociology of Religion* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966) 40. The quote reads: "Ritual is a symbolic transformation of experiences that no other medium can adequately express. Because it springs from a primary human need, it is a spontaneous activity—that is to say, it arises without intention, without adaptation to a conscious purpose; its growth is undersigned, its pattern purely natural, however intricate it may be."

<sup>30</sup> See William R. Greer, "Susanne K. Langer, Philosopher, Is Dead at 89," *New York Times* (July 19, 1985) A12. An interesting fact about Langer's life is that she was proficient at playing the cello, which "gave her the expertise lacked by many other philosophers in studying the philosophy of esthetics."

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. See also Max Hall, *Harvard University Press: A History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986) 79. Hall details the publishing success of *Philosophy in a New Key*: "By 1984, *Philosophy in a New Key* had sold at least 545,000 copies. This figure included about 12,000 in the Press's hardcover; 447,000 as a low-priced commercial paperback; 43,000 as a Harvard Paperback beginning in 1971; at least 32,000 in a Japanese translation; and about 11,000 in nine other translations. The book became required or recommended reading for students of semantics, general philosophy, English, aesthetics, music, and the dance."

<sup>32</sup> See Susanne K. Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite, and Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1942) esp. 40-41. She writes: "This basic need, which certainly is obvious only in man, is the *need of symbolization*. The symbol-making function is one of man's primary activities, like eating, looking, or moving about. It is the fundamental process of his mind and goes on all the time. Sometimes we are aware of it, sometimes we merely find its results, and realize that certain experiences have passed through our brains and have been digested there."

which the “rational” dominated the “empirical.”<sup>33</sup> However, with the rise of scientific observation came the flourishing of the symbol, for what is observed must be put into language, which is itself a symbol. Langer writes: “Not simply seeing is believing, but *seeing and calculating, seeing and translating*.”<sup>34</sup> Thus, for Langer, the “new key” to philosophy and to the search for meaning in this world is “symbolic transformation.”<sup>35</sup> “Symbolism,” Langer maintains, “is the recognized key to that mental life which is characteristically human and above the level of sheer animality.”<sup>36</sup> Human beings do not simply respond to their senses; they *translate* what they sense into symbols.<sup>37</sup>

Thus, according to Langer, while animals are capable only of performing “practical” acts such as gathering food and procreating, humans perform many different types of

---

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 15-16.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>35</sup> See Arabella Lyon, “Susanne K. Langer: Mother and Midwife at the Rebirth of Rhetoric,” in *Reclaiming Rhetorica: Women in the Rhetorical Tradition*, Ed. Andrea A. Lunsford (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995) 270. Maintaining that Langer’s primary contribution is the grounding of philosophy in symbolic transformation rather than logic, Lyon writes: “She proclaimed as intrinsically human the constant and necessary transformation of sensual experience into personal symbols. From the flux of sensations felt by our bodies, our eyes, our ears, our mouths, and our noses, our minds abstract what is significant—the forms that affect us. Every act of thinking is an act that expresses these feelings by transforming them into symbols, insists Langer. In privileging feeling over logic in meaning making, Langer defied the mainstream of her discipline.” See also Mary Collins, “Liturgical Methodology and the Cultural Evolution of Worship in the United States,” *Worship* 49 (1975) 92-94; 97-99. In the context of establishing new directions for the study of ritual, Collins summarizes the contribution of Langer and states: “Suzanne Langer explores how and why ritual begins in motor attitudes; and how rituals are presentational rather than discursive embodiments of people’s insights into life. *She establishes the notion that the ritual or presentational embodiment of people’s insights into life are disciplined rehearsals of right attitudes whose forms are first devised in play.* . . . Langer establishes theoretically what the liturgical scholar, the anthropologist and the grammarian know, even when they cannot or do not deal adequately with that knowledge: that the elements of any expressive system do not mean or express of and by themselves. They participate in the meanings of the larger whole” (92-93). Emphasis mine.

<sup>36</sup> Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 28. See also Margaret Drummond, “The Nature of Images,” *British Journal of Psychology* 17 (1926) 10-19. Langer cites this work in her description of symbolic transformation, in that distinct images work together to create a sensible vision, just as words work together to create a sentence.

<sup>37</sup> Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 28. Langer frequently employs the example of Helen Keller, whose sensory blindness and deafness did not prevent her from achieving an understanding of the world and order in it. Langer writes: “Miss Helen Keller, bereft of sight and hearing, . . . with the single sense of touch, is capable of living in a wider and richer world than a dog or an ape with all his senses alert.”

“impractical” acts that serve to express feeling, which she associates with such words as “intuition,” “deeper meaning,” “artistic truth,” and “insight.”<sup>38</sup> For Langer, speech is the primary example of an “impractical” act that serves as the “symbolic transformation of experiences.”<sup>39</sup> Similarly, ritual behavior is “impractical” activity that has the expression of feeling as its primary function.<sup>40</sup> Langer writes:

Ritual “expresses feelings” in the logical rather than the physiological sense. . . . The ultimate product of such articulation is not a simple emotion, but a complex, permanent *attitude*. This attitude, which is the worshipers’ response to the insight given by the sacred symbols, is an emotional pattern, which governs all individual lives. . . . A rite regularly performed is the constant reiteration of sentiments towards “first and last things”; it is not a free expression of emotions, but a *disciplined rehearsal of “right attitudes.”*<sup>41</sup>

Ritual serves as a vehicle of symbolic transformation in which the “disciplined rehearsal of right attitudes” aims at expressing “deeper meaning” and “insight.” “Human attitudes,”

---

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 44-45. Regarding language as an “impractical” act, Langer writes: “Speech is, in fact, the readiest active termination of that basic process in the human brain which may be called *symbolic transformation of experiences*. . . . Words are certainly our most important instruments of expression, our most characteristic, universal, and enviable tools in the conduct of life. Speech is the mark of humanity. It is the normal terminus of thought. We are apt to be so impressed with its symbolic mission that we regard it as the only important expressive act, and assume that all other activity must be practical in an animalian way . . .”

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 45. Langer writes: “Eating, traveling, asking or answering questions—any or all such activities may enter into *rites*; yet rites in themselves are not practical, but expressive. Ritual, like art, is essentially the active termination of a symbolic transformation of experience.” See also Louis Arnaud Reid, “Critical Notices,” *Mind: A Quarterly Review of Psychology and Philosophy* 54 (1945) 77. Reid summarizes Langer’s ritual theory in the following manner: “The contemplation of *sacra* gives rise to motor attitudes—shouting, prancing, rolling on the earth—which are no doubt in the first instance self-expressive, but soon are used to demonstrate rather than to relieve feeling. Its demonstrative intent becomes clearer through contagion, collective activity, the communal act. Becoming stereotyped and formalized, this overt behaviour before *sacra* is ritual, whose function is to develop a tribal or congregational unity of rightness and security.”

<sup>41</sup> Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 153. It is important to emphasize that the rehearsal involved in ritual is of an impractical nature. Its expression is of ultimate life patterns. Langer writes: “Ritual is the most primitive reflection of serious thought, a slow deposit, as it were, of people’s imaginative insight into life. That is why it is intrinsically solemn, even though some rites of rejoicing or triumph may degenerate into mere excitement, debauchery, and license.” Emphasis mine.

writes Langer, “vaguely recognized as reasonable and right, are expressed by actions which are not spontaneous emotional outlets but prescribed modes of participation and assent.”<sup>42</sup>

All of this leads Langer in the direction toward aesthetics and her belief that art and music, like ritual, have an objective reality—they are not means of “self-expression” but rather serve as symbolic transformations of life “attitudes.” In other words, they transcend immediate emotions and are “the reflection of inner life in physical attitudes and gestures” and of tensions created therein.<sup>43</sup> In other words, art and music fall into the realm of symbolic translation; they are not meant to evoke a particular emotion as they are meant to provide insight. Langer writes:

The fact is, that we can *use* music to work off our subjective experiences and restore our personal balance, but this is not its primary function. Were it so, it would be utterly impossible for an artist to announce a program in advance, and expect to play it well; or even, having announced it on the spot, to *express himself* successively in *allegro*, *adagio*, *presto*, and *allegretto*, as the changing moods of a single sonata are apt to dictate. Such mercurial passions would be abnormal even in the notoriously capricious race of musicians!<sup>44</sup>

---

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 162. Langer states this in another way on page 171: “Ritual begins in motor attitudes, which, however personal, are at once externalized and so made public.” See also Lyon, “Susanne K. Langer and the Rebirth of Rhetoric,” 273. Lyon writes: “According to Langer, many mechanisms within a society control individuation and keep the group’s members interdependent. Social groups use rituals, or ‘formalized gestures,’ which articulate feelings and common thinking. . . . Since society works toward a uniform belief, even a singular effective speaker cannot dictate or prescribe meaning. The individual may express her conceptions, but the meaning is determined in and by communal attitudes.”

<sup>43</sup> Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 226. See also Susanne K. Langer, *Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art Developed from Philosophy in a New Key* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1953) 372. Here Langer writes: “But the fact that music is a temporal, progressive phenomenon easily misleads one into thinking of its passage as a *duplication* of psychophysical events, a *string of events* which parallels the passage of emotive life, rather than as a symbolic projection which need not share the conditions of what it symbolizes, i.e. need not present its import in temporal order because that import is something temporal. The symbolic power of music lies in the fact that it creates a pattern of tensions and resolutions. . . . Painting, sculpture, architecture, and all kindred arts do the same thing as music.” For a critique of Langer’s methodology regarding artistic form and communicated feeling see Mary Francis Slattery, “Looking Again at Susanne Langer’s Expressionism,” *British Journal of Aesthetics* 27 (Summer 1987) 247-258.

<sup>44</sup> Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 217.

What is said here about music can be applied to ritual behavior as well, namely that participation in ritual is not meant to serve the goal of evoking subjective, personal feelings but is meant to practice the fundamental attitudes it seeks to express. Thus, ritual is not about self-expression but rather life-expression, which depends upon the communal transformation of symbols for meaning to take place. As Langer contends, “A life that does not incorporate some degree of ritual, of gesture and attitude, has no mental anchorage.”<sup>45</sup>

A further dimension of Langer’s philosophy that is important in terms of ritual theory is that all means of symbolic transformation must be examined in terms of an overall experience that creates what she calls “semblance of life.” When a piece of music is played, a painting unveiled, or a ritual performed, meaning is to be found in the overall experience, in the entire complex comprised of artists, art, and art admirers. Langer writes:

This total semblance is, I think, what critics often refer to as the poet’s “vision.” I can find no other justification for that word. In the framework of the present theory, however, it is perfectly justified. A poem is essentially and entirely a creation; the words beget virtual elements, that exhibit forms of sensibility and emotion and thus carry a meaning beyond the discursive statements involved in their construction. But the meaning is not something to be read “between the lines”; it is *in* the lines, in every word and every punctuation mark as well as in the literal content of every sentence. The whole fabric is a work of art.<sup>46</sup>

The idea of the “total semblance,” when approaching aesthetics or ritual performance, is important as it rejects the notion of trying to examine distinct parts in order to determine meaning. For example, music is created when individual notes are in relationship with one

---

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 290.

<sup>46</sup> Susanne K. Langer, “The Primary Illusions and the Great Orders of Art,” *Hudson Review* 3 (1950) 230. Langer opens this article with the following sentence: “All art is the creation of forms expressive of human feeling, from the primitive sense of vitality that goes with breathing and moving one’s limbs, or even suddenly resting, to the poignant emotions of love and grief and ecstasy.” According to her theory, art is a result of the symbolic transformation the deepest attitudes and feelings of life that are prior to logic.



another; therefore, to examine one note by itself or even a series of notes and rests apart from the entire piece is futile.<sup>47</sup> Thus, in the composition of an overall art form, all constituent elements “are illusions achieved by abstracting semblances *from* the actual world” that then create “these sheer appearance into new forms that mirror the logic of feeling.”<sup>48</sup>

To summarize Langer’s contribution to the body of knowledge of ritual theory, she first and foremost claimed symbols as fundamental to the human condition. Furthermore, Langer believed that symbols do not arise from the level of cognition but rather out of the need to express feeling. In the realm of ritual, symbols are employed to articulate the “deeper meaning” of attitudes. She propositioned, therefore, that ritual is in fact the “rehearsal of right attitudes,” expressing a corporate worldview. To “rehearse” attitudes is not to express one’s emotional state but to surrender the self to the symbols of the rehearsal. For this reason, Langer subscribed to the notion that there is an objective meaning to be found in ritual (as well as in music and art) since ritual behavior is not about “a simple emotion, but a complex, permanent *attitude*.”<sup>49</sup> Therefore, identifying the underlying attitudes of ritual is a necessary project of those interested in understanding what ritual intends to perform and accomplish. Finally, Langer suggested that symbolic transformation is only possible because symbols are necessarily in tension with one another; thus, she demonstrated the need to incorporate semiotics in the realm of ritual theory.<sup>50</sup>

---

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 223. Langer states: “The elements of music therefore are sensuous images of the tensions and resolutions which constitute *passage* for us; and those sensuous images, creating the semblance of passage, are tonal forms in virtual motion. By these the illusion of time is achieved and its experiential character set forth—its complexity, density, and volume, its interwoven elements and indivisible flow.”

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 228.

<sup>49</sup> Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 153.

***Searle's Definition of Liturgy as "Rehearsal of Christian Attitudes"***

While it is clear that Searle was familiar with the overall content and breadth of Langer's work, it is most certain that his imagination was captivated specifically by her definition of ritual as "rehearsal of right attitudes."<sup>51</sup> An adapted form of this definition began to appear in the earliest of his published writings and continued to play a role throughout his entire career. Thus, in several short pieces that appeared in the 1979 volume of *Assembly*, Searle introduces the definition of liturgy as "rehearsal of Christian attitudes," and therefore was recognized among the post-Vatican II scholars who focused primarily on the pastoral project of illuminating the meaning of liturgy in the life of the Christian community. Rather than exerting his energy on proposing ways to change the liturgy, Searle sought to articulate the need for a deeper internalization of the liturgy itself. What follows is a brief presentation of Searle's earliest rendering of liturgy as "rehearsal of Christian attitudes"—necessarily limited in scope—since each chapter will expand on this theme in accord with the major liturgical topics which he addressed throughout his academic career.

In the March edition of the 1979 volume of *Assembly*—a publication of the Notre Dame Center for Pastoral Liturgy for which Searle himself functioned as editor—an article entitled "The Sacraments of Faith" appeared in which he concretely defines liturgical

---

<sup>50</sup> See Lyon, "Susanne K. Langer and the Rebirth of Rhetoric," 282. Lyon states that Langer "worked towards describing a semiotic model that privileged her experience."

<sup>51</sup> See Footnote 29 above. As suggested there, it is likely that O'Dea's expansion upon Langer's definition of ritual as "rehearsal of right attitudes" may have been very intriguing to Searle. See especially pages 39-41 of *The Sociology of Religion*, where O'Dea incorporates Langer's insight in the following manner: "The institutionalization of ritual, the patterning of its words, gestures, and procedures, means a kind of sharing and objectification of the originally subjective and spontaneous attitudes of the believers. Such a sharing and objectification is necessary in order to preserve under the new conditions of developing institutionalization its original expressive activity. The result of this sharing and objectification is established ritual, which now *elicits* attitudes instead of directly *expressing* them." (40) O'Dea also alludes to the role ritual plays in social cohesion in the following quote from Talcott Parsons: "For by the common ritual expression of their attitudes men not only manifest them but they, in turn, reinforce the attitudes. Ritual brings the attitudes into a heightened state of self-consciousness which greatly strengthens them, and through them strengthens, in turn, the moral community." See Talcott Parsons, *The Structure of Social Action* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1949) 435.

celebration in terms of “rehearsal of attitudes.”<sup>52</sup> Here Searle concisely portrays all of the sacraments in terms of their ability to help Christians surrender to the new life that is bestowed in death. His contention is that all liturgical practice teaches the art of dying to self, as we enter into Christ’s self-gift. Searle writes:

When we participate in the sacraments of faith we identify with Christ in his own commitment of his whole self freely to God. . . The sacraments of faith are not painless alternatives to the faithful obedience which is perfected in suffering. *They are rather instances of learning-by-doing, rehearsals of attitudes of obedience and surrender, exercises and celebrations of our self-abandonment to God in Christ.* . . The liturgy enacts this paradox: it is a celebration of life because it is a rehearsal of death.<sup>53</sup>

At a point in the post-Vatican II renewal when liturgical celebration was often an experiment in attaining temporal joy, Searle offered a theology of celebration rooted in Christian surrender.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, Searle emphasized the attitudes of “obedience” and “surrender” as paramount to the nature of liturgy precisely because these are the attitudes held by Christ as he suffered death on the cross in offering himself to the Father.

Several months later Searle wrote an editorial for *Assembly* entitled “Active Participation” in which he once again stated that liturgy is about practicing the art of self-surrender to contemplate what it means to be part of Christ’s own suffering, death, and

---

<sup>52</sup> See Mark Searle, “The Sacraments of Faith,” *Assembly* 5:5 (1979) 54-55.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 54. Emphasis mine. See also Searle, *Eight Talks on Liturgy*, 87-88. He states: “Our Christian faith should produce in us an attitude to death which clearly differentiates us from our unbelieving contemporaries. . . In former times and in less advanced cultures, death was a public, or at least a family, celebration; now it is a private obscenity. . . This has resulted in attitudes to sickness and death which are profoundly unchristian.”

<sup>54</sup> See Searle, “The Sacraments of Faith,” 55. Searle concludes the article with this statement: “Our liturgical celebrations, so parochial and demure, are heavy with unnoticed irony: the life-giving waters only resuscitate those whom they first drown; the bread of life is the condemned man’s nourishment; the sacrament of unity celebrates a unity we hardly suspect and desire even less; the comfortable congregation gathers dispassionately under the sign of the Crucified to pray for the blessing—not promised in the Gospel—of never being asked to change, to suffer or to surrender. Yet the irony, hanging like a vulgarism in polite conversation, remains to disquiet us and even, on occasion, to drive a saint to that insanity we call faith.”

resurrection.<sup>55</sup> Instead of viewing liturgy in terms of what “builds” community, Searle contends that liturgy is where our oneness in Christ is realized again and again, since community is already established in Christ through baptism. He writes:

Active participation is nothing more or less than the realization and activation of the common life of Christ into which we are initiated by baptism. The right and duty of active participation is the right and duty to discover the immeasurable dimensions of our life together in the Spirit of Christ. It is the right and duty to lose one’s life in order to find it in the common life of the one Body.<sup>56</sup>

Thus, he states quite succinctly: “We learn who we are by doing what we do.”<sup>57</sup> As early as the late 1970s—just a little more than a decade after the close of the Second Vatican Council—Searle began heralding the need for a corporate contemplation of liturgy to conquer a growing sense that how one participates in worship is a matter of personal choice. “The enemy of ‘active participation’,” Searle writes, “is not interiority or a dislike of noisy celebrations. The real enemy is individualism, i.e. egotism in all its forms.”<sup>58</sup>

Finally, in the December 1979 edition of *Assembly*, Searle wrote an editorial entitled “Liturgical Gestures,” in which he again discusses liturgy in terms of the “rehearsal of attitudes” and specifically credits Susanne Langer as the source of this idea.<sup>59</sup> Here he deals

---

<sup>55</sup> See Mark Searle, “Active Participation” (Editorial), *Assembly* 6:2 (1979) 65, 72.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. He continues: “Too often, what passes for community celebration is little more than the indulgent ‘self-expression’ of a group of people who ‘like that kind of thing’—until they tire of it. Similarly, the refusal of the ‘new liturgy’ may be, for all its apparent piety, a refusal to give up attachment to familiar forms. In either case, there is an inability to move beyond one’s own ideas of God, Church and the economy of salvation. In either case, the result is the arrested spiritual development of the individual and the disintegration of the ecclesial community.”

<sup>59</sup> See Mark Searle, “Liturgical Gestures” (Editorial), *Assembly* 6:3 (1979) 73, 80. Here Searle defines liturgy as “rehearsal of *right* attitudes,” in keeping with Langer’s earlier contribution. However, in subsequent works, he will change this definition to “rehearsal of *Christian* attitudes.”

with the issue of “authenticity,” as he contends that with the introduction of the vernacular into the liturgy as well as the mandate to reform the rites according to the goal of making things understandable, uncovered the search for meaning and authenticity.<sup>60</sup> Authenticity in the liturgy is not about the revelation of one’s own personal feelings at the time, but rather is about expressing what the ritual demands of us. Searle writes:

Yet it is precisely in the area of integration, and of authenticity which is its moral dimension, that problems seem to arise for people in regard to liturgical celebration. Often the question is posed in terms of feelings and emotions. *Liturgical rites and texts invite us to express emotions that are not necessarily ours.* We are called upon to express contrition and humility when we feel neither particularly sorry nor particularly humble. We are called to be alternatively joyful and repentant, to say “I believe” to things we are not sure of, to stand, to kneel, cross ourselves and genuflect, whether that is the way we feel or not.<sup>61</sup>

Thus, Searle turns to the example of rituals of etiquette and suggests that just as such simple actions involved in greeting and leave-taking are indispensable for the well-being of society, so too must “programmed responses” be trusted in the liturgy. It is not a matter of “going

---

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 73. Searle writes: “Before the coming of the vernacular liturgy, Catholics had enjoyed a reputation for cultivating the non-rational, for moving in a world of symbols and beliefs which mediated between the Transcendent and simple humanity in ways which placed comparatively little emphasis on intelligibility. With the introduction of the vernacular, however, the expectation has arisen that everything should be simple to understand (and thus to explain) at the risk of otherwise failing to be authentic. *This double quest, for meaning and authenticity, has shifted the balance in favor of the written and spoken word and away from non-verbal forms of participation.* Statue and icon give way to the printed banner; incense is out, commentary is in; the congregation of spectators becomes an audience drilled in programmed responses. This, in turn, is producing its own reaction in some circles. There is a sudden hungering for the visual, the expressive, the tactile, the olfactory. Dance is in: either in the form of a solo performer offering an ‘interpretive dance,’ or in the form of simple movements that everyone can join in and that often smack of nothing so much as first-grade play sessions. New rituals are being invented: linking hands for the Lord’s Prayer; burning written lists of sins in the paschal flame; solemnly (or gleefully?) turning on the popcorn machine to ‘symbolize’ the resurrection.” Emphasis mine.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. Emphasis mine. See also Searle, *Eight Talks on Liturgy*, 64. What he writes concerning contrition may be applied to the project of liturgy as a whole: “It is more concerned with God and with his purpose and with getting back into the stream of what God is doing. It is more concerned with that than with oneself and with one’s own feeling.”

through the motions” but rather practicing and articulating who we are at prayer. “In fact, they are a form of discipline in which we express attitudes rather than emotions.”<sup>62</sup>

Perhaps for the reason that “attitudes” can sometimes be mistaken for “feelings,” Searle labors to provide an exact definition for what constitutes attitudes. Attitudes express a worldview; they represent a deeply-held conviction about an outlook on life. “Attitudes,” according to Searle, “represent more or less habitual ways of thinking, judging and acting; more or less stable and reiterated ways of relating to ourselves and to the world around us. . . . They are, in short, our response to life itself.”<sup>63</sup> Therefore, using Langer’s definition of ritual as the “rehearsal of right attitudes,” Searle contends that what is necessary for liturgical enactment is the practicing of objective attitudes that are sometimes mistakenly overrun by the desire to make paramount the expression of subjective emotions. He writes:

. . . the gestures of the faithful during the course of the liturgy represent expression of attitude rather than of emotion. In fact, not the least important aspect of liturgical ritual is that it helps to shape our attitudes instead of letting ourselves be tossed around by the fickle gusts of feeling. They are not so much meant to be spontaneous reactions to the here and now as disciplined approaches to the Always and Everywhere. As Susanne Langer has pointed out, “a rite regularly performed is the constant reiteration of ‘first and last things’; it is not a free expression of emotions, but a disciplined rehearsal of right attitudes.” What the liturgical gesture can do, therefore, is help us to discover the proper way of being-with-others and of being-before-God. *Whether or not they meet our moods, they discipline us and rehearse us in right attitudes.* Indeed, the very conflict of gesture and emotion may on occasion provoke insights into who we are and who we are called to be. Liturgical celebration not only expresses faith, but

---

<sup>62</sup> Searle, “Liturgical Gestures,” 80.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. See also Bernard Cooke, “Living Liturgy: Life as Liturgy,” in *Emerging Issues in Religious Education*, Eds. Gloria Durka and Joanmarie Smith (New York: Paulist Press, 1976) 119. Cooke writes that “the external enactment of the liturgy is meant to be a true expression of the *attitudes* of all those in attendance; those gathered at liturgy are there precisely because of their Christian faith, i.e., that faith is the very thing they presumably have in common; those gathered for liturgy have not come to do simultaneously and in one spot the individual actions that they could just as well have done in separation from one another.” Emphasis mine. Cooke’s point is that attitudes are the domain of the community; the attitudes of the liturgy are corporate.

can form us as men and women of faith . . . if we enter into its actions.<sup>64</sup>

What Searle will later develop as his concept of “liturgical spirituality,” here he articulates as the demand to rehearse the attitudes of the liturgy with “attentiveness,” not to oneself or even to the gesture performed but rather “that to which the gesture points us”—namely Christ.<sup>65</sup>

Clearly, this kind of “attentiveness” requires that the liturgical assembly must practice praying as the Body of Christ, to pray in such a way so that every spoken word, every enacted gesture, every moment of silence reveals Christ’s own attitudes toward the Father in surrendering himself in perfect love.<sup>66</sup>

## **Conclusion**

“What is the point of liturgy?”<sup>67</sup> This is the primary question that subtly guides the principles for liturgical reform contained in the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*.<sup>68</sup> And

---

<sup>64</sup> Searle, “Liturgical Gestures,” 80. Emphasis mine.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. Searle states: “We need to ‘dwell in’ the gesture, whether it be a genuflection or the sign of the cross, to get the feel of it, to try it on. . . By putting ourselves into the prayerful postures of the liturgical tradition, we might discover their direction, discover who God is and who we are together before him. In other words, even the simplest liturgical gestures do not merely express the things of which we are already conscious, but they serve to deepen our consciousness and to strengthen ‘right attitudes.’”

<sup>66</sup> For a similar theology on “attentiveness” as fundamental to liturgical prayer see Evelyn Underhill, *Worship* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1936) 27. She eloquently writes: “Habit and attention therefore co-operate in the life of worship; and it is a function of cultus to maintain this vital partnership. Habit alone easily deteriorates into mechanical repetition, the besetting sin of the liturgical mind. Attention alone means, in the end, intolerable strain. Each partner has his weak point. Habit tends to routine and spiritual red-tape; the vice of the institutionalist. Attention is apt to care for nothing but the experience of the moment, and ignore the need of a stable practice, independent of personal fluctuations; the vice of the individualist. Habit is a ritualist. Attention is a pietist. But it is the beautiful combination of order and spontaneity, docility and freedom, living humbly—and therefore fully and freely—within the agreed pattern of the cultus and not in defiance of it, which is the mark of a genuine spiritual maturity and indeed the fine flower of a worshipping life.”

<sup>67</sup> See Searle, “What Is the Point of Liturgy?” 26-27.

<sup>68</sup> See the many descriptions of the nature of liturgy in the introduction and first chapter of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. According to the plan of renewal envisioned by the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council, the ascertaining of knowledge as to what liturgy is must accompany the work of restoring or creating new prayer forms. See for example Annibale Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy 1948-1975*, Trans. Matthew J. O’Connell (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1990) 48. In keeping with the call for “full, conscious, and active

yet, at the time of the promulgation of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* on December 4, 1963, new discoveries continued to be asserted as to what “the very nature of the liturgy” means.<sup>69</sup>

Mark Searle became one of the liturgical scholars who would make a contribution to the understanding of liturgy. Launching his study of the liturgy from the perspective of ritual behavior, Searle maintained that exploring the human dynamics of ritual would help to provide greater insight into the liturgy than could be provided by theological and historical methods alone.

Searle was convinced that the liturgy reveals God’s “attitudes” toward the world; that prior to our response, the liturgy expresses God’s love for creation. However, if the liturgy is revelatory of God’s “attitudes” toward us, then our faith response must involve “rehearsing” those same attitudes. Thus, liturgy is the “rehearsal of Christian attitudes.” The liturgy is the locus for the celebration and appropriation of “right” attitudes, the place where the Christian community practices over and over again the worldview of God’s reign. It is the event in which individual Christians rehearse surrendering their individuality in order to be fashioned into the Body of Christ. It is where the pattern of redemption is lived out, experienced bodily, and appropriated for the whole of life.

As will be demonstrated in the subsequent chapters of this study, liturgy as the “rehearsal of Christian attitudes” is a fundamental key in unlocking Searle’s method for

---

participation” as mandated in *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 14, Bugnini writes: “The pastors of local Churches, along with all their pastoral workers, are urged to start the process of educating the faithful in the liturgy, familiarizing them with the Scriptures, and getting them actively involved in the celebration through listening and singing and through acclamations, prayers, and responses. In addition, they are to begin the work of translating the liturgical books; this a completely new field, full of difficulties and responsibilities.”

<sup>69</sup> See for example *The Study of Liturgy*, Eds. Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright, and Edward Yarnold (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978). See especially the first essay by J.D. Crichton, “A Theology of Worship,” 3-29. Crichton not only attempts to define liturgy as “the communal celebration of the Church, which is Christ’s body and in which he with the Holy Spirit is active, of the paschal mystery,” but he also provides a theology and historical context through which to study the liturgy.



liturgical studies and of his vision for liturgical reform in general. This mantra becomes the basis for Searle's project of leading worshippers into a deeper sense of what it means to participate in the liturgy. His aim is to demonstrate that, in all things liturgical, "rehearsal" demands deep attentiveness, while the "attitudes" practiced necessitate a willing surrender to self.

## Chapter II

### ***Christian Initiation and Faith Development***

From the beginning of Christian worship, a fundamental and indispensable principle underlying all celebration is the requirement of faith. Such is the case in the New Testament, in which the proclamation of the Good News is followed immediately by some degree of faith commitment prior to baptism (e.g., Acts 8:26-40). And such is the vision of the Second Vatican Council in its declaration that all sacraments “presuppose” faith and can thus be called “sacraments of faith.”<sup>1</sup> At the foundation of all Christian worship and sacramental celebration is the covenant of love established between God and humanity, in which the role of faith is undeniably intrinsic and descriptive.

Nowhere is the necessity of faith more explicit than in the renewed celebration of initiation, specifically in the sacrament of baptism.<sup>2</sup> While the Second Vatican Council ordered the restoration of the adult catechumenate—thereby recognizing once again the inherent connection between conversion (i.e. a mature life change) and baptism—it also

---

<sup>1</sup> See *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 59 in Flannery, *The Basic Sixteen Documents*. The full text reads: “The purpose of the sacraments is to sanctify people, to build up the body of Christ, and, finally, to worship God. Because they are signs they also belong in the realm of instruction. They not only presuppose faith, but by words and objects they also nourish, strengthen, and express it. That is why they are called sacraments of faith. They do, indeed, confer grace, but, in addition, the very act of celebrating them is most effective in making people ready to receive this grace to their profit, to worship God duly, and to practice charity.”

<sup>2</sup> The renewal of the liturgy after the Second Vatican Council witnessed, for the first time in the Church’s history, the institution of two distinct rites for the celebration of initiation. The *Rite of Baptism for Children* was promulgated on May 15, 1969, while the *editio typica* for the adult rite of initiation, *Ordo initiationis christianae adultorum*, appeared in 1972, was first translated into English in 1974, and was published again with emendations in 1988.

sought to maintain the traditional practice of infant baptism.<sup>3</sup> As stated in the “General Introduction” to the second *editio typica* (1973) of the instruction on initiation:

Baptism is the door to life and to the kingdom of God. Christ offered this first sacrament of the New Law to all that they might have eternal life. . . . Baptism is therefore, above all, the sacrament of that faith by which men and women, enlightened by the Spirit’s grace, respond to the Gospel of Christ. That is why the Church believes it is the most basic and necessary duty to inspire all, catechumens, parents of children still to be baptized, and godparents, to that true and living faith by which they hold fast to Christ and enter into or confirm their commitment to the New Covenant. To accomplish this, the Church prescribes the pastoral instruction of catechumens, the preparation of the children’s parents, the celebration of God’s word, and the profession of baptismal faith.<sup>4</sup>

As a result of emphasizing the importance of faith for baptism, the reformed rite fueled inadvertently the argument against baptizing infants on the grounds that children are insufficiently mature to “respond to the Gospel of Christ” and are believed to be incapable of expressing “that true and living faith by which they hold fast to Christ.”<sup>5</sup>

While both the creation of a new order for the baptism of infants in 1969 and the restoration of the adult catechumenate in 1972 represented serious and scholarly attempts to respond to pastoral concerns, a debate regarding the relationship between meaning of baptism and the nature of the Church began to draw the attention of theologians and pastors alike.<sup>6</sup> For example, this was particularly true in the American Church, in which the

---

<sup>3</sup> See *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 64-69 in Flannery, *The Basic Sixteen Documents*. Concerning adult initiation, Number 64 declares: “The catechumenate for adults, divided into several distinct steps, is to be restored and brought into use at the discretion of the local Ordinary.” Likewise, as infant baptism is concerned, Number 67 states: “The rite for the Baptism of infants is to be revised.”

<sup>4</sup> *Christian Initiation*, General Introduction, 3 in *Documents on the Liturgy, 1963-1979, Conciliar, Papal, and Curial Texts*, 720.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Ralph A. Keifer, “Christian Initiation: The State of the Question,” *Worship* 48 (1974) 392-404. Referring to a general lack of theological direction at the time, Keifer writes: “We are really less a community of faith now than we were a decade ago: an extremely brittle authority structure and narrow

enthusiasm for the restoration of the adult catechumenate often went hand in hand with viewing “indiscriminate” baptism as a “pathological” problem.<sup>7</sup> Such is the view of Aidan Kavanagh, whose 1978 work *The Shape of Baptism: The Rite of Christian Initiation* championed the practice of adult conversion and subsequent initiation as “normative.”<sup>8</sup> Out of a serious desire to uphold sacraments as true celebrations of faith rather than mechanical functions, Kavanagh criticizes the normativity of “indiscriminate” baptism:

Baptism done anonymously and indiscriminately in a *pro forma* manner with little inconvenience to anyone, with drops of water and daps of oil, is not merely a regrettable lapse in pastoral taste. It symbolizes and inevitably reinforces a view of the Christian mystery that is vastly at odds with everything the Church knows about the intent of its Lord. When this sort of baptism becomes the initiatory *norm*, the Church of Jesus Christ cannot repair the damage done its faith and ministry simply by more education and tighter administrative controls. It must enrich its context of meaning with regard to those who come to its faith and bring others to it through the catechumenate.<sup>9</sup>

---

symbolic focus has cracked, and with it a sense of distinctiveness and belonging which characterized preconciliar Catholicism. As a result, to speak of initiation is extremely difficult because there is so little to initiate people *into*, and little or nothing to celebrate” (395).

<sup>7</sup> See Aidan Kavanagh, *The Shape of Baptism: The Rite of Christian Initiation* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1978) 94. Kavanagh cites A.M. Roguet in labeling indiscriminate baptism “a pathological situation”: “One might ask oneself, as do many priests today in anguish, if such baptisms should be celebrated at all; if they are not doing more harm than good, by weighing down the Church with a multitude of Christians who are so only in name, and who do harm to the Church by confirming unbelievers in their opinion that, far from being a living society, a leaven that should raise the world’s masses the Church is a worn-out institution, ineffective, unreal, surviving only by custom” (94-95).

<sup>8</sup> See Kavanagh, *The Shape of Baptism*, 109. Concerning the “norm” of baptism, Kavanagh writes: “The norm of baptism was stated by the Council in a more diffused form than that of the eucharist, but no less definitely, to be the solemn sacramental initiation done especially at the paschal vigil and preceded by a catechumenate of serious content and considerable duration. This implies strongly, even if it does not require, that the initiate be an adult or at least a child well advanced in years.”

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 172-173. See also Aidan Kavanagh, “Initiation: Baptism and Confirmation,” *Worship* 46 (1972) 274. In promoting the necessary proximity of the celebration of confirmation with the sacrament of baptism, Kavanagh writes strongly against baptism performed without catechetical formation: “What is of more radical pastoral consequence is the present practice of what has amounted virtually to *indiscriminate baptism*, done for negative motives (only to remove original sin) or, worse, for purely conventional social reasons without adequate catechesis either before or after the event.”

Kavanagh not only critiques the performance of “indiscriminate” baptism, but he also labels the practice of infant baptism an outdated “Christendom model” of initiation that will not be able to survive the theological challenge offered by the “antique and paschal” model that is the restored adult catechumenate.<sup>10</sup> The bottom line for Kavanagh is that he believes the *Ordo Initiationis Christianae Adultorum*, published in January of 1972, makes the initiation of adults, who display mature faith, the “normative” means for entrance into the Church.<sup>11</sup> “With this,” he writes, “the preconciliar prevalence of infant baptism as sacramentally *normative* is occluded.”<sup>12</sup>

However, Kavanagh’s theological objections to infant baptism did not go unchallenged, and some theologians argued that the riches and merits of the *Ordo Baptismi Parvulorum*, issued in 1969, had yet to be discovered in the life and the reform of the

---

<sup>10</sup> See Kavanagh, *The Shape of Baptism*, 196-198. He writes: “One might suggest that while the juxtaposition (adult vs. infant initiation) reflects the reality of the Church’s position at present and perhaps for some time to come, the more paschal and antique polity will, granted the fact of our being a Church in a post-Christendom world, eventually prevail in some form. If one is correct in this assessment it means that the days of baptism in infancy and confirmation years later as the norm are numbered.”

<sup>11</sup> See Aidan Kavanagh, “Christian Initiation of Adults: The Rites,” *Worship* 48 (1974) 334-335. Here Kavanagh outlines what he sees as seven major changes in initiatory policy and practice resulting from the introduction of the R.C.I.A.: “The main alterations I perceive in the document are these: First, the initiation of adults is regarded as the normal practice. Second, a catechumenate of serious content and duration is made again a standard church structure. Third, the ministry of confirmation is opened up to presbyters in a good many circumstances. Fourth, the reason for the foregoing is to secure a closer proximity of confirmation to baptism within the same liturgical event. Fifth, the documents insists that there is, in addition, a most serious theological and sacramental set of reasons for this closer connection: it ‘. . . signifies the unity of the paschal mystery, the close relationship between the mission of the Son and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the joint celebration of the sacraments by which the Son and the Spirit come with the Father upon those who are baptized’ [34]. Sixth, the immediately postbaptismal chrismation is omitted when confirmation is to follow, a reform that cannot but help enhance the pneumatic element in sacramental initiation. And seventh, prebaptismal and postbaptismal modes of catechesis are clearly discriminated.”

<sup>12</sup> Aidan Kavanagh, “The Norm of Baptism: The New Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults,” *Worship* 48 (1974) 146. He writes: “The *norm of baptism* was stated to be that of solemn initiation done at the paschal vigil, preceded by a catechumenate of serious content and duration—which implies, if it does not require, that the initiate be an adult. The conciliar emphasis is clearly on the adult nature of the *norm* for Christian initiation, deriving as it does from the New Testament doctrine of conversion. While nowhere in the acts of the Council is there a denial of the licitness of infant baptism, there is no spirited defense of the practice either: Even less is there any suggestion that infant baptism is the norm, or that adult baptism should be regarded as abnormal.”

Church.<sup>13</sup> Among those who took Kavanagh's view to task was Kevin Irwin who, in a 1981 piece that appeared in *The Chicago Catechumenate*, counters Kavanagh with the argument that the *lex orandi* of the new rite for the baptism of children provides a complimentary theology to the conversion model of the R.C.I.A. He writes:

In the light of this recent emphasis on the *lex orandi* of the church, one wonders why the RCIA should become *the* norm of initiation when adult initiation has not been experienced by the majority of Catholic Christians as the way baptism is celebrated. The initiation of infants has existed from the beginning of baptismal practice, has been experienced as the manner of initiation for most Christians from the ninth century onwards in most countries, and is the present liturgical experience of most people. . . Instead of determining *a priori* that a form of initiation that has not been the church's lived expression of baptism for centuries should now become the church's norm for theology and practice, what would be more helpful is to allow both forms of initiation to co-exist and to utilize both in developing the theology of initiation.<sup>14</sup>

Irwin contends that although infant baptism prior to the reformed rite emphasized the riddance of the devil's power and the necessity of baptism for salvation, the new rite emphasizes growth into the Christian community and Christ himself.<sup>15</sup> He writes: "An act of faith in Christ is the lived reality when the baptism of infants is understood as a sacrament expressive of the faith of the church, not just of the one initiated."<sup>16</sup> Thus, the rite for infant baptism, as outlined in the *Ordo Baptismi Parvulorum* (especially in its introduction), is both

---

<sup>13</sup> See for example Adrien Nocent, "Christian Initiation and Community," in *Concilium 122: Structures of Initiation in Crisis*, Eds. Luis Maldonado and David Power, (New York: The Seabury Press, 1979) 26-33. Nocent's basic argument is that, like adult initiation, infant baptism provides for ecclesial renewal and calls for the participation of the community in catechesis and celebration. His concluding sentence states: "The present ritual we have been given is acceptable as a whole; but we can improve it in order to bring out more the link between initiation and the community."

<sup>14</sup> Kevin Irwin, "Christian Initiation: Some Important Questions," *The Chicago Catechumenate* 3 (1981) 10.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 15. Irwin states: "The new rite emphasizes that initiation is the beginning of a lifelong process of growing in the faith professed and of growing in spiritual maturity through one's life."

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 13-14.

“theologically nuanced and liturgically balanced” and provides a serious encounter with grace for the Christian community.<sup>17</sup>

The scholarly dispute between Kavanagh and Irwin merely exemplifies the wide-range of approaches regarding initiation and the role of faith development that surfaced in the American Church by the early 1980s. The array of differences are detailed by Paul F. X. Covino in a 1982 article entitled “The Postconciliar Infant Baptism Debate in the American Catholic Church,” in which he identifies four schools of thought on the topic.<sup>18</sup> The first perspective—the position held by Kavanagh—is the “mature adulthood school” which subscribed to the belief that true ecclesial renewal would come about only with the conversion of those seriously expressing a desire for the Christian life.<sup>19</sup> The second opinion on infant initiation, the “environmentalist school,” emphasized the social reality of the community into which the child is baptized and upheld the importance of apprenticeship in the faith.<sup>20</sup> The third school Covino dubs the “initiation unity school,” which advocated the reuniting of the three sacraments of initiation (baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist) into a

---

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>18</sup> See Paul F. X. Covino, “The Postconciliar Infant Baptism Debate in the American Catholic Church,” *Worship* 56 (1982) 240-260. This article stems from his master’s thesis, which he wrote at the University of Notre Dame under the direction of Mark Searle.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 243-244. Concerning the “mature adulthood school,” Covino writes: “The apparent “shallowness” of faith in many Christians led most of the authors of this school to focus on an act of *mature* faith as the requisite for baptism. This not only ruled out infant baptism . . . but it also emphasized that baptism implied much more than a verbal profession of faith. Evidence of Christian faith in one’s life, arrived at through a process of conversion, was to be the hallmark of a Christian.” It should be noted that Covino borrows the term “mature adulthood school” from Nathan Mitchell. See Nathan Mitchell, “The Once and Future Child: Towards a Theology of Childhood,” *Living Light* 12 (1975) 429.

<sup>20</sup> Again, Covino borrows the term “environmentalist school” from Nathan Mitchell. See Mitchell, “The Once and Future Child: Towards a Theology of Childhood,” 429-430. Regarding proponents of the school he writes: “Adherents to this position stress the principle that people learn how to think, judge and behave most effectively as Christians through regular participation in the life of the community during all the stages of development between infancy and mature adulthood. To withhold access to the church’s worship from children is to deny them the most effective and most widely available means for becoming convinced adult believers.”

single celebration.<sup>21</sup> The fourth and final line of argumentation—consistent with Irwin’s position—comes from the “corresponding practice school,” which maintained that a variety of ways of initiating are necessary to meet people where they are in life.<sup>22</sup> Clearly, these four diverse perspectives demonstrate the way in which theological demands and pastoral concerns vied for center stage in the early years of the reformed rites of Christian initiation.

When Mark Searle arrived on American soil in 1977, and returned again for good in 1979, the debate surrounding Christian initiation and the practice of infant baptism was very much marked by a climate of excitement and contention. From the beginning, Searle entered this debate suspicious of any theology that excessively glorified or triumphed human accomplishment over the grace of God. Such a concern was at the heart of his fight to promote the theological value of infant initiation amidst a climate that heavily endorsed adult conversion. As Maxwell Johnson writes in his introduction to the 1995 volume, *Living Water, Sealing Spirit: Readings on Christian Initiation*: “Indeed, the name of Mark Searle (+1992) has been synonymous with the concerns related to infant initiation in the American Catholic Church as well as, through his numerous ecumenical students, in other

---

<sup>21</sup> See Covino, “The Postconciliar Infant Baptism Debate in the American Catholic Church,” 255. According to the emphasis of this school, neither the maturity of the one to be baptized nor the formative responsibility of the community matters as much as the theological import of celebrating the sacraments of initiation in one rite. As Covino states about the “initiation unity school”: “While the revised rite of adult initiation has reunited these sacraments (baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist) in one rite, it was argued that such a reunification should be effected for infant initiation, since this, too, had been the practice of the early Church..”

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 259. In defense of the “correspondence practice school,” Covino quotes Mark Searle, who writes: “. . . the fact that we now have a rite of infant baptism as well as accommodated versions of the rite for the Christian initiation of adults for use with other children does point to the inescapable fact that God works with people as they are; or, in the language of the theologians, grace builds on nature. Being baptized at six days or six weeks is not the same as being baptized at six years or sixteen years of age.” See Mark Searle, *Christening: The Making of Christians* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1980) 50. See also Luis Maldonado and David Power, “Editorial,” in *Structures of Initiation in Crisis*, viii. The desire to uphold one rite that is “normative” betrays the understanding of the uniqueness of God’s call that necessarily demands a plethora of pastoral responses on the part of the Church. Thus, Maldonado and Power succinctly state: “In other words, different and differing pastoral approaches can be simultaneously theologically sound.”



communions.”<sup>23</sup> Searle did not simply provide justification for the celebration of infant baptism, rather he labored to overturn a perspective which viewed the child as merely a passive vessel, incapable of faith, and he strove to demonstrate how the newly created rite for infant baptism could challenge the family and the Church to embrace the call to conversion.

In Searle’s own words:

At a time when the Church is so intent on rescuing the humane values of Christianity and is concerned to do greater justice to the role of the family and to the Christian vision of sexuality, and at a time when the role of the nonrational and prerational dimensions of the life of faith is being recovered, *perhaps infant initiation ought to be seen less as a problem to be grappled with than as an opportunity to be grasped*. Far from barring children from the font, the chrism, and the altar, the Church should welcome their participation in these sacraments as a reminder both of the catholicity of the Church and of the fact that, no matter how informed or committed we might be as adults, when we take part in the sacramental liturgies of the Church we are taking part in more than we know.<sup>24</sup>

Searle believed that infant initiation could help to reveal that “faith” is not a gift bestowed by God for individual possession and personal profession but as the very way in which the Church comes into being—the Body of Christ that participates in the faith of Christ. This was not mere theological jargon for Searle, but rather, he believed the appropriation of this faith was absolutely imperative for liturgical renewal. Thus, Searle would begin his academic career very much focused on what it means to develop faith and to celebrate faith through the sacraments of the Church.

---

<sup>23</sup> Maxwell E. Johnson, “Introduction,” in *Living Water, Sealing Spirit: Readings on Christian Initiation*, Ed. Maxwell E. Johnson (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1995) xix-xx. See also Maxwell E. Johnson, “Introduction to ‘Infant Baptism Reconsidered,’” in *Vision: The Scholarly Contribution of Mark Searle to Liturgical Renewal*, Eds. Anne Y. Koester and Barbara Searle (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2004) 138-141.

<sup>24</sup> Mark Searle, “Infant Baptism Reconsidered,” in Mark Searle, Ed., *Alternative Futures for Worship*, vol. 2, *Baptism and Confirmation* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1987) 50. Emphasis mine.

### *Searle's Early Contributions to the Debate*

Searle's interest in initiation and faith development is apparent as early as his licentiate thesis, entitled "The Sacraments of Initiation in the Catechesis of St. Cyril of Jerusalem," which he wrote for the theology faculty at the Pontificium Athanaeum Antonianum in Rome. Underlying this comprehensive exploration of St. Cyril's post-baptismal catechesis on the rites of initiation is the desire to counter the argument that Cyril's teaching is a witness to the distinct sacrament of confirmation in the fourth century.<sup>25</sup> According to his interpretation of the *Mystagogical Catecheses*, Searle believed that St. Cyril saw both rites—baptism and chrismation—as together constituting "assimilation to" Christ.<sup>26</sup> He writes:

Consequently, it doesn't matter particularly whether one holds that Baptism and Confirmation are two separate sacraments, or two grades of one sacrament of initiation, as long as one holds the rite of Confirmation to be sacramental. This position, certainly, is nearer to that of St. Cyril. But in any case, and this is the important point, since there is such a thing as the development of dogma in the Church, and since this is especially noticeable in her sacramental life, it is quite licit to use the Catecheses of St. Cyril as evidence for the sacramental character of Confirmation.<sup>27</sup>

Thus, for Searle, the separation of the mysteries was less important than the sacramental nature of the rites themselves. To maintain that Searle's primary concern was the sacramentality of the rite of confirmation is simply to say that the effects of baptism and confirmation cannot be seen apart from one another, as both are signs of being conformed into the death and resurrection of Christ. Consequently, Searle's theological premise was to

---

<sup>25</sup> See Mark Searle, "The Sacraments of Initiation in the Catechesis of St. Cyril of Jerusalem," (Rome: Pontificium Athenaeum Antonianum, 1966), 59-65. Searle credits Antoine-Augustin Touttée (1677-1718) and Xavier Marie Le Bachelet (1855-1925) as the originators of the opinion that Cyril understood chrismation as a sacrament apart from Baptism.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 64-65.

worry less about whether or not the sacraments of initiation are divided in practice as much as to stress that their objective is one and the same—maturation in Christ.

Perhaps it is the conclusion of Searle's licentiate thesis that laid the foundation for his future endeavors in studying the relationship between Christian faith and initiation practices. Searle thought that the major import of the *Mystagogical Catecheses* is Cyril's pastoral approach to the concept of faith.<sup>28</sup> This allowed Searle to suggest that faith is "a life, defined not by abstract principles but by personal relationships."<sup>29</sup> He labeled such an approach the "essence of Cyril's genius," and he continues: "His approach to the sacraments is dynamic, not bothered with curious enquiries as to the manner of their working, but totally preoccupied with the personal encounter which they make possible."<sup>30</sup> Thus, in this very early work, Searle clearly articulated that faith is not so much a matter of coming to accept Church doctrine as it is being drawn into mystery and relationship with God.<sup>31</sup>

This holistic approach to faith and the place of the sacraments as a response to such a faith is really the starting point and the hallmark of Searle's theological understanding of Christian initiation. His first published thoughts on the matter are contained in a 1974 article entitled "The Church Celebrates Her Faith," which appeared in the British journal *Life and*

---

<sup>28</sup> The word "pastoral" is used here, because Searle understands the *Mystagogical Catecheses* to reflect the reality of life rather than dogma. See Ibid., page 66, where he writes: "Modern theology has much in common with that of Cyril, above all in its tendency away from purely abstract speculation and its concern with the life of the Church. That is not to say that it is superficial; only that it is more directed to the problems arising from the Church's engagement with the world, and so tends to deal with the actual rather than the possible, with the existential rather than the essential."

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 66-67.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 68. Of St. Cyril's catechesis, Searle writes: "It is an introduction into the Christian life which consists not in the acceptance of a set of dogmas, but in being caught up in the history of God's saving work among men. Baptism is the sacrament or mystery whereby the individual becomes part of that history by conforming himself to Christ, who is its centre."

*Worship.* Against those who would suggest that faith is an intellectual assent, Searle defined it as “entrusting one’s whole self freely to God,” and he states:

Thus faith is man’s *total* response to God’s self-revelation in history. It seizes a man in his entirety: it claims every fiber of his being, every area of his life. Consequently it cannot remain a purely internal assent: a man must express this surrender to God and his reliance upon him in what he says and what he does. So we can distinguish, without separating, two forms of external expression for this internal assent and submission to God: a man must give his faith living expression in what he says and in his moral behaviour.<sup>32</sup>

For Searle, it is the act of surrendering to God—in a way that involves the totality of one’s life—that is the supreme indicator of faith; “Christian” faith is, therefore, self-abandonment to the faith of Christ.<sup>33</sup> Growth in faith can be understood as the willing submission to Christ’s pattern of obedience to his Father; Christ’s abandonment of clinging to himself becomes the way of true worship for the Christian community. Thus, this early article makes very clear Searle’s conviction that faith, as a foundation for sacramental celebration, can never be limited to a verbal assent but must always be located in willing submission—in every aspect of life—to the sacrifice of Christ, thereby “making us aware that our lives only have meaning insofar as they are lived in dependence upon the Father and in union with Christ, whose life we share through the gift of his Spirit poured out into our hearts.”<sup>34</sup>

### ***Searle’s First Major Book***

It was Searle’s first published book that identified him as one of the voices dedicated to helping the Church better understand the challenges surrounding initiation. *Christening:*

---

<sup>32</sup> Mark Searle, “The Church Celebrates Her Faith,” *Life and Worship* 43 (1974) 4.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 7. Searle writes: “Just as faith is not simply intellectual assent but total commitment to Christ, and just as to ‘remember’ God means not only to think of him but to obey him, so to celebrate the God-who-is-in-our-world means not only to acclaim his presence and his power but to submit ourselves to his will, to give ourselves over as Christ did to the realization of his plan for mankind.”

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 7-8.

*The Making of Christians* was first published in Great Britain in 1977 and subsequently reprinted in 1980 by The Liturgical Press in the United States.<sup>35</sup> In the Foreword of the British publication, Bishop David Konstant suggests that the book's content is "practical theology," in which Searle "examines the sacraments of initiation in their full context – historically, theologically and liturgically" in order for the reader to develop a "practical spirituality."<sup>36</sup> This is in keeping with Searle's claim in the book's introduction that the aim of his work is "not academic but pastoral," thereby suggesting that the actual liturgical celebration links faith with experience.<sup>37</sup> In describing his pastoral approach, Searle writes:

Too often in the past theology and catechesis have suffered by being pursued at a level quite remote from experience, whether that be ordinary human experience of life or the more specifically sacramental experience of liturgical celebration. The value of this approach thus lies in its attempt to draw faith and experience together and to recognize the liturgy as being the celebration of them both. The liturgical celebrations of the Church point to the meaning of our experience of life in the world and help us to understand it; they express our faith and they shape it.<sup>38</sup>

Searle's rather humble assertion that the pages of his work are not meant to be academic is certainly less than true, as what follows in the book is actually a very thorough historical and theological exploration of Christian initiation, placed in the midst of a pastoral commentary. In the foreword to the U.S. edition, James Shaughnessy, the first director of the Notre Dame Center for Pastoral Liturgy, offers the perspective that the book is to be considered a "good tool," that displays "a most gratifying admixture of scholarship and clear vision and

---

<sup>35</sup> See Mark Searle, *Christening: The Making of Christians* (Great Britain: Kevin Mayhew Ltd., 1977). See also Mark Searle, *Christening: The Making of Christians* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1980).

<sup>36</sup> See Searle, *Christening* (British edition) 9.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 11. Also, see Searle, *Christening* (U.S. edition) vii.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

understanding of the pastoral needs and desires of the assembly at prayer and worship.”<sup>39</sup>

Clearly, Searle’s goal in writing *Christening* was neither to critique liturgies of initiation nor to suggest creative ways in which they could be celebrated better but rather to illuminate the theological meaning contained in the rites themselves.

With his pastoral objective at the fore, Searle is not silent about the issues involved in the debate on whether or not to baptize infants. In Chapter Two, which focuses on the meaning of the Word of God in the celebration of Baptism, Searle attempts to answer the question: “Is there any point in celebrating the sacrament of faith for one who, in virtue of age and condition, is humanly incapable of making any commitment to faith?”<sup>40</sup> For Searle, the answer to such a question lies in overturning the commonly held conception that becoming a Christian is a matter of individual, private choice.<sup>41</sup> The problem with such a perspective is that it fails to acknowledge that the commitment of faith begins with God’s initiative; it is not first and foremost the product of a personal decision. He writes: “Christians are those who discover and accept the invitation and gift of God and cooperate

---

<sup>39</sup> Searle, *Christening* (U.S. edition) v.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 48. In his later work, “Infant Baptism Reconsidered,” Searle suggests that the rise of private choice with regard to initiation begins with the Anabaptist tradition, the Protestant Reformation, and the “emerging modern concept of the person as an autonomous individual” (24). See also Louis Dumont, “A Modified View of Our Origins: The Christian Beginnings of Modern Individualism,” *Religion* 12 (1982) 1-27. In this article, Dumont suggests that while the Christian tradition is based upon the goal of transcending the boundaries of this world—“the emancipation of the individual through a personal transcendence, and the union of outworldly individuals in a community that treads on earth but has its heart in heaven” (6), the rise of the Holy Roman Empire reaches a final stage in the Protestant Reformation—“the individual is now in the world, and the individualist value rules without restriction or limitation” (19). Dumont concludes by saying: “In the general continuous process, the Reformation is a crisis marked by reversal on one level: the institution that had been the bridgehead of the outworldly and had conquered the world is itself condemned as having become inworldly in the process” (24). Searle cites Dumont and concludes: “Whereas earlier and non-Western concepts of the person tended to identify the person in terms of his or her place in the community the modern concept of the autonomous individual makes the individual self the source of its values and its own identity.” See Searle, “Infant Baptism Reconsidered,” 24-25.

with them to allow them to transform us into the creatures we are thereby capable of becoming, for his glory, not for ours.”<sup>42</sup>

Acceptance of God’s invitation, therefore, captures how Searle understands the seeds of faith. Faith is not something to be possessed in terms of quantitative form, but rather, it is an awakening to God’s call. In other words, it is not a matter of decision but of discovery.

Searle writes:

Faith is not so much a matter of knowledge which can be acquired, but of insight which is given or understanding which dawns on a person. The same is true of faith as submission to God. It is not purely the individual’s decision alone, but the discovery of being discovered, loved, and called to faith. The very freedom with which we surrender to God is itself God’s gift and grace.<sup>43</sup>

Thus, Searle does not minimize the “struggle and sacrifice” involved in an adult candidate for baptism, a person who has to necessarily make certain choices on the course of his or her life. However, he advocates that the choices themselves are only possible because God seeks us not because we seek God.

Simply stated, like the Word of God that must be understood as beginning in God for the purpose of summoning a human response, so too must baptism be seen as first and foremost an expression of God’s love for us so that we may respond in love. Thus, Searle maintains that infant baptism is necessarily a revelation of God’s graciousness.<sup>44</sup> For this reason, even the lack of faith on the part of parents who present a child for baptism does not hinder the bestowal of God’s love. Thus, Searle argues that it is ultimately the Church that is entrusted with both presenting and receiving the child who is to be baptized. This is due

---

<sup>42</sup> Searle, *Christening*, 48.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 49. Searle comments: “One would have thought, perhaps, that after centuries of infant baptisms, we would have developed a much greater sensitivity to the initiative and graciousness of God in our lives, and yet there are those who ask whether it is not ‘unfair’ to baptize such children.”

precisely to the fact that baptism is not celebrated in response to the faith of the parents but in response to the faith of the Church. “In this sense, too, infants are baptized in the faith of the Church, for it is the faith of the community expressed in word and gesture which provides the Holy Spirit, dwelling in the community, with the visible sacrament through which he enters into the lives of the infants.”<sup>45</sup> In Covino’s terms, this sounds very much like the “environmentalist school,” which contends that the sacrament of baptism belongs to the faith community as a whole and not to any particular individual.<sup>46</sup>

At the same time, Searle also presents a perspective that is very much in keeping with the “corresponding practice school.” Because the Church has more than one rite for Christian initiation, it holds out pastoral options which demonstrate that “God works with people as they are.”<sup>47</sup> While he readily acknowledges the limitations of the effectiveness of grace in the baptism of an infant, Searle’s foundational tenet is that the child is called by God to become a member of the community of faith. Thus, election into God’s grace may occur in the celebration of infant baptism even if the appropriation of that gift of grace remains merely a hope for the future. In other words, Searle repudiates the notion that it is “unfair” to baptize a child into a life that he or she has not chosen; grace is gift not choice.<sup>48</sup>

---

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>46</sup> See, also, R.-M. Roberge, “Un tournant dans la pastorale du baptême,” *Laval Théologique et Philosophique* 31 (1975) 227-238. Roberge argues that marking the growth in faith through the celebration of rites and stages of formation is a pastoral solution to the infant baptism debate. Searle cites Roberge in his “Infant Baptism Reconsidered” as argumentation for a catechumenate for children: “By enrolling infants in the catechumenate, we can give them something, whether their parents are committed Christians or not, while still withholding baptism until the children are old enough to ask for it themselves and to make a lasting commitment” (29-30).

<sup>47</sup> See Searle, *Christening*, 50.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. Searle writes: “One can only feel that people who argue that it is unfair and unreasonable to commit a child, in baptism, to a life he or she has not chosen must be seriously unappreciative of the meaning of ‘grace’: God’s free gift to those whom he loves.”



### ***Conversion and the Growth into Faith***

As demonstrated in the context of his licentiate thesis on the catechesis of St. Cyril of Jerusalem, Searle's major contribution to the "pastoral" approach to understanding of the sacrament of baptism, and initiation as a whole, resides in his conviction that faith is not something to obtain but rather represents the whole reality of the way one approaches life.<sup>49</sup> While Searle discussed this topic in *Christening*, it is really in a short article, entitled "The Sacraments of Faith," prepared for a 1979 edition of *Assembly* (a publication of the Notre Dame Center for Pastoral Liturgy for which Searle himself was the editor) that he succinctly articulated the role of faith development in relationship to the sacraments. First of all, contrary to the notion that faith is measured by one's ability to acquire a body of knowledge in the form of doctrine, Searle argued that faith is "surrender." He writes:

It is the surrender of our very lives, an abdication of the claim to control and autonomy, the dreadful yielding of our grip on life, the abandoning of our preoccupation with determining and controlling our own destinies. It is, in fact, death to human life as it is ordinarily lived.<sup>50</sup>

However, for one to "die" and come to faith, it is essential that the bearer of faith be Christ himself. In other words, Searle maintained that the celebration of all the sacraments is not revelatory of what we have attained by our belief but rather what our participation in Christ has accomplished by Christ himself. This understanding of faith paves the way for Searle to define the sacraments of faith as celebrations of life lived in Christ, namely "instances of

---

<sup>49</sup> Another way of describing this understanding of initiation as a growth process is described as follows: "... the term *initiation* is not now necessarily taken to indicate a moment, or even a ceremony, at which a person passes from the status of catechumen to the status of *fidelis*. A broader meaning is more often given to it which allows it to stand for the whole growth process, extending over a period of time and comprising all the factors of passage which lead eventually to personal adult identity with the community. To discuss initiation, therefore, is to discuss the way in which an individual, within the appropriate context and with the appropriate support, and through the appropriate means of induction, acquires a Christian identity which is truly interiorised as a gift of the Lord." Taken from: Luis Maldonado and David Power, "Editorial," viii-ix.

<sup>50</sup> Mark Searle, "The Sacraments of Faith," *Assembly* 5:5 (1979) 54.

learning-by-doing, rehearsals of attitudes of obedience and surrender, exercises and celebrations of our self-abandonment to God in Christ.”<sup>51</sup>

Furthermore, Searle wished to demonstrate that the faith of Christ does not belong to the realm of liturgical celebration alone, but rather, the element of “surrender” in order to be drawn into the person of Christ constitutes all Christian prayer. Thus, in an article written the same year (1979), entitled “Prayer: Alone or with Others?,” Searle presented his conviction that all prayer must resist the temptation to be influenced by a spirit of individualism,<sup>52</sup> a conviction which laid the groundwork for his fundamental position that faith is not a matter of personal choice but of growth into the Body of Christ. Searle believed that the issue of personal conversion must always be seen in the context of the corporate, i.e. the Church’s, submission to the way of life established by Christ in his Paschal Mystery. Taking his lead from Jung’s notion of the “collective unconscious,” Searle offers this poetic interpretation:

. . . the individual person is not a solitary star drifting in the immensity of the human firmament, but a bloom whose roots strike deep into the soil of our common humanity. In other words, I am part of the race first and an individual second. . . In short, the image of self which contemplation should bring is not that of the remote and solitary star, but that of an island which is separated from other islands by the swirling sea, yet firmly linked with them by the bedrock of the deep.<sup>53</sup>

Searle’s fundamental concern with the emphasis on the need for initiation based upon the understanding of faith as a personal choice, as witnessed by the growing popularity of the

---

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> See Mark Searle, “Prayer: Alone or with Others?,” *Centerlines* (July 1979) 20. Searle writes: “Today, the recovered emphasis upon community celebration and community prayer may seem at odds with true contemplation and genuinely personal prayer. And, as it is pursued, it often is. But it need not be. *A very large part of the difficulty is that, for all our talk of community, we remain deeply impregnated with the spirit of individualism; this continues to color . . .* Yet, fortunately, we have available a number of insights from the human sciences which can help to make us aware of our common humanity and so provide bridges back to a *sense of what it might mean to live and pray ‘in Christ.’*” Emphasis mine.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

R.C.I.A. in the United States, was that the indispensable reality of living in Christ, “the bedrock of the deep” would fail to be embraced by believers confident in their individual possession of faith.<sup>54</sup> For Searle, the naming of a Christian as someone baptized “into Christ” demands the difficult work of surrendering the self to the Body, the Church, and thus to Christ himself. He writes: “Potentially, at least, (for the old self does not, like old soldiers, just fade away), the hopes, thoughts, images, aspirations, desires that well up from the region of my deepest self, are no longer those of my own unregenerate nature, but the hopes, thoughts, aspirations,—yes, the prayers—of Christ Himself.”<sup>55</sup>

In the early 1980s, with the implementation of the R.C.I.A. very much at the forefront of the liturgical agenda in this country, Searle labored to counter the growing trend of rendering infant baptism inherently problematic. He argues that the call to make adult initiation “normative” eschews the meaning of faith development and places too great an emphasis on the act of commitment. Employing developmental psychology, Searle writes:

Psychologically, the equation of justification by faith with an allegedly mature personal decision seems questionable in light of what we now know about the development of the human person. Developmental psychology has given us a richer understanding of infancy and

---

<sup>54</sup> See for example Mark Searle, “Response: The RCIA and Infant Baptism,” *Worship* 56 (1982) 330. Searle states poignantly: “Adult initiation highlights the importance of conversion in Christian life, but it can only do so, it seems, by effecting a break with the past rather than fostering growth into the future. The Christian ideal of continuing conversion is not necessarily antipathetic to the image of growth and continuity, but to the degree that Catholic catechists become enamored of the Protestant ideal of a single, decisive decision for conversion, everything tends to become concentrated in the experience of the catechumenate itself. The experience becomes its own justification, the means becomes the end. To the degree that that happens, the Catholic tradition of grace building on nature and of lifelong growth in holiness is endangered.” Searle’s “response” is made to Raymond Kemp’s glowing assessment of the ecclesial transformations brought about through the implementation of the R.C.I.A. See Raymond Kemp, “The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults at Ten Years,” *Worship* 56 (1982) 309-326. Kemp writes: “Without question, the restoration of the catechumenate has restored our parish and has been the prime force in helping us realize that we exist to initiate adults into the saving death-resurrection of Christ” (311).

<sup>55</sup> Searle, “Response: The RCIA and Infant Baptism,” 19.

childhood and a much more relativized image of what constitutes adulthood.<sup>56</sup>

Thus, Searle desired to caution the perspective that would attribute total sacramental value to the adult act of commitment and wished instead to herald the importance of “developing habits of behavior.”<sup>57</sup> Searle goes on to suggest that for such habits of conversion to develop in a child three things are necessary: (1) a theology of childhood and the child’s role in the Church, (2) a theology of the family, and (3) the creation of an “ethos of conversion” in general.<sup>58</sup> Although he does not develop these topics in detail here, subsequent works provided Searle with the opportunity to develop his theological perspective; each of these three topics is treated below.

### *Theology of the Child*

With regard to the establishment of a theology of childhood, Searle was greatly influenced by the 1962 classic work of Philippe Ariès, entitled *Centuries of Childhood*.<sup>59</sup> Ariès’ critique that childhood, from the medieval world to the present day, simply did not count for anything but rather was merely a state of life to be endured, provided Searle with ample evidence as to why children are rarely the subject of theological speculation.<sup>60</sup> Searle

---

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 328.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 330-332.

<sup>59</sup> See for example Mark Searle, “The Child and the Liturgy,” *Assembly* 9 (1982) 185. See also Searle, “Infant Baptism Reconsidered,” esp. 20.

<sup>60</sup> See Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, Trans. Robert Baldick (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962). See especially page 128, where Ariès write: “In medieval society the idea of childhood did not exist; this is not to suggest that children were neglected, forsaken or despised. The idea of childhood is not to be confused with affection for children: it corresponds to an awareness of the particular nature of childhood, that particular nature which distinguishes the child from the adult, even the young adult. In medieval society this awareness was lacking. That is why, as soon as the child could live without the constant solicitude of his mother, his nanny or his cradle-rocker, he belonged to adult society.”

also discovered evidence for his theory in a study on the place of children in English literature done by Robert Pattison in 1978. Like Ariès, Pattison discovered in classical literature a basic neglect for the child:

Certainly the most striking feature of classical literature's attitude toward children is the thunderous silence that envelops the idea of childhood, especially when compared to the outpouring of concern and attention recent centuries have produced on the same subject. . . Childhood raised few questions and evoked only the slenderest train of associations. The child may have contained the possibility of perfection, but until the possibility bore actual fruit, he remained subreasonable and therefore subliterate.<sup>61</sup>

Thus, Searle applied such findings to the experience of infant initiation in the Church and deduced that infant baptism had historically overlooked the lived experience of a child, as it was justified as an “emergency measure” in case of death.<sup>62</sup> For Searle, the debate of whether or not to baptize infants was unfairly waged without a proper theological understanding of the child *as child* and not the child on the road to adult maturity.

The issue then becomes deciphering the place of the child in the economy of salvation. Searle turned to the writing of Karl Rahner to begin to address this problem. In his 1971 “Ideas for a Theology of Childhood,” Rahner writes that “childhood itself has a

---

<sup>61</sup> Robert Pattison, *The Child Figure in English Literature* (Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 1978) 5-6.

<sup>62</sup> See Searle, “The Child and the Liturgy.” Searle writes, “Even where infant baptism has been upheld, as in Roman Catholicism, it has been perceived as little more than an emergency measure, in case the child should die. Why else should small children, alone of all the baptized, been considered unworthy of the seal of confirmation of the Eucharist (at least since the twelfth and thirteenth centuries)?” Searle’s writing took into consideration contemporary works that placed the child in a positive light. See, for example, Bernard Wishy, *The Child and the Republic: The Dawn of Modern American Child Nurture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1968). Wishy links the recognition of children to the “health” of the United States in general: “The history of the changing notions of the child and the debates about childrearing is, therefore, an important chapter in our ceaseless national inquiry about what is wrong with America and what America needs in order to be put right” (4). See also H. Shelton Smith, *Changing Conceptions of Original Sin: A Study in American Theology Since 1750* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1955). Smith traces American theologians (largely Protestant) who contributed to the debate on original sin, some of whom tried to disassociate childhood from natural sinfulness. For example, Smith examines the theological perspective of Yale theologian Chauncy Goodrich (1829) and contends: “In explaining how sin arises in the life of the child, Goodrich acknowledged the environment (the indulgence of parents) to be a potent factor in creating a bias toward sinful conduct” (115).

direct relationship with God. It touches upon the absolute divinity of God not only as maturity, adulthood and the later phases of life touch upon this, but rather in a special way of its own.”<sup>63</sup> In his 1987 article “Infant Baptism Reconsidered,” Searle echoes Rahner:

Unless there are good reasons for thinking that the child *as child* has some part in the economy of grace and may be called, precisely as a small child, to witness as part of the sacramentality of the whole Church which is “a sacrament or sign of intimate union with God and of the unity of all mankind” (LG, 1), there is a danger of romanticizing childhood and of reading into the life of a child salvific realities which are in fact suspended until such time as the child gradually acquires those adult characteristics of intellect, will, and which are the preconditions for their realization.<sup>64</sup>

The mystery of the Incarnation—the perfect union of the human and the divine—cannot be said to begin when Jesus reached a certain level of maturity but began at the moment of his birth.<sup>65</sup> In other words, because Jesus became a child, childhood is forever redeemed. Stated simply by another theologian, whose work contributed to Searle’s thinking, “So it is that God does not expect children to act like little adults, but as faithful children.”<sup>66</sup>

---

<sup>63</sup> Karl Rahner, “Ideas for a Theology of Childhood,” in *Theological Investigations*, Volume VIII. Trans. David Bourke (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971) 36.

<sup>64</sup> Searle, “Infant Baptism Reconsidered,” 39.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 39-40. Searle writes: “Thus infants and young children are sanctified in principle insofar as the Son of God became a child and lived through childhood’s experiences in total union with the will of the Father, thereby redeeming infancy and childhood. Thereafter, childhood lived in the Spirit of Christ—albeit necessarily in a preconscious and prereflective way—is sanctified and may be seen as a *sign of the glory of God and of the unity of the redeemed human family*.” Emphasis mine.

<sup>66</sup> Randolph Crump Miller, “Theology and the Understanding of Children,” in Simon Doniger, Ed., *The Nature of Man in Theological and Psychological Perspective*, (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1962) 145. He also states: “The reason Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come unto me,’ is that little children are persons, not things—creatures of a loving, heavenly Father. The little child is to be treated as a child of God and as a sinner at the same time. He has the same value as an adult and in his childish freedom the same responsibilities. Yet he is to be treated as a child and not a little adult. He is expected to grow up and to put away childish things. He is not to think like a child any longer, but after he comes mature he is still to be capable of childlike faith in God” (146). Searle also cites Rosemary Haughton, *Tales from Eternity* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1973) 19-49. Haughton discusses legendary stories of the “youngest son,” who was thought foolish but actually excels in wisdom. She writes: “The youngest son, the fool, the dreamer, the coward, the unmeritorious, socially and psychologically underprivileged—he is the one who inherits the earth” (23-24). Similarly, Searle employs the work of Guy Bedouelle, “Reflection on the Place of the Child in the Church:

Furthermore, Searle's theology of childhood is linked to the idea of vocation in the Church, since the child must be understood as a "sign of the glory of God."<sup>67</sup> But what role does the child play for the Church as a whole? Returning to the essay by Rahner, it is possible to speak of children as embodying complete dependence as "receivers," who "*know* that they have nothing of themselves on which to base any claim to his [God's] help, and yet who trust that his [God's] kindness and protection will be extended to them and so will bestow what they need upon them."<sup>68</sup> Rahner suggests that children reveal to the Church an "attitude of openness" to which all are called to return to in adulthood (the "childlike faith" of Matthew 19:14) in order to receive the God's kingdom. Rahner writes:

And therefore the kingdom of heaven is for those who are children in this sense when, on the basis of this attitude of openness, and not without a certain *metanoia*, they become what they are—precisely children. Now this also implies, however paradoxical it may appear, that we do not really know what childhood means at the beginning of our lives until we know what that childhood means which comes at the end of them; that childhood, namely, in which, by God-given repentance and conversion, we receive the kingdom of God and so become children.<sup>69</sup>

Thus, in Rahner's theology, childhood is not simply the demarcation of the beginning of our human lives but actually the means of full relationship with God. In this way, childhood is not a state of life to be passed through, but a state of life to be constantly embraced as a fundamental Christian attitude, "in which we bravely and trustfully maintain an infinite

---

'Suffer the Little Children to Come Unto Me,' *Communio* 12 (1985) 349-367. See especially page 363 where Bedouelle suggests allowing children to be awestruck by the liturgy: "Doubtless our ceremonies are too static, too verbose, and too digressive for children. Possibilities for wonderment are now often lacking, however many marvels of imagination are now unfolded which may bear fruit later. It is not so much a matter of multiplying 'children's masses,' which would isolate them and separate them too much from the ecclesial community and the visible situation, but rather of finding ways to introduce them into a liturgy in which the beauty and joy of the celebration unite Christians of all ages."

<sup>67</sup> Cf. n. 65 for the full quote.

<sup>68</sup> Rahner, "Ideas for a Theology of Childhood," 41.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 42-43.

openness in all circumstances and despite the experiences of life which seem to invite us to close ourselves.”<sup>70</sup> In a very real way, the child is a “sacrament” of complete openness to and trust in his or her future.<sup>71</sup>

However, Searle desired to take the above theological perspective on childhood a step further. Fearing that such an approach could depict the child as a purely passive subject in his or her role of revealing to the Church an attitude of trusting openness, Searle wanted to provide a more dynamic understanding of the child’s faith. Thus, for Searle, faith encompasses the entirety of one’s life—not just information and beliefs that one grasps but how one looks at life in general. “Faith is a holistic sense of who we are, of the kind of world we live in, and integrated intuition of how things are and what it all means.”<sup>72</sup>

Applying this to baptismal faith, Searle writes:

---

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. See also Mitchell, “The Once and Future Child: Towards a Theology of Childhood,” 423-437. See especially page 427, where Mitchell describes the role of the child in the Christian community: “Children are significant for the Christian life of faith and grace not primarily because they are symbols of innocence or nostalgic reminder of what we once were or ‘potential soldiers of the church,’ but because every Christian believer must be a once and future child. In children the Christian recognizes both the origins of life and the future of life; he affirms both what he has been and what he is destined to become; he discerns the power of human past and the pull toward a human future in the presence of God.” See, also, Guy Bedouelle, “Reflection on the Place of the Child in the Church: ‘Suffer the Little Children to Come unto Me,’” Trans. Esther Tillman, *Communio* 12 (1985) 349-367. Bedouelle articulates a Catholic ecclesiology based upon a vision of the Church that understands children as having “rights” as members of the Body of Christ.

<sup>71</sup> See Mitchell, “The Once and Future Child,” 428. Mitchell writes: “The child, therefore, is a sacrament of that radical openness to the future which is a characteristic posture of the Christian believer precisely because the child reveals not only what we once were, but what we will be. Indeed, once could almost define Christianity as the state of childhood, the surrendering openness to God as the absolute future of man, the future that comes forward to meet men in unconditional love and acceptance.”

<sup>72</sup> Mark Searle, “Childhood and the Reign of God: Reflections on Infant Baptism,” *Assembly* 9 (1982) 186. See also Martin A. Lang, “Faith as a Learned Life-Style,” in *Emerging Issues in Religious Education*, Eds. Gloria Durka and Joanmarie Smith (New York: Paulist Press, 1976) 73. Although not cited by Searle, Lang shares a similar theology of a child’s experience of grace: “The smallest infant communicates with his or her mother in an intuitive center-to-center exchange. The infant senses her love, feels valued and appreciated. If the infant learns in this rudimentary way that he or she is of great value, that ‘being here’ is good, that he or she can rely upon others with security, he or she has learned several fundamental awarenesses of the Judeo-Christian tradition. He or she has indeed been *graced* by his or her parents and has begun his or her own personal salvation history. . . In this view, grace does not come from a separate God ‘out there’ flowing through an either of distance; it inheres in the loving interchange between persons.”



Part of the difficulty with much traditional theology of baptismal faith is a one-sided preoccupation with faith as a matter of cognitive understanding. Vatican II attempted to counter this with a return to the Pauline concept of the “obedience of faith,” which it defined as that obedience “whereby a person commits himself totally and freely to the God who reveals . . . “ (DV, 4). In this view, faith is essentially a way of being, marked by commitment to, and dependence upon, God. The articulation of belief can never be other than a reflection upon and a making explicit of that initial stance towards life.<sup>73</sup>

With this deeper appreciation of the Second Vatican Council’s understanding of the “obedience of faith,” Searle argued that infants are capable of being baptized (as well as confirmed and admitted to the Eucharist) precisely because they have faith.<sup>74</sup> In other words, infants are able to participate in the sacraments, not simply because of some primordial sense of trusting dependence, but because they have faith. Searle drew such a conclusion based on his research in psychology and the human behavioral sciences in general.

For example, it is undoubtedly the thinking of James Fowler, and his 1979 work entitled “Perspectives on the Family from the Standpoint of Faith Development Theory,” that Searle employed to justify his assertion that infants have faith. In this influential article, Fowler contends that even before children are born they begin to develop a sense of the world that impacts upon them, and they necessarily respond to that sense. Thus, Fowler defines faith itself as a way of “leaning into life,” a phrase that Searle would continue to use often in his writing. As Fowler states:

In this way of thinking faith need not be approached as necessarily a religious matter. Nor need it be thought of as doctrinal belief or assent. Rather, faith becomes the designation for a way of leaning into life. It points to a way of making sense of one’s existence. It denotes

---

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. Note that “DV” is an abbreviation for the Second Vatican Council’s constitution on divine revelation, *Dei Verbum*.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid. Searle states: “The presupposition is that the child is capable of being baptized, confirmed and admitted to Eucharist and that by recognizing that capacity, the Church comes to a richer insight into the meaning of Christian initiation than she would if these sacraments were reserved until the ‘age of discretion.’”

a way of giving order and coherence to the force field of life. It speaks of the investment of life-grounding trust and of life-orienting commitment.<sup>75</sup>

Fowler concludes that this way of approaching the topic of faith suggests that it is a “human universal;” no one is deprived of faith, since all are in need of a way of organizing their world.<sup>76</sup> Searle writes of this universal experience of faith, saying that “the child, from the moment of its birth, is learning to enact its developing faith as it encounters its human environment, experiencing dependency and separation, shared meanings of ritual patterns, provision for its bodily needs and a sense of its own social and sexual identity.”<sup>77</sup>

However, defining faith in this holistic, universal sense does not simply lead to the conclusion that baptism is indiscriminately open to everyone. As Searle states, “the question, then, is not whether a small child can have faith, but whether that faith is to be different from that of the baptized.”<sup>78</sup> There must be something that distinguishes baptismal faith, and for Searle, baptismal faith is “paschal faith”—the willingness to die to self so that God may provide new life. Here Rahner’s theology of childhood is at work. Searle writes:

Such a pattern of surrender and exaltation, of abandonment and deliverance, of dying and being raised is by no means alien to the experience of the small child. Having experienced the trauma of separation from the womb, the child has to learn how to live as both

---

<sup>75</sup> James Fowler, “Perspectives on the Family from the Standpoint of Faith Development Theory,” *Perkins Journal* (Fall 1979) 7.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. In describing the universal nature of faith, Fowler states: “That is to say, as members of a species burdened with consciousness and self-consciousness, and with freedom to name and organize the phenomenal world, we nowhere can escape the task of forming tacit or explicit coherent images of our action-worlds. . . . Consciously or unconsciously, in this process, we invest trust in powerful images which unify our experience, and which order it in accordance with interpretations that serve our acknowledgement of centers of value and power.”

<sup>77</sup> Searle, “Childhood and the Reign of God: Reflections on Infant Baptism,” 186.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 187.

autonomous and dependent, caught between the desire for communion and the need to accept separation.<sup>79</sup>

Baptism is the way in which an infant “leans into life” in a Christlike manner. The emphasis on baptism as an expression of a deliberate choice to follow Christ is overshadowed by the reality that baptism is a celebration of the faith of *Christ* and the way in which this participation will form a child as he or she develops into that faith.

Thus, Searle did not attempt to argue that the faith of the child is the same as the faith involved in adult conversion but rather that a child’s experience is just as much inserted into the paschal mystery as that of the adult. It would be wrong to say that adult believers have greater access to the paschal mystery than children, who, by virtue of their way of “leaning into life,” are able to experience the pattern of Christ’s suffering, death, resurrection, and glorification. This is possible because Christ himself has redeemed the pattern of being born into the world. Thus Searle writes that paschal faith, “the Christlike way of ‘leaning into life,’ is not necessarily anything which has to await our deliberate decision or conscious choice. *It is rather something we discover to be already operative in us by the grace of God by the time we become aware of it.*”<sup>80</sup> In fact, Searle goes so far as arguing that the notion of “choosing” faith is actually an “abuse” of the R.C.I.A.; those initiated into the Church (the Elect) are always chosen by God, not the ones doing the choosing.<sup>81</sup> In Searle’s words: “Thus it is not so much that baptism infuses faith into a child as that baptism is the conscious

---

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid. Emphasis mine.

<sup>81</sup> Thus, Searle maintains that infant initiation provides a “complement” to adult initiation. See Mark Searle, “Issues in Christian Initiation: The Uses and Abuses of the R.C.I.A.,” *Living Light* 22 (1986) 204. There he writes: “Thus, when Augustine justified the baptism of infants on the grounds that they were baptized into the faith of the church, not their own faith, he was not saying anything not equally applicable to adults. It seems to me that on this score at least, the score of faith, adult initiation needs to be complemented by infant initiation if our understanding of the faith professed by adults is not to be led astray by an exclusive identification of faith with personal faith.”

and deliberate insertion of the child by the believing community into the pattern of Christ's own faith."<sup>82</sup> Such a statement underscores the principle that the faith of individuals is always subservient and secondary to the faith of the Church (which is always subservient to the faith of Christ).

### ***Theology of the Family: "Household of Faith"***

As discussed above, one of the primary results of the development of a theology of childhood is the prohibition of understanding faith as the private domain of an individual believer. In fact, a theology of the child serves to deemphasize the absolute necessity of mature choice involved in adult conversion, since, in some sense, thinking of initiation in terms of individual commitment masks the primary role of the faith of the community. In other words, the faith of the individual belongs to the faith of the community (and ultimately to the faith of Christ). Searle believed that in order to connect the faith of an infant to the faith of the Church a theology of the family must receive attention.<sup>83</sup> Thus, he maintained

---

<sup>82</sup> Ibid. Searle repeats these words, with a bit more clarification on page 43 of his later piece, "Infant Baptism Reconsidered": "Thus it is not so much that baptism infuses faith into a child as that baptism is the deliberate and conscious insertion of the child into the environment of faith, which faith is the faith of the Church, which in turn is the faith of Christ himself. If the Church did not continue to live by the pattern of Christ's own faith in its dying and being raised to life, it would cease to be Church. Such existential faith constitutes the identity of the Church and the identity of the family as domestic church. It is into this faith that the child is baptized when it is baptized in the faith of the Church."

<sup>83</sup> See Searle, "Childhood and the Reign of God," 187. He writes: "The Church is, by definition, the community of the baptized, whose identity is therefore derived from its solidarity with the paschal Christ. Whatever else the Church may be or do, the Church is the community that lives in Christ, conformed to the pattern of his death, or it is nothing. It establishes its visible witness and affirms its identity in its *ecclesiae*, its congregating and common life. Hence the Church subsists primarily in its local congregations, the smallest of which is the Christian family. For the historical reasons mentioned and because of a tendency to identify the Church with its clerical (and celibate) leadership, the Christian family has never received the theological appraisal it both deserves and desperately needs. Nevertheless, it is in this marital household that the child primarily, though not exclusively, discovers its Christian identity." Emphasis mine. See also P.M. Zulehner, "Religionssoziologie und Kindertaufe," in *Christsein Ohne Entscheidung, oder Soll die Kirch Kinder Taufen?*, Ed. Walter Kasper (Mainz, Germany: Grünewald, 1970) 188-206. Searle cites Zulehner for his description of ecclesial socialization for infants and thus concludes: "It remains the case that because such socialization is presumed to be parish-based, it is only undertaken with preschoolers at the earliest. The Church apparently has

that the idea of “*ecclesiola in ecclesia*”—the family as domestic church—is not merely a theological platitude but rather the framework by which the family necessarily participates in the faith development of a child, just as the Church plays a role in catechesis and evangelization.<sup>84</sup>

Returning to the article written by James Fowler on the subject of the family: if faith is defined as a way “leaning into life,” then it becomes abundantly clear that the first stages of a child’s development are particularly important for “teaching” faith. Fowler defines families as “ecologies of faith consciousness,” and suggests that “children compose meaning and invest faith through the images and insights *they* construct.”<sup>85</sup> Fowler also suggests, in an article that appeared several years earlier, that faith development in the context of the family “occurs as a person wrestles with the givenness and crises of his/her life, and draws adaptively upon the models of meaning provided by a nurturing community (or communities) in construing a world which is given coherence by his/her centering trusts and loyalties.”<sup>86</sup> Obviously, then, the child learns about faith from the life-style of the family; the family is the

---

nothing to say to or about young children from the time they are baptized shortly after birth until they are old enough to be enrolled in preschool religious education programs” (“Infant Baptism Reconsidered,” 35).

<sup>84</sup> See Searle, “Infant Baptism Reconsidered,” 36. Regarding the family as domestic church, Searle writes: “This means that the family, a communion of life in Christ within the larger communion of the local and universal Church, participates in the threefold operation of the Church’s priestly, prophetic, and royal mission. Indeed whatever can be said of the Church as a whole can be said, *mutatis mutandis*, of the Christian family.”

<sup>85</sup> Fowler, “Perspectives on the Family from the Standpoint of Faith Development Theory,” 15. The definition of the family as an “ecology of consciousness” may be found on page 14 of the same article.

<sup>86</sup> James Fowler, “Faith Development Theory and the Aims of Religious Socialization,” in Gloria Durka and Joanmarie Smith, Eds., *Emerging Issues in Religious Education* (New York: Paulist Press, 1976) 201. Fowler is clear in suggesting that the beginning of faith is not “taught” but “experienced,” for “we must remind ourselves that the kind of competences under discussion are not skills that can be directly taught. Nor are they operations or acquisitions about which one is usually self-consciously aware. Rather, these competences accrue derivatively in the interaction of a person with the world, as he/she employs (and is employed by) the available relational, symbolic, linguistic, cultic, and ideological resources. *The development of faith competences and the movement from one stage to another cannot be the direct result of education or schooling.*” (200-201). Emphasis mine.

primary locus of grace for the child as it is there that the child first experiences relationship.<sup>87</sup> However, it is not only the child's faith that develops. The family is also reconstituted as it negotiates both internal relationships (those within the family) and external relationships (those within the wider community). This reordering of relationships gives expression to beliefs and values.

Searle believed that this description of the family as domestic church bears several important consequences for the decision to baptize a newborn infant. First, the family is called to discern the meaning of the entire spectrum of pregnancy, birth, and parenting as the revelation of God's will.<sup>88</sup> Second, the family is charged with exercising a priestly function, as its members turn to God in thanksgiving and prayer, which can even be expressed in simple gestures of care for the newborn child.<sup>89</sup> These first two theological aspects of the family can be seen respectively as the realization of God's Word (prophetic role) and the domestication of "sacrament" (priestly role), which together lead to the third consequence for

---

<sup>87</sup> See Martin A. Lang, "Faith as a Learned Life-Style," in Gloria Durka and Joanmarie Smith, Eds., *Emerging Issues in Religious Education* (New York: Paulist Press, 1976) 73. Lang writes: "The smallest infant communicates with his or her mother in an intuitive center-to-center exchange. The infant senses her love, feels valued and appreciated. If the infant learns in this rudimentary way that he or she is of great value, and that 'being here' is good, that he or she can rely upon others with security, he or she has learned several fundamental awarenesses of the Judeo-Christian tradition. He or she has indeed been *graced* by his or her parents and has begun his or her own person salvation history." See also Thomas A. Droege, "The Formation of Faith in Christian Initiation," *The Cresset* 46 (1983) 22. Searle highlights the following of Droege's essay: "To say that the initiation of children into the family of God should begin when they are old enough to understand the language of that family, i.e., the proclamation of the gospel, is like saying that children should be initiated into their human family only when they are old enough to understand the language being used in the family, such as mother saying, 'I love you.' In the human family a child learns the use of language within the experience of community and not as a precondition for entering the community. I see no reason why it should be different if the family we are talking about is Christian." This article can be found in MSP, E49, Folder "Myth & Symbol Course."

<sup>88</sup> See Searle, "Infant Baptism Reconsidered," 36. Searle calls such discernment an exercise in the family's "prophetic function" and suggests that it is "from the specifics of the event and the actual history of its occurrence that faith will seek to read the merciful will of God, so that the event becomes itself a moment of revelation, a Word of God expressed in the contingencies of family life."

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

the family-as-Church: the need to be reconstituted through the celebration of the sacraments in the Church. Searle writes:

This is not to suggest, as sometimes seems to be suggested, that baptism is *really* for the parents or that infant baptism justifies itself as a “teachable moment” in the life of the parents. In a more profound sense the liturgy of baptism depends for its ability to “translate” the child from outside to inside the Church upon the reconstituting of that Church in the liturgical assembly and particularly upon the reconstituting of the family in its organic unity as an *ecclesiola in ecclesia*. If the child is baptized in the faith of the Church, then the identity of the family as constituted by faith, as itself a sacrament of faith, must be “confectured” anew in the process and event of sacramental initiation. In short, the family is part of the sacramental sign of baptism and will be confirmed as such by taking its part in the enactment of the rites themselves.<sup>90</sup>

The fourth and final consequence of infant baptism in the context of the *ecclesiola in ecclesia* is that the sacramental effect of “washing away” sins is extended to the family; in other words, the family is in a very real sense reborn in grace. Searle states that “the celebration of baptism for the forgiveness of sins, for the overcoming of alienation from God, would serve to reinforce the intentionality of the family in its specific role as a community of Christ’s holiness and grace in the world.”<sup>91</sup> Thus, Searle believed that the consequence of not baptizing a member of a family who is an infant would be to render “ambiguous” the very nature of the *ecclesiola in ecclesia*; the family would be shirking its vocation to holiness.<sup>92</sup>

---

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid. Searle writes: “Were the child of Christian parents not baptized, the opportunity of re-presenting its vocation to holiness would be passed up and the ambivalence of the family would be rendered all the more ambiguous. Correspondingly if a family merely ‘goes through the motions’ of having its child baptized without at the same time taking stoke of its own vocation to be a sacrament of grace and holiness the child would be validly baptized as a member of the institutional Church, but the reality signified by membership of the Church—participation in the very life of God, which is forgiveness of sin—would be unlikely to be realized, and the shadow of original sin would still linger over the child precisely because that shadow would be cast by members of the family. The overcoming of original sin by the grace of Christ is not magic. It happens sacramentally, that is through signs. It happens because the rite is a sacramental of the faith of the Church which, where a small child is concerned is in effect the faith of the family. Where the family does not

These four ramifications of the family that looks to baptize a newborn infant point to the active role a child plays in the reconfiguring of relationships, both in the biological family and in the family of the Church. Searle believed adamantly that the general way in which newborn children “lean into life” produces the realization of both joy and suffering.<sup>93</sup> The response by Christian parents and family members in response to the life-situation of the child may be seen in terms of a faith act, in the sense that faith is seen as willing self-abandonment. Thus, Searle valued the position taken by Stanley Hauerwas challenging the “sentimental drivell” usually written about children:

Sentimentality not only belies the hard reality of caring for children, but worse, it avoids the challenge with which they confront us. Generally our children challenge the kind of self-image that finds its most intense expression in the expectations we have for them. If we are lucky, these expectations are modified by our children’s refusal to be what we want them to be. . . Children train us not only to be parents but sometimes even more decent people.<sup>94</sup>

For Hauerwas, as for Searle, children offer parents and families the opportunity to engage in “training” their moral commitments.<sup>95</sup> The unwillingness to participate in such a challenge

---

consciously live the life of faith and grace, it is hard to see how baptism can then and there be fruitful for the forgiveness of sin. The child will have to await the effective intervention of some other representative of the faithful Church for its baptism to ‘revive’ and to become fruitful in the life of grace and faith.”

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 44. It is clear that Searle is realistic about his theology of the child, in the sense that children provide a difficult challenge, as well as a great joy, for parents and entire families. He writes: “Children will test the sacrificial self-commitment, the self-delusions, and the spurious faith of those with whom they come in contact for any length of time. . . But they also evoke a spirit of wonder and benediction and become messengers of unsolicited consolation. All this is merely to suggest that *in their own way children in fact play an extremely active, even prophetic, role in the household of faith.*” Emphasis mine. See also Andrew D. Thompson, “Infant Baptism in the Light of the Human Sciences,” in *Alternative Futures for Worship*, vol. 2, *Baptism and Confirmation*, Ed. Mark Searle (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1987) 55-102. Searle cited Thompson’s work as demonstrating the ways in which infants serve to reconfigure the family. For example, Thompson writes: “The health of a family is largely determined by its adaptive capacities, while the health of the family as a whole is critically important for the health of its individual members. The ability to cope with the new and continually to adapt without losing its own identity is crucial for the family and its members” (76).

<sup>94</sup> Stanley Hauerwas, “Learning Morality from Handicapped Children,” *Hastings Center Report* (October 1980) 45.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 46.



offered to families is, in fact, the only reason Searle could see for withholding baptism from an infant, since the family would be rejecting the call to grow in faith. Searle writes: “If there is any reason for not admitting an infant to faith and baptismal life in the communion of the Church, it may only be that the child’s own God-given household is not faithful.”<sup>96</sup>

In addition to the ways in which newborn infants provide the family with new ways of enacting its faith, Searle established an ecclesiological axiom by interpreting the family as a “domestic household of faith within the communion of the local assembly.”<sup>97</sup> Not only is the child a teacher for parents, but the family is a teacher for the Church. Infant baptism, for Searle, does not so much reveal the promise of parents seeking to teach their children what they already know but testifies to their desire to discover anew what it means to follow Christ. Thus, Searle maintained that the “family-as-ecclesial-sacrament” exemplifies for the whole Church “the means of our continuing formation in Christian fidelity.”<sup>98</sup> Thus, the decision to baptize an infant is understood by Searle to be a concrete testimony of the family’s desire—which is extended to the Church community as well—to be further trained in the Christian story. As Hauerwas suggests, liturgy becomes the training ground for experiencing this story: “Therefore it becomes our duty to be a people who submit to the

---

<sup>96</sup> Searle, “Infant Baptism Reconsidered,” 44.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 48. See also “Response: RCIA and Infant Baptism,” 331, and Mark Searle, “Households of Faith,” *Assembly* 8 (1982) 169. Referring to the New Testament, Searle writes: “A household, traditionally, was more than a nuclear family—it usually included several families related by kinship or service. On the other hand, it was considerably less than the more or less anonymous conglomerates of isolated individuals and families which constitute our typical housing projects and even, sadly, our parishes. In a household, everyone was known by name and knew everyone else.”

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 49. See also Stanley Hauerwas, “The Gesture of the Truthful Story: The Church and ‘Religious Education’,” *Encounter* 43 (1982) 326. Searle picks up on Hauerwas’ idea that religious education is learning the Christian story: “Put simply, religious education is the training in those gestures through which we learn the story of God and his will for our lives. Religious education is not, therefore, something that is done to make us Christians or something done after we have become Christian; rather, *it is the ongoing training in the skills necessary for us to live faithful to God’s Kingdom that has been initiated in Jesus*. For that Kingdom is constituted by a story that one never possesses, but rather constantly challenges us to be what we have not yet become.” Emphasis mine.

discipline of liturgy, as it is there we are trained with the skills rightly to know the story.”<sup>99</sup>

It was Searle’s fundamental belief that this story is learned largely through real, concrete immersion into the story by living it, not simply by hearing or learning its doctrines.<sup>100</sup>

### **“Ethos” of Conversion**

Searle believed that placing greater weight on the theological value of both the child and the family would ultimately bring to a close the debate about adult conversion vs. infant initiation and lead to the creation of an “ethos of conversion.” In other words, the mode of initiation is less important than the establishment of an underlying theology of conversion in every aspect of Church life.<sup>101</sup> Taking his lead from the research and writings of such developmental psychologists as Erik Erikson, Daniel Levinson, and Gail Sheehy,<sup>102</sup> Searle

---

<sup>99</sup> Hauerwas, “The Gesture of the Truthful Story: The Church and ‘Religious Education’,” 327. See also Nocent, “Christian Initiation and Community,” 26-33. Nocent argues that greater participation by the local ecclesial community in a “rite of catechesis” for parents desiring baptism for their infants would help to establish a link between families and the Church. He writes: “After the initial indispensable constitution of a true community, there would seem to be an urgent need to prepare a rite of catechesis for the parents and those responsible for the child; this should of course be a rite in which the community plays its part. In several instances, this infant catechumenate could resolve the serious problem of parents who are inadequately Christian yet request baptism for their child” (32).

<sup>100</sup> Searle, “Infant Baptism Reconsidered,” 49. He continues by making a value statement upon the necessity of apprenticeship: “In this apprenticeship the accent is on doing the things that Christians do, which makes the practice of withholding from small children the anointing of the Spirit and regular participation at the Eucharistic table all the more unfortunate.” For more on the sociological reality of apprenticeship as part of life passage from childhood to maturity, see Abel Pasquier, “Initiation and Society,” in *Concilium* 122: *Structures of Initiation in Crisis*, 3-13. Locating his evidence in the reality of a tribal society south of the African Sahara, Pasquier observes: “Both instruction and apprenticeship are contained in the initiation process” (7).

<sup>101</sup> See Searle, “Response: The RCIA and Infant Baptism,” 331. He writes: “The explicit preference for regeneration over generation as the mode of coming to faith and membership of the Church always overlooks the inevitable fact that, except in monasteries and among a celibate clergy, every first generation is followed by a second generation. . . . Ultimately, the question we are confronted with is not how individuals may best be initiated, but how we can create an ethos of conversion.” Emphasis mine.

<sup>102</sup> See Mark Searle, “The Journey of Conversion,” *Worship* 54 (1980) 35. The authors and works that Searle calls attention to are the following: Erik H. Erickson, *Childhood and Society* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1950) and also *Toys and Reasons* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1977); Daniel Levinson, et al., *The Seasons of a Man’s Life* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1977); Gail Sheehy, *Passages. Predictable Crises in Adult Life* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1976). While Searle credits the work of Sheehy for popularizing the identification of critical

first published his thoughts on conversion in an article entitled “The Journey of Conversion,” which appeared in a 1980 volume of *Worship*. In it, he quite clearly synthesized conversion as “the successful negotiation of crisis or change . . . a form of ‘passage’ or ‘transition’ whereby a person may pass through to a new lease on life and enter into a new set of relationships with himself, the world around him, and with life itself.”<sup>103</sup> Simply stated, conversion can never be reduced to the level of personal choice.<sup>104</sup>

Therefore, in Searle’s understanding, the element of crisis as the starting point for any conversion necessarily entails a confrontation with the meaning of one’s world as he or she knows it. Crisis calls the parameters of an established worldview into question. Searle states this in the following manner:

Each of us has our own world, a complex network of relationships of different kinds; we have our accepted, often unexamined, values; standards of what is acceptable and unacceptable; we have our expectations, ambitions, opinions and so forth. It is this world, my own little world, which a conversion crisis calls into question. What is really at stake here is loss of meaning. We each live in a subjective world in which everything has its assigned place and meaning; we each have a more or less conscious frame of reference within which things are meaningful to us; that is to say, where things are symbolic of the values we hold and of the significance we attach to different people and different kinds of experience. Every human crisis, whatever its ultimate origin, calls that subjective world into question, causes a degree of disillusionment, creates a feeling of dissatisfaction, of being unable to continue with things as they are.<sup>105</sup>

---

stages of personal development in adult life, it is really Levinson’s study that serves as the foundations for Searle’s description of the conversion process.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 38. Concerning the dynamic of crisis, Searle states: “. . . it is a fact that we do not choose crisis: it is thrust upon us. No one sets out deliberately upon a journey of conversion: he is always called to it, perhaps we had better say launched upon it, by circumstances outside his control. . . It is given, not chose. It comes ‘out of the blue,’ uninvited and perhaps unannounced.”

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

In an article that appeared in *Emmanuel* later that same year (1980), Searle similarly defined conversion as: “adherence to the kingdom, that is to say, to the ‘new world,’ to the new state of things, to the new manner of being, of living, of living in community which the Gospel inaugurates.”<sup>106</sup> Focusing attention once again on the issue of infant initiation, as we have seen above, the birth and addition of a new child into a family and into the parish community is nothing less than a crisis that calls all parties to acknowledge and respond to the “new world” that has been created.<sup>107</sup>

Searle argued that the Christian response to the crisis of being confronted with a “new world” is one of surrender and the grasping of a new vision.<sup>108</sup> He also maintained that at the “turning point,” or the moment when one surrenders (“dying to one’s previous life and world”), the journey of “return” begins in which the old life is seen in a new way.<sup>109</sup>

Especially helpful for Searle are the words of T.S. Eliot:

We shall not cease from exploration  
and the end of all our exploring  
will be to arrive where we started  
and to know the place for the first time.<sup>110</sup>

It is not so much that anything changes around us, but that our attitudes and outlooks on life take on new meaning. Thus, all three of these stages—crisis, surrender, return—provide the

---

<sup>106</sup> Mark Searle, “The Christian Community: Evangelized and Evangelizing,” *Emmanuel* 86 (1980) 610.

<sup>107</sup> See Searle, “The Journey of Conversion,” 51. He writes: “The rite of infant baptism can bring parents to a profound sense of their place in the economy of God, or it can serve as a merely perfunctory nod in the direction of the mystery of life.”

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 41-43.

<sup>109</sup> Searle credits Levinson (cf. n. 99 above) with suggesting that the imagery of “death” is appropriate for talking about the surrender that takes place in response to crisis, if one is on the journey of conversion. Levinson uses the “Mid-life crisis” as his template: “The Mid-life Transition brings new concerns with the loss of youth, the assumption of a more senior position in one’s world, and the reworking of inner polarities. Some preoccupation with death—fearing it, being drawn into it, seeking to transcend it—is not uncommon in all transitions, since the process of termination-initiation evokes the imagery of death and rebirth” (51).

<sup>110</sup> T.S. Eliot, *Little Gidding*, as quoted in Searle, “The Journey of Conversion,” 43.

dynamism for Christian liturgy, which serves to express and reveal the Christian community as living in a constant state of “amazement” at God’s power to transform life as we see it.<sup>111</sup>

“Thus every sacrament is a rite of passage: or rather, it is an opportunity to live through the transition occurring within our own lives in explicit identification with the passage of Jesus through death from this world to the Father.”<sup>112</sup> Sacraments are thus “marker events”<sup>113</sup> of individuals submitting themselves to communal growth in the life of Christ.

Thus, by the early 1980s, Searle’s writing started to reflect a real concern about the way in which conversion was being attended to (or conversely ignored) in the parish community, especially in the Sunday assembly.<sup>114</sup> For Searle, the Sunday assembly is the

---

<sup>111</sup> See Searle, “The Christian Community: Evangelized and Evangelizing,” 611. Searle contends that the Christian people in “amazement” is the reality that underlies all sacraments: “So before there are seven sacraments there is the sacrament of the Christian people, the sign of a people who live ‘amazed’ at the God who has shown himself to us in Jesus and amazed at the vision of human life and destiny which he has opened up.” In the conclusion, he repeats this paradigm: “Finally, the celebration of the liturgy in the Christian community is intended to sustain and support our initial conversion and to keep us part of that ‘new world’ which we entered when we first learned to believe and to place our hopes in the God who stands hidden in our midst and who alone can save us from death. . . . The liturgy is where our ‘amazement’ is sparked anew and pours forth in song and pray, in praise and petition” (618). It is interesting to note that Searle’s use of the term “amazement” is strikingly similar to Erik Erikson’s use of the term “playfulness” with regard to child development (cf. n. 102 above). Erikson writes: “The growing child’s play (and that is what a long childhood is for) is the training ground for the experience of a leeway of imaginative choices within an existence governed and guided by roles and visions. These, however, must undergo meaningful adjustments during economic and historical upheavals, wherefore man must suffer (and that is what adolescence is for) a certain identity confusion during which the adolescent person may be glad to accept existing confirmations or feel creatively moved, ideologically inspired—or, indeed, motivated to destroy” (78).

<sup>112</sup> Searle, “The Journey of Conversion,” 49.

<sup>113</sup> See Gail Sheehy, *Passages* (cf. n. 102 above). She uses the term “marker events” to describe significant moments in our lives that call for some sort of internal response or change: “Everything that happens to us—graduations, marriage, childbirth, divorce, getting or losing a job—affects us. These *marker events* are the concrete happenings of our lives” (25).

<sup>114</sup> For example, see Mark Searle, “Introduction” and “The Shape of the Future: A Liturgist’s Vision,” in *Sunday Morning: A Time for Worship*, Ed. Mark Searle (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press) 7-9 and 129-153. Searle surveys the situation as follows: “Sunday church-attendance figures remain high in America, but when one begins to ask what such attendance is understood to mean, problems begin to surface. Sunday morning—such is our tradition—is above all the time at which we become what we are called to be: the gathered People of God, the Body of Christ united in the Holy Spirit. . . . Not surprisingly, perhaps, 88 percent of unchurched Americans claimed that it was possible to be a good Christian without attending church. More significantly, however, 70 percent of church members in this country professed the same belief. In other words, nearly three-

day of conversion for the Christian community, for it is, as Searle calls it, the “*time of life-after-death*.”<sup>115</sup> In other words, the Sunday assembly is when the baptismal identity of the community—of a people who “were plunged into the death of Christ and raised in the Spirit”—realizes its baptismal identity and is immersed again into the “new world” of Christ.<sup>116</sup> It is not that the Church engages in community “building” each time it gathers on Sunday, but rather it recognizes the community already established “in Christ.” Thus, all liturgy returns to this ongoing, corporate conversion into Christ. Searle writes:

While the liturgical assembly cannot provide a sense of community itself, it nevertheless rehearses the Christian account of the meaning of existence and invites the faithful to reaffirm their commitment to the common perspectives, definitions, and values which bond and identify people as members of the Christian community . . . Liturgical celebration, then, should not be guided by the quest for community but should be allowed simply to proclaim the perspectives, definitions, and values of gospel life-after-death. In this way it will continually deepen, purify, and correct our common life in the Spirit.<sup>117</sup>

Thus, the Sunday assembly is the celebration of the call to conversion, not just a rediscovery of Christian identity (of life-after-death) but of receiving again the challenge to become who it is called to be, namely Christ. So, as Searle concludes: “What is at stake, then, is not so much the character of the so-called Christian Sunday, but the secret of Christian living itself.”<sup>118</sup> To live as Christians in this world, Searle argues, requires learning anew the

---

quarters of those who claimed to be practicing church members lacked any sense of their Christian identity as being essentially a corporate one. The Christian faith, it would appear, is so distorted by the individualism of the culture that one of the key elements of the Christian vision is either unknown or irrelevant to them” (130-131).

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 132.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 140-141.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 151.

attitudes that are part of the “new” vision of living of the Kingdom, to express through common rehearsal the baptismal life of conversion and life in Christ.

### ***Conclusion***

Although Searle identified the Christian community assembled for liturgical prayer as a sign of the Church engaged in conversion, he recognized the need to attempt to make sense of this dynamic in terms of Christian life in general. Thus, in a short piece entitled “Conversion and Initiation into Faith Growth,” which appeared in 1981, Searle began to speak of faith in terms of a “fundamental attitude toward existence.”<sup>119</sup> Here Searle demonstrates that faith development in an individual is inseparable from the faith of the Church and ultimately the faith of Christ. Therefore, what is initiation if it is nothing but the expression of the attitude of Christ, i.e. “his total submission to the will of the father, even to death on a Cross”?<sup>120</sup> Searle writes:

Faith, in the last analysis, is what a person lives by and lives for. It is the sum total of the attitudes which motivate us, the values we opt for, the personal relationships we establish in pursuit of those values. Since none of us has the purity of heart—or single-mindedness—of Jesus’ dedication to the Kingdom of God, our faith and our religious beliefs do not so completely coincide. The psalmist says, “Some put their faith in horses and chariots, but we put our faith in the name of the Lord” (Psalm 20:8). Reality is not so clear-cut: there is the better as well as the believer in all of us. We live by various faiths. We have religious convictions, but our attitudes, lifestyle, sense of priorities, and reactions to the events of the day often reveal a set of loyalties which are hard to square with demands of the obedience of faith.<sup>121</sup>

---

<sup>119</sup> See Mark Searle, “Conversion and Initiation into Faith Growth,” in *Christian Initiation Resources Reader*, Vol. 1, *Precatechumenate* (New York: William H. Sadlier, Inc., 1981) 65.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid. 67. Concerning this expression of Christ’s faith, Searle writes: “And that, essentially, is the faith of the church, the existential attitude she lives by. This is the faith she manifests in baptism . . .”

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 68.

Thus, to live according to the “obedience of faith” is to resist the temptation to believe that our conversion to Christ is ever complete, that we have come to know him fully, or that our attitude no longer needs to be conformed to his. What is true for a catechumen is true for the entire Church: “The understanding of the gospel and the teaching of the church are things we come to gradually in the experience of trying to live the Christian way.”<sup>122</sup>

Therefore, Searle demands that in order to “engage in the faith of Christ”<sup>123</sup> the Church must rehearse the attitude of Christ in the celebration of the sacraments. Searle suggests that the rites of Christian initiation, whether the R.C.I.A. or the initiation of infants, are paramount opportunities for the Church to rehearse the attitude of Christ’s willing surrender. He writes:

The rites . . . are sacraments of the faith of Christ. To engage in them is to engage in the faith of Christ. Each in their own way, from the initial signing with the Cross to the climactic paschal Eucharist, all point to and reveal the same thing: the faith of Christ, the sacrifice of the Cross. *Learning to pray liturgically is not so much a matter of learning to express what one believes in word and rite as it is of learning to discipline oneself to live out of a faith which is only gradually and painfully learning to make one’s own.* When one has made it entirely one’s own, one will be ready to challenge what Paul calls “the last enemy,” death, in a final and definitive act of the obedience of faith.<sup>124</sup>

---

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 72-73.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid. See also Mark Searle, “God Writes Straight in Crooked Lines: Part I. The Inner Process: Conversion,” *Catechumenate* 12 (1990) 2-9. Emphasis mine. Although this piece is not among Searle’s early publications, it is worth noting at this point in the study. Here Searle quotes his friend Ray Kemp, who has this to say about the attitude of surrender: “Everyone wants to go to heaven but nobody wants to die.” In response to this observation, Searle comments: “The yearning for union with God—to come into contact with what is really real, to get beyond illusions and half-truths to the truth of one’s existence, to find one’s life-support in a strength outside oneself—is reined in by the fear of losing oneself. When the need to move beyond the present impasse can no longer be denied, when the illusion of being able to save oneself or of being able to be saved on terms acceptable to oneself is finally surrendered, then one can fall headlong into the Real” (6). What are the rites of initiation if not primarily the rehearsal of such surrender into God? See also Searle, “Infant Baptism Reconsidered,” 42. He writes: “Paschal faith is the faith which was Christ’s, the faith whereby he was made perfect through suffering and consistently surrendered his life into the hands of the God who alone could save him out of death (see Heb 5:7-8). Such a pattern, as something lived out by the community of the baptized, is



Searle's suggestion that engagement in the sacraments is more a matter of "learning to discipline oneself" than it is a matter of "learning to express what one believes" does not negate the need for authenticity in ritual activity, but rather, it demonstrates that the ongoing practice involved in liturgy promotes an integration of the attitudes celebrated therein. Thus, Searle states: "Faith in Christ can really be grasped only from the inside, by trying it on."<sup>125</sup>

Searle argues, therefore, that the most fundamental attitudes rehearsed in Christian initiation (as in all of liturgy) are "obedience," "trust," "self-surrender," and "confidence in God's truthfulness."<sup>126</sup> By rehearsing these attitudes in the celebration of the rites of initiation, the Christian community and those preparing for the Christian life learn the art of "leaning on God."<sup>127</sup> For example, Searle provides the liturgical action of the profession of faith in the baptismal liturgy as a way in which the attitude of Christian surrender is practiced and thereby learned:

In the earliest Roman tradition (*The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus*, c. 215), the candidate stands in the water and is asked three times "Do you believe . . . ?" Each time, after saying "I believe" (*credo*), the candidate is plunged into the water. This is not just a last minute effort to be sure the candidate has understood the religious instructions. *The*

---

what constitutes the faith of the Church. *By baptism we have been fitted into a pattern of surrender and exaltation, of self-abandonment and deliverance, of dying and being raised.*" Emphasis mine.

<sup>125</sup> Searle, "Conversion and Initiation into Faith Growth," 72. He continues: "This is a gradual process particularly since the implications of living in Christ are by no means entirely clear for the church, let alone for the catechumens." See also Romano Guardini, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, Trans. Ada Lane (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1940) 176-184. Here Guardini argues that growth into the liturgy involves relearning the art of child's play, which is full of meaning yet free of purpose. He writes: "The liturgy wishes to teach, but not by means of an artificial system of aim-conscious educational influences; it simply creates an entire spiritual world in which the soul can live according to the requirements of its nature" (177).

<sup>126</sup> See Mark Searle, "Faith and Sacraments in the Conversion Process: A Theological Approach," in *Conversion and the Catechumenate*, Ed. Robert D. Duggan (New York: Paulist Press, 1984) 68. Searle continues: "Christian faith is therefore something open-ended, and this in two ways. It is open-ended in the sense that it is a surrender to being led by God into an unknown future; and it is open-ended in that we cannot give our lives totally and entirely over to God in a single momentous decision, but must continually, day by day, take up the opportunities and confront the vicissitudes of life in ways that express and affirm our faith in God" (68-69).

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

*words proclaim the meaning of the action, while the action confirms and manifests the meaning of the words.* The candidate identifies with Christ in submitting to God in faith, even to death. . . The obedience sacramentalized in Christ's death on the cross is the same obedience of faith to which the neophyte surrenders, and obedience irrevocably pledged to God's word for the sake of the joy that lies ahead.<sup>128</sup>

The ritual action of being immersed in the water after speaking the words "I believe" rehearses, not only for the individuate candidate but for the entire assembled community as well, the attitude of surrender. Therefore, in terms of gestures, how the individual enacts a letting go of self at the moment of being immersed into the water makes a difference in how the community rehearses its faithful surrender.

Furthermore, the overall experience of the rites of Christian initiation rehearses an attentive awareness to God's activity in the world; the rites call for the practice of obedient listening. A primary example of exercising such an attitude, which Searle raises, is the ritual action of dismissing catechumens after the liturgy of the word.<sup>129</sup> The dismissal teaches both the catechumens and the assembly as a whole the importance of reflecting upon God's Word and learning to respond to the challenge it necessarily offers. In other words, the dismissal rehearses the discipline of being obedient to the living Word of God. In fact, the entire pattern of the catechumenate is structured to heighten awareness of encounter with God. As Searle writes:

The whole experience of the catechumenate enables us to recognize that God may break into our lives on occasions as mundane as a chance encounter with a stranger or a catechumenal session with coffee and doughnuts. In the saying and doing of human interaction, God may be found to have spoken and acted. While the liturgy shares the same structures of saying and doing and makes the same claim to mediate an encounter with God, the *ritualized* character of the event means that we are set up for this encounter. . . The words and gestures

---

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 72. Emphasis mine.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 83-84.

of the rite bring us to stand at the end of human action and language,  
till we tremble on the edge of that ultimately unnameable and  
unmanageable mystery we call God.<sup>130</sup>

The rites of Christian initiation, whether for adults or children, rehearse God's vision for the world and practice the relationships that are a part of God's Kingdom. Thus Searle writes: "Words of exorcism and renunciation both represent and effect a break with an old network of relationships (the 'world'); blessings, presentations of the Creed and the Lord's Prayer, the Ephphatha rite, the anointing, the celebration of baptism, confirmation and Eucharist, represent and effect our appropriation of our new role."<sup>131</sup> In other words, the celebration of Christian initiation rehearses relationships as God would have them.<sup>132</sup>

This chapter has traced Searle's positive appraisal of the practice of infant baptism as fulfilling the requirement for faith and has demonstrated that the sacraments of initiation in general rehearse the Christian attitudes of obedience and surrender. No matter if the community is engaged in the celebration of adult initiation or infant baptism, what is being practiced is the faith of Christ—the willingness to "lean into God."<sup>133</sup> Thus, for Searle, Christian initiation must always involve a serious commitment to conversion, a commitment

---

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 79. Searle goes on to say that the rehearsal of the rites of Christian initiation (here specifically adult initiation) serves to alter our identity: "Thus the ritual of the RCIA is celebrated for the purposes of altering our identity, it might be said. But the new identity is no easier to grasp than the old: we assume it, but we do not know it exhaustively. The reason for this is obvious: Not only does God remain a mystery, but we even remain something of a mystery to ourselves. Thus the meaning of the new identity is to be discovered in living it out. *All that happens in the liturgy is that there is an encounter which, if we engage in it with anything more than merely superficial attention, must make us aware of the mystery and of the real change of identity which results from the rite*" (80). Emphasis mine.

<sup>132</sup> For a beautiful description of liturgy celebrating the "good purpose of all created things" see Mark Searle, *Ministry and Celebration* (La Crosse, WI: Diocesan Liturgical Office, 1980) 6. Searle writes: "The liturgy, it might be said, is the celebration of the good purpose of all created things. . . the liturgy puts ordinary things and ordinary people explicitly to use in the service of God and of one another, thus revealing the purpose for which they were made."

<sup>133</sup> See Searle, "The Journey of Conversion," 40. Here he describes the Paschal nature of Christian ritual in general: "Every Christian ritual is a liturgical celebration of the death of the Lord, his descent into hell and his being raised from death—a community rehearsal of the journey of the Body of Christ."

that is fundamental to the nature of the celebrating community itself. “Christianity, it has been said,” writes Searle, “is more caught than taught, and the model for learning is closer to that of an apprenticeship than that of a classroom.”<sup>134</sup> The next chapter will explore how such apprenticeship involves the enactment of a just Kingdom, which Searle believes is the inherent connection between liturgy and justice.

---

<sup>134</sup> Searle, “Infant Baptism Reconsidered,” 49.

## Chapter III

### *Liturgy and Images of God's Just Kingdom*

When the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council proclaimed in *Sacrosanctum Concilium* that the liturgy is “the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed” and “the fount from which all her power flows,”<sup>1</sup> they implicitly reaffirmed the indispensable relation between the Church’s corporate work of prayer and its involvement in the redemption of the world. Far from being an escape from the world’s anxieties and miseries, the liturgy is a primary means of experiencing the ways of peace and justice. Liturgy and the pursuit of justice do not put forth competing agendas, for liturgy that is separated from the world becomes a myopic waiting for a perfect society in the next world, while the agenda of justice without a grounding in the liturgy risks forgetting God’s role in establishing a Kingdom of right relationship and peace.

The attempt to define clearly the intrinsic link between liturgy and life was the work of the nineteenth and twentieth century liturgical pioneers whose vision of worship produced what is well known as the liturgical movement.<sup>2</sup> In his classic work, *Liturgical Piety*, Louis

---

<sup>1</sup> *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 10 in Flannery, *The Basic Sixteen Documents*.

<sup>2</sup> *Sacrosanctum Concilium* acknowledges the groundwork of the early pioneers of the liturgical movement when it proclaims: “Enthusiasm for the promotion and restoration of the sacred liturgy is rightly held to be a sign of the providential dispositions of God in our time, and as a movement of the Holy Spirit in his church. It is today a distinguishing mark of the life of the church, and, indeed, of the whole tenor of contemporary religious thought and action.” See *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 43 in Flannery, *The Basic Sixteen Documents*. For an overview of the development of the “liturgical movement,” see Olivier Rousseau, *The Progress of the Liturgy*:

Bouyer offers the following definition of this phenomenon: “the liturgical movement is the natural response arising in the Church to the perception that many people have lost that knowledge and understanding of the liturgy which should belong to Christians, both clergy and laity, and in consequence, have lost the right use of the liturgy also.”<sup>3</sup> In other words, the liturgical movement must be spoken of according to a two-fold aim: to “rediscover” the liturgy, and at the same time to “renew” the Church’s life of prayer.<sup>4</sup> Similar to Bouyer, Bernard Botte once described the liturgical movement as a necessary reaction to the following dilemma: “Left to themselves, the faithful became more and more isolated in a religious individualism and narrow moralism whose ideal was to have each one work on personal salvation by avoiding mortal sin.”<sup>5</sup> In short, the liturgical movement was born out of the conviction that greater comprehension of the meaning of liturgy would help Christians see worship as intertwined with all aspects of life.<sup>6</sup>

---

*An Historical Sketch from the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century to the Pontificate of Pius X* (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1951).

<sup>3</sup> Louis Bouyer, *Liturgical Piety* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1954) 39.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. Bouyer writes: “The necessity for both these aspects—the mental rediscovery and the renewal in practice,—presupposes the existence of a fact which we have already made clear; they presuppose, that is, that the true nature of the liturgy itself and what it should mean in the daily life of the Church and of Christians have been neglected for a long time and allowed to fall into apparently hopeless oblivion.” See Henri Daniel-Rops, Ed., *The Liturgical Movement*, Trans. Lancelot Sheppard (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1964) 9. Here there appears an excerpt from a 1940 letter from Romano Guardini to the bishop of Mainz, in which he outlines the major objective of the liturgical movement in terms of restoring the relevance of worship (and religious thinking in general) to a world marked by the effects of Modernity: “The liturgical movement came into being because it was necessary. Under the influence of modern individualism and rationalism, the worship of the Church with its magnificent forms, lofty considerations and concentration on the totality of revealed realities, had been increasingly relegated to the background. Spiritual life had assumed very largely a subjective and private character. It therefore became necessary that from within the Church should arise the desire to regain what had been thus set aside. Scientific and historical research was then carried out in an endeavour to revive the liturgy in its purity and to restore to it the place belonging to it in religious life.”

<sup>5</sup> Bernard Botte, *From Silence to Participation: An Insider’s View of Liturgical Renewal*, Trans. John Sullivan, O.C.D. (Washington, D.C.: The Pastoral Press, 1988) 8.

<sup>6</sup> See Gerald Ellard, *Men at Work at Worship: America Joins the Liturgical Movement* (New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1940). See especially the preface written by Archbishop John Murray, pages vii-ix. He writes: “Godlessness in government, education, commerce, industry and economic life will give way only as

For his own part, Mark Searle wrote of two liturgical movements. The first focused on establishing a greater *understanding* of what liturgy is, “weaning nineteenth- and twentieth-century Catholics from their culturally accommodated devotions and their individualistic piety and bringing them back to the liturgy.”<sup>7</sup> The second worked in the reverse direction to reform the liturgy itself and was based on the premise that the “liturgy had to be accommodated to the people.”<sup>8</sup> Searle summarizes his interpretation of the history of the liturgical movement as follows:

Historians usually see the liturgical movement that led to the reforms of Vatican II as unfolding in several phases: First, the monastic phase, associated with Solesmes and Beuron and Maria Laach; second the pastoral phase, associated with Lambert Beauduin, Pius Parsch, Virgil Michel, and others between the wars; and finally, the reform phases culminated in the liturgy constitution of the Second Vatican Council. . . . If instead of focusing on places and personalities, however, the historian were to focus on agendas, the history of the liturgical movement would seem less evolutionary, more discontinuous. . . . The first movement was driven by the strong belief that liturgy could reform Catholics as a People of God to be reckoned with socially and politically. The second recognized that for liturgy to have an impact on the people, it would have to be brought closer to them, for example, through the use of the vernacular.<sup>9</sup>

According to Searle, the first liturgical movement, with its emphasis on a renewed understanding of the liturgy, would attempt to produce a new sense of being Catholic (along with a worldly mission), while the second liturgical movement, which called for a renewal of the liturgy itself, aimed at improving participation in worship. Thus, Searle describes the

---

godliness is cultivated in the sacramental life imparted by the Son of God for the enlightenment, sanctification and unification of all who were redeemed by His precious Blood. Action in every phase of endeavor must be preceded by the conviction, appreciation and acceptance of the sovereignty of Christ in the affairs of men. The recognition given him in the liturgy of the Church must be extended to all men, and underlie all their relations to each other and to God” (ix).

<sup>7</sup> Searle, *Called to Participate*, 1.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. 1.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

first movement as “bringing people to the liturgy” and the second movement as “bringing the liturgy to the people.”<sup>10</sup>

While Searle believes this second liturgical movement culminated in the work of the Second Vatican Council with its Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, he concentrates on three important figures who he considers essential pioneers of the first liturgical movement: Prosper Guéranger (1805-1875), Pius X (1835-1914), and Virgil Michel, O.S.B. (1890-1938).<sup>11</sup> “Unlikely as it must have seemed to most of their contemporaries,” Searle writes, “they saw the best chance for such a (social) transformation to lie with the ancient, encrusted, largely ignored, and almost entirely fossilized public worship life of the Church.”<sup>12</sup> A brief word about the writings of Guéranger, Pius X, and Michel will help to situate the importance of the century-long work of liturgical investigation and reinvigoration that took place prior to Vatican II.

Prosper Guéranger’s contribution to liturgical reform flows from his work to restore the Benedictine abbey at Solesmes in 1833 as well as his ongoing publication of *Institutions liturgiques* (beginning in 1840) and his reflections on the liturgical year (beginning in 1841).<sup>13</sup> In the aftermath of the French Revolution and government-sponsored attack against

---

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 11-12. Searle provides the following summary: “Thus we have had two liturgical movements, both of which have made important contributions to the life of the Church much as multiple movements enrich and deepen a symphony. The first focused on liturgical formation and social transformation, *bringing people to the liturgy* so that they might be empowered to go out and change the social order. The Second focused on liturgical change and ecclesial renewal, *bringing the liturgy to the people* so that they might participate fully and help bring the Church into the modern world.” Emphasis mine.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 2-8.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>13</sup> See Cuthbert Johnson, *Prosper Guéranger (1805-1875): A Liturgical Theologian, An Introduction to His Liturgical Writings and Work* (Rome: Pontificio Ateneo S. Anselmo, 1984) 428-432. See also R.W. Franklin, “The Nineteenth Century Liturgical Movement,” *Worship* 53 (1979) 12-39. Franklin’s article largely focuses on the contribution of Guéranger and asserts that the “nineteenth century liturgical movement was the work of the Benedictines” (12). Later he writes: “The liturgical movement would not have survived the nineteenth



the Church as well as the rise of the Enlightenment, Guéranger sought to revitalize faith in the Church and in the tradition of its liturgy. He believed that the liturgy provided society with a trustworthy and stable pattern for living that moved away from the temptation to rely on the power of the individual.<sup>14</sup> Thus, he stressed the importance of communal prayer over individual devotion. In his study of Guéranger, biographer Cuthbert Johnson writes:

It was the social aspect of Liturgical prayer that Guéranger stressed as being of fundamental importance . . . He actually went so far as to say that the social dimension of the Liturgy is “the basis of all divine worship”. . . The Church is a visible society and since the social dimension of the Liturgy is the common exercise of the virtue of religion, Guéranger pointed out that it was impossible to consider this virtue simply as a matter of concern for the private spiritual well-being of the individual.<sup>15</sup>

Therefore, by restoring a sense of beauty in liturgy, as seen in his reintroduction of the Gregorian chant at Solesmes, worshippers would recognize and contribute to the aesthetic dimension of society, for as Guéranger wrote: “*La Liturgie, cette divine esthétique de notre foi.*”<sup>16</sup> According to Guéranger, confidence in and care for the Roman liturgy would help to

---

century had it not been the enterprise of monasticism. The international character of monasticism allowed monks to become the medium for the transmission of its ideas out of the countries in which the liturgical movement had become threatened and distorted. The nature of the monastery as an institution which is both a center of learning and of daily life shaped the liturgical movement along a creative ‘middle way’ which was at once conservative, in that it looked to the past for models, and progressive, in that it sought to create a revived community life appropriate for modern conditions” (38).

<sup>14</sup> See for example Mary David Totah, Ed., *The Spirit of Solesmes* (Petersham, MA: St. Bede’s Publications, 1997) 164-168. Totah states: “The liturgy as seen by Dom Guéranger in his youth had been overlaid with fanciful interpretations and developments foreign to its nature. Since the Renaissance, liturgical ceremonies often resembled operatic shows and were more concerned with performance than with prayer to God” (165). See also Louis Soltner, *Solesmes and Dom Guéranger, 1805-1875*, Trans. Joseph O’Connor (Orleans, MA: Paraclete Press, 1995) 89-110. Soltner writes: “In giving back to his century the profound meaning of liturgical prayer, the abbot of Solesmes fought against two forms of individualism: a personal individualism, by upholding the superiority of ecclesial prayer; and a national or regional individualism, by emphasizing the importance of this unity—never to be confused with uniformity” (91).

<sup>15</sup> Johnson, *Prosper Guéranger (1805-1875)*, 256-257.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 262. “The Liturgy is the divine aesthetic of our faith.” Johnson comments on this phrase: “The Liturgy fosters and deepens a man’s appreciation of the good and the beautiful in life. The beauty of the Liturgy is of a sublime kind because just as all beauty is a reflection of truth so the Liturgy whose essence is holiness and truth

correct the materialistic attitude that marked mid-nineteenth century France; true understanding of the liturgy would promote a balance between the individual and the communal, between devotional and liturgical prayer.<sup>17</sup>

The second significant pioneer of the “liturgical movement,” according to Searle, is Pius X, who succeeded Leo XIII in 1903 and reigned until 1914. During his pontificate, Pius X encouraged frequent reception of Communion, restored the use of chant, reworked the breviary, and heralded the active participation of the assembly in liturgical celebration. While displaying a desire to restore interest in the liturgy itself, Pius X took a skeptical approach to theological scholarship in general by condemning the trend of “Modernism.” Therefore, critical of scientific developments and historical-critical methods, he identified the liturgy of the Church as the “indispensable fount” from which flowed the true “Christian spirit”—only the liturgy would move the Church away from the attraction of secular movements to a position of prophet in the world. In his *Motu Proprio* on restoring sacred Music, “Inter Plurimas Pastoralis” (November 22, 1903), Pius X writes:

We are filled with a burning desire to see the true Christian spirit flourish in every respect and be preserved by all the people. We therefore are of the opinion that before everything else it is necessary to provide for the sanctity and dignity of the temple where the faithful primary and indispensable fount, that is, the active participation in the

---

reflects something of the beauty of Him who is its object. A care for the aesthetics of religion is a reflection of the faith of the community. At the same time those periods in the history of the Church which manifest the greatest vitality were those in which the Liturgy both expressed and nourished the faith of the community” (262-263).

<sup>17</sup> See R.W. Franklin, “Guéranger: A View on the Centenary of His Death,” *Worship* 49 (1975) 327-328. Franklin sums up Guéranger’s contribution to the liturgical movement as follows: “Balancing reactionary politicians and utopian socialists, Guéranger urged that the community not reject existence in the contemporary world. But the choking life of materialism would be transcended only if men adopted a system of values whose end was not man himself but reached beyond man and mere concern with the standard of living. The community is formed by that act of reaching beyond. That act is the mass liturgy. The liturgy expresses the authenticity, austerity, simplicity, and dignity which over comes the stuffy bourgeois world.”

most sacred mysteries and in the public and solemn prayer of the Church.<sup>18</sup>

For Pius X, liturgical reform did not mean a radical reworking of liturgical texts and rituals; rather, it meant promoting the “active participation” in the liturgy necessary for a retrieval of a “true Christian spirit” in the world. His understanding of the duty for the Church to “restore all things in Christ” (*instaurare omnia in Christo*) meant that the world order must be thoroughly Christianized; he believed that submission to the Church’s ancient liturgy would unify the Church in its mission to bring the world to Christ.<sup>19</sup>

The third pioneer of the liturgical movement, identified by Searle, was Dom Virgil Michel, O.S.B., who sought to awaken the Church in the United States to a deeper understanding of the liturgy. The early twentieth century in the United States witnessed both the economic collapse which brought about the Great Depression in the 1930s and the rebound generated by the industrial needs of the Second World War. The triumph of a capitalistic market in the United States not only increased social disparity in many facets of life but also served to crown individualism as an American ideal. A free enterprise system would go hand-in-hand with the pursuit of self over society. Thus, Michel saw the liturgy as

---

<sup>18</sup> Pius X, *Motu Proprio on the Restoration of Sacred Music* (November 22, 1903), in *All Things in Christ: Encyclicals and Selected Documents of Saint Pius X*, Vincent A. Yzermans, Ed. (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1954) 200. The Latin original reads: “Etenim cum nihil Nobis potius sit et vehementer optemus ut virtus christianae religionis floreat et in omnibus Christifidelibus firmior sit, templi decori provideatur oportet, ubi Christicolae congregantur ut hoc virtutis spiritu ex priore fonte fruuntur, quae est participatio divinarum mysteriorum atque Ecclesiae communium et solemnium precum.” For the complete Latin text of “Inter Plurimas Pastoralis,” see *Acta Sanctae Sedis* 36 (1903-1904) 387-395. The preceding quote is found on page 388.

<sup>19</sup> See Pius X, *The Restoration of All Things in Christ* (October 4, 1903), in *All Things in Christ: Encyclicals and Selected Documents of Saint Pius X*, Vincent A. Yzermans, Ed. (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1954) 3-13. “... to re-establish all things in Christ and to lead men back to submission to God is one and the same aim. We must therefore labor to bring men back to the dominion of Christ, and when this is accomplished, we shall have then have brought them back to God” (7). The Latin original reads: “Ex quo consequitur, ut idem omnino sit *instaurare omnia in Christo* atque homines ad Dei obtemperacionem reducere. Huc igitur curas intendamus oportet, ut genus hominum in Christi ditionem redigamus: eo praestito, iam ad ipsum Deum remigra verit.” For the complete Latin text of “E Supremi Apostolatus,” see *Acta Sanctae Sedis* 36 (1903-1904) 129-139. The preceding quote is found on page 133.

means of practicing the ideals of Christianity that would counter the rise of unchecked individualism.<sup>20</sup> Endorsing the theological principle that participation in the “Mystical Body of Christ” produces a practical solidarity in life, Michel writes:

Similarly the liturgy of the Church not only makes and keeps us members of this fellowship, but it always puts the idea of fellowship in Christ into full practice. Just in so far as we participate in the liturgy after the mind of Christ do we also live and breathe this supernatural social unity of all members in Christ. This is why the liturgy is so truly the primary and indispensable source of the true Christian spirit: it not only teaches us what this spirit is but also has us live this spirit in all its enactments. In the liturgy the teaching is inseparable from the putting into practice.<sup>21</sup>

Michel believed in the promotion of an “intelligent return” to the liturgy, which would provide the necessary practice for living a Christian life in general.<sup>22</sup> In his words, “The Christian who drinks deep at the liturgical sources of the Christ-life will appreciate the seal of Christ with which he was indelibly marked at his baptism, and he will endeavor to put this same seal on everything with which he comes in contact throughout his daily life.”<sup>23</sup> For

---

<sup>20</sup> See Virgil Michel, “The Liturgy, the Basis of Social Regeneration,” *Orate Fratres* 9 (1935) 537. Michel writes: “What actually happened thereupon was that this principle of exaggerated individualism made of society a battle-ground of each against all. This was a condition not of dignified human personalities and life, but a human version of the law of the jungle. It was a raw ‘struggle for existence and survival of the fittest’ disguised under the phrase of ‘free competition’.” See also Paul Marx, *Virgil Michel and the Liturgical Movement* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1957) especially 49-71. Marx writes: “In the 1920’s, when the organized liturgical apostolate began, Virgil Michel frequently insisted that the world was at the end of an era in an age of transition that is ‘questioning all its old beliefs and habits.’ A pagan and unnatural individualism, in both secular and spiritual fields, had run its course. . . . The purpose of the liturgical apostolate, he stated thirty years ago, is to bring man, civilization, and culture back to Christ, after the apostasy that began with the Renaissance, received its great impetus in the Protestant Revolt, and developed relentless logic through the successive eras of the enlightenment, deism, liberalism, and individualism to the secularism of his day” (66-67).

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 542. Michel concludes the article with the following syllogism: “Pius X tells us that the liturgy is the indispensable source of the true Christian spirit; Pius XI says that the true Christian spirit is indispensable for social regeneration. Hence the conclusion: The liturgy is the indispensable basis of Christian social regeneration” (545).

<sup>22</sup> See Virgil Michel, “The Scope of the Liturgical Movement,” *Orate Fratres* 10 (1936) 490.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

Michel, this sort of intelligent appropriation of the liturgy's spirit in all areas of life will ensure that concern for society will prevail over the tide of rampant individualism.<sup>24</sup>

Clearly, Prosper Guéranger, Pius X, and Virgil Michel shared the conviction that changing people's approach to the liturgy would assist in the overall transformation of society. Reinvigorate the desire to understand the liturgy and the result would be an awakening of the proper means of participating and influencing the social order. However, after the Second World War, the emphasis of the liturgical movement shifted to focusing on the refurbishing of the liturgy in order to help transform the Church.<sup>25</sup> Emblematic of such a

---

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 489. Michel contends that "a flourishing of the true Christian spirit will help us to see all material goods as destined for the fulfillment of the purposes of God's creation . . . Thus the possession of material goods will change from a mere means of individual privilege and enjoyment, into one of service of God in his fellowmen, and the social duty of wealth will again function in the society of mankind." Michel's understanding of the liturgical crisis caused by the rise of individualism must have been largely formed by the thought of his mentor, Dom Lambert Beauduin, under whom he studied in France. Michel was responsible for translating Beauduin's signature work, *Notre piété pendant l'avent* (Belgique: Abbaye du Mont César, 1919) into English. Renaming the work *Liturgy the Life of the Church*, Michel published the translation with the Liturgical Press in 1926. See Lambert Beauduin, *Liturgy the Life of the Church*, Trans. Virgil Michel (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1926) especially 12-13 where he addresses the situation of individualism. He writes: "Hence, from the first centuries to our own day, the Church has ever given to all her prayer a character profoundly and essentially collective. By means of living the liturgy wholeheartedly, Christians become more and more conscious of their supernatural fraternity, of their union in the mystic body of Christ. And this is the most powerful antidote against the individualism to which our natural egoism surrenders itself so readily. It can therefore be said in all truth that *whatever the liturgy loses is gained by individualism*" (13). See also the concluding paragraph of the book, in which Beauduin summarizes what he considers to be the liturgical movement: "Like the wonderful basilica, the liturgy has riches and splendors of infinite variety in reserve for all souls, and for all circumstances of life. Yes! Would that the preachers explained it, the educators taught it, the theologians consulted it, men of action propagated it, that mothers spelled it out and children lisped it; that ascetics there learned true sacrifice, Christian fraternity and obedience, men the true equality, and societies harmony! May it be the contemplation of the mystic, the peace of the monk, the meditation of the priest, the inspiration of the artist, the magnet that draws the prodigal! May all Christians, hierarchically united to their pastor, to their bishop, to the common father of the faithful and of their pastors, live it fully, come to draw the true Christian spirit at this 'primary and indispensable source,' and by means of living the liturgy, realize the prayer of the first Mass of the Eternal High-Priest: *Ut sint unum*, that they be one—supreme wish and supreme hope! . . . *That is the liturgical movement; all of that; nothing but that!*" (94).

<sup>25</sup> See Alexander Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, Trans. Asheleigh E. Moorhouse (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1966) 12-13. Concerning the ecclesial nature of the liturgical movement, Schmemmann writes: "Its main efforts were directed toward the practical revival of Church life, by giving worship its real place and meaning. But in the first place it created the necessary conditions for liturgical theology by its focus on worship, by its experience of worship as the centre of the whole life of the Church. And second, in its inner development, it finally pointed up the need for a strictly theological analysis of the data of the liturgical experience and tradition of the Church. It became clear that without such theological

shift is the work of Pius XII in his restoration of the Easter Vigil in 1951 and the restored Holy Week liturgies in 1955. In addition, the National Liturgical Weeks (1940-1975) served to realize the need that in order to increase liturgical participation, it would be necessary to make changes to the liturgy itself. Whereas the early pioneers of the liturgical movement, identified by Searle, believed that what needed updating was appreciation of the ancient liturgy, the second half of the twentieth century witnessed that the liturgy itself was insufficient for general participation. Such is the spirit that would imbue the work of the Second Vatican Council, which sought a restoration of the liturgy that would allow the graces of the liturgy to be more accessible to those who celebrate its mysteries.<sup>26</sup>

Nevertheless, whether the liturgical movement emphasized transforming society or transforming the Church, at its very foundation was the consistent need to demonstrate the indivisibility of liturgical prayer from life as a whole. Therefore, by exploring three key images in Searle's writings, it is possible to distinguish the significant contribution he made to promote the recognition of this intrinsic relationship.

### ***Image One: "Belonging to a People"***

With his training in the Franciscan worldview, in which respect for all of God's creation is paramount, Mark Searle fostered an interest in the connection between liturgy and

---

'reflection' the liturgical revival was threatened either by an excessive submission to the 'demands of the day,' to the radical nature of certain 'missionary' and 'pastoral' movements quite prepared to drop old forms without a second thought or, on the other hand, by a peculiar archeologism which considers the restoration of worship in its 'primitive purity' as the panacea for all contemporary ills."

<sup>26</sup> See for example *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 21 in Flannery, *The Basic Sixteen Documents*. "It is the wish of the church to undertake a careful general reform of the liturgy in order that the Christian people may be more certain to derive an abundance of graces from it. For the liturgy is made up of unchangeable elements divinely instituted, and of elements subject to change. These latter not only may be changed but ought to be changed with the passage of time, if they have suffered from the intrusion of anything out of harmony with the inner nature of the liturgy or have become less suitable. In this renewal, both texts and rites should be ordered so as to express more clearly the holy things which they signify. The Christian people, as far as is possible, should be able to understand them easily and take part in them in a celebration which is full, active and the community's own."

life.<sup>27</sup> At a time in the history of the U.S. Church when its hierarchy was devoting much attention to issues of peace and justice,<sup>28</sup> Searle recognized that Christian liturgy is a privileged setting for wrestling with the issues that threaten the very survival of the world. The liturgy is not a form of activity that adds the dimension of the sacred onto life, but rather, it is the practice and the discovery of a particular way of life. He once wrote in an unpublished talk: “What this means for us, as it meant for Francis, is that the sanctification of life is not so much something the Church does, but rather something the Church is. Christian life is life lived in such a way that its holiness is revealed.”<sup>29</sup>

Searle believed that the major stumbling block in realizing the inseparability of liturgy and life is that Christians mistakenly believe they “come to” Church for Sunday Mass

---

<sup>27</sup> Searle’s first detailed exposition on the connection between liturgy and life can be in his 1974 piece entitled *Eight Talks on Liturgy*. There he suggests that the very thrust of the Second Vatican Council is to reunite the Church with the world. He writes: “In the documents of Vatican II we see the Church looking reflectively at a world now alienated from her, a world which feels it has outgrown the Church and does not need faith. This, in turn, led to the Church’s reassessment of her own identity as a community of faith, love and hope in an unbelieving and despairing world. But the Church cannot, anymore than the individual, discover her identity simply by defining it. She has to discover it in the experience of her life in the world.” See Searle, *Eight Talks on Liturgy*, 6-7.

<sup>28</sup> See for example *The Challenge of Peace: God’s Promise and Our Response* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, May 3, 1983) and *Economic Justice for All* (Washington D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, November 18, 1986). The concluding paragraph of *Economic Justice for All* states particularly well the dual need for eschatological hope and social concern in the process of realizing true justice: “The fulfillment of human needs, we know, is not the final purpose of the creation of the human person. We have been created to share in the divine life through a destiny that goes far beyond our human capabilities and before which we must in all humility stand in awe. . . God now asks of us sacrifices and reflection on our reverence for human dignity—in ourselves and in others—and on our service and discipleship, so that the divine goal for the human family and this earth can be fulfilled. Communion with God, sharing God’s life, involves a mutual bonding with all on this globe. . . We have to move from our devotion to independence, through an understanding of interdependence, to a commitment to human solidarity” (182).

<sup>29</sup> Mark Searle, “The Hallowing of Life,” 8. Although it is uncertain as to when Searle wrote this paper, he states in the introduction that the talk is being given “in the very year in which we celebrate the eight hundredth anniversary of the one man who, perhaps more than any other, exemplifies what it means to hallow life: Francis of Assisi.” Thus, it is likely that this talk was written in 1981. See also Romano Guardini, *The Living God*, Trans. Stanley Godman (New York: Pantheon Books Inc., 1957) 107-108. Here Guardini portrays Francis of Assisi as one whose holiness came from his ability to summon creation to live as God intentioned. He writes that in the presence of St. Francis, created things “were released from their dumbness, their fetters fell away from them, stunted things blossomed and became beautiful, free, and noble. . . and this was what they had been waiting for, longingly and painfully, something in which their innermost spirit was fulfilled and in which they were enabled to be wholly themselves for the first time. . . This glorious liberty of the children of God began to be revealed in St. Francis and around him. In his presence the world began to be redeemed.”

rather than understand that they “belong to” Church as a people.<sup>30</sup> The result is that the liturgy is seen as something “other-worldly.”<sup>31</sup> Searle combats such an approach by turning to the introductory paragraph of the Second Vatican Council’s constitution on the Church, *Gaudium et Spes*:

The joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted, are the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well. Nothing that is genuinely human fails to find an echo in their hearts. *For theirs is a community of people united in Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit in their pilgrimage towards the Father’s kingdom, bearers of a message of salvation for all of humanity.* That is why they cherish a feeling of deep solidarity with the human race and its history.<sup>32</sup>

This prophetic declaration states that it is because Christians recognize themselves to be “a community of people united in Christ” that they are simultaneously one with the world in its joys and its suffering.<sup>33</sup> “The trouble is,” writes Searle, “that most people do not think of themselves as belonging to this Church, but rather of themselves as coming into contact with

---

<sup>30</sup> See Mark Searle, “Liturgy as Critical of Society” in MSP, B16, Folder “Liturgy + Social Justice Papers.” See also Searle, “The Church Celebrates Her Faith,” 6. Here he suggests that the act of assembling provides the essential identity for the Christian community: “It is, then, chiefly by assembling together and celebrating its faith that the Christian community retains its sense of identity, keeps its faith alive, continues to be a community of believers.”

<sup>31</sup> Searle, “Liturgy as Critical of Society,” 1-2. For Searle, the connection between liturgy and life is based on the Incarnation of Jesus Christ: “Yet surely the liturgy of the Church is no more other-worldly than Jesus Christ himself—and no less this worldly. We confess Jesus to be truly God and truly man, believing that the divinity is to be found in his humanity, present and active in his historical and fully human involvement with the world. Such is the pattern, not only of the incarnation of the only-begotten Son of God, but of all God’s dealing with men: the divine presence is found in historical human form.”

<sup>32</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, 1 as quoted in Searle, “Liturgy as Critical of Society,” 1. Emphasis mine.

<sup>33</sup> See Dermot A. Lane, *Foundations for a Social Theology: Praxis, Process and Salvation* (New York: Paulist Press, 1984) especially 110-140. In the process of tracing Church social teaching since the Second Vatican Council, Lane makes the following remark about *Gaudium et Spes*: “Perhaps the most significant thing about that document is its title. The Church exists *in* the world and as such it exists *for* the world. There is a very real sense in which the world, according to this document, defines the nature of the Church” (114).



the Church at Sunday Mass . . . Sunday worship appears as totally other-worldly, irrelevant to the concerns of the age, a haven for people who happen to like that kind of thing.”<sup>34</sup>

Searle turns to sacred scripture to find two “great types or models” for countering such an approach to liturgy, models that demonstrate how the Sunday liturgy is an expression of belonging to a people.<sup>35</sup> First, he suggests that the Exodus story, and more specifically the forming of an assembly in the desert of Sinai, reveals how a band of refugees can reconstitute its identity by recognizing themselves as God’s chosen people.<sup>36</sup> “The revelation given in this act of deliverance from slavery,” Searle writes, “was such as revealed the deepest aspirations of man himself: aspirations to freedom, dignity, equal access to the fruits of Creation.”<sup>37</sup> Thus, the gathering at Sinai, far from being simply a religious experience, was necessarily political in nature, as it grounded a people in a particular worldview, one at odds with the Israelites’ experience in Egypt.

The second “model” of belonging, as established in scripture, is the Last Supper which witnesses to “the gathering of a group of people at a critical moment in their life as a group: the end of their three years on the road, the imminent arrest and execution of their leader, the beginning of a new phase which would have repercussions far beyond that little

---

<sup>34</sup> Searle, “Liturgy as Critical of Society,” 1.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>36</sup> See Exodus 19: 3-8. Here God commands Moses to tell the Israelites: “You have seen for yourselves what I did to the Egyptians and how I carried you away on eagle’s wings and brought you to me. So now, if you are really prepared to obey me and keep my covenant, you, out of all peoples, shall be my personal possession, for the whole world is mine. For me you shall be a kingdom of priests, a holy nation.” This is the translation provided by Searle in “Liturgy as Critical of Society.”

<sup>37</sup> Searle, “Liturgy as Critical of Society,” 2.

group.”<sup>38</sup> Searle believes that this scene is a dual celebration of all that has taken place in a community’s history as well as the establishment of a future destiny. He writes:

When Jesus said, “Do this in memory of me,” he was not implying that the historical events associated with that particular celebration were the only events ever worth celebrating and that the rest of human history is meaningless. On the contrary, we were to celebrate “this” in memory of him on any and every occasion precisely because everything we experience has meaning and is worth celebrating.<sup>39</sup>

Thus, Searle contends that every celebration of Christian liturgy provides meaning for the Christian community: it reveals God’s presence in the past events of a community’s life, and it provides hope for a community’s future. “What we have forgotten,” Searle maintains, “is that liturgy is the celebration of the presence of God in the community of men and its affairs, of the fact that God calls communities as well as individuals, of the fact that communities, groups, families, even nations, must *as such* seek his will and submit to it.”<sup>40</sup>

For Searle, God’s “intervention” in human history is directly related to the establishment of a people in his name. Therefore, he identifies liturgy as the “celebration of the life of a congregation as life with God who is reconciling the world to himself,”<sup>41</sup> which means that the liturgy not only proclaims God’s peace as a future-oriented goal but also as the present lived experience of the assembly at prayer. He continues:

The liturgical assemblies of the Old Testament and of the early church developed a strong sense of identity vis-à-vis the people among whom they lived and a strong sense of vocation to further God’s plan for the

---

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 3-4. Searle suggests that the recognition of the “intervention of God in the life of a community” is seriously hindered by the flourishing of “individualistic spirituality.” He writes: “Centuries of individualistic spirituality have rendered commonplace such notions as ‘the presence of God,’ ‘vocation,’ ‘submission to the divine will.’”

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 4.

world. The celebration of the Eucharist should have a similar effect. It should spur us to look more closely at what goes on in the world around us, to understand it in the light of faith, and to celebrate the presence of God in our times.<sup>42</sup>

Thus, the influence of the liturgy upon society is not only that participants' hearts might be changed in the midst of celebration but that all of the world's inhabitants who witness the Church praying might be drawn to God.<sup>43</sup> The image of "belonging to a people" serves to underscore the indispensable link between liturgy and life.

### ***Image Two: The "Holy Grail"***

Beginning with an editorial he wrote for the June 1979 edition of *Assembly*, Searle depicts the bond between worship and action through the story of the medieval knight Parsifal and his quest for the Holy Grail.<sup>44</sup> His rendition of the story is quoted here in full:

Wolfram von Eschenbach's thirteenth-century version of the story of Parsifal tells of a knight who, looking for adventure, stumbled upon a castle where the Holy Grail was kept. Before his astounded eyes were borne first the bloody Lance and then the life-giving grail. He wondered at the sadness of the company, but asked no questions. Next morning he awoke to find the castle empty: the wounded king and all his sorrowful court disappeared, and with them the Holy Grail. The land around lay desolate and bereft of life.

Parsifal returned to a life of adventuring and, thanks to the strange sword he had been given at the castle, his reputation spread far and wide. Yet, beneath his success, he was tormented with the memory of the Grail. Wherever he went he made inquiry as to its whereabouts, but no one could tell him anything of it. Then, one Good Friday, he

---

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 4-5.

<sup>43</sup> See Searle, *Called to Participate*, 81. Searle affirms the vocation of the Church as a witness to the world: "The assembly, as a realization of the mystery of communion, is an efficacious sign of union with God and of the unity of humankind, for it shares in the mediatorial work of Christ. In the liturgy we as a people represent all our fellow human beings before God, and invoke God's blessings upon the whole of humanity. *Thus, the liturgy of the Church cannot be separated from its social mission—at least as long as its liturgy is truly the act of a priestly people and as long as its social mission is rooted in its sacramental nature, i.e., in the Church's own attachment to Christ through submission to the Spirit.*" Emphasis mine.

<sup>44</sup> See Mark Searle, "Liturgy and Social Action," *Assembly* 6:1 (1979) 57.

was directed to seek out a hermit to whom he made his confession and with whom he prayed and fasted for forty days in search of divine guidance. At the end of that time he set off again, but soon found himself led to the Grail castle. As he drew near, two questions began to stir in his heart. Entering humbly into the castle, he approached the wounded king, and kneeling before him, put those questions to him. “Uncle,” he inquired, “what is your sorrow? Who does one serve, in serving the Grail?”

With that the wounded king arose, radiant and whole, the burden of grief was lifted from the whole company, and the lands and waters for miles around sprang to life anew, teeming with living things.<sup>45</sup>

Searle suggests that the connection between the call to worship and its association with daily life is captured in Parsifal’s two questions: attention must be given to the world’s pains and injustices (“What is your sorrow?”), and fitting worship must be rendered unto God (“Who does one serve, in serving the Grail?”). “Liturgical renewal without social concern,” writes Searle, “degenerates into pious aestheticism. Social concern without liturgical celebration loses sight of the Source of life. . . . If, as Vatican II taught, the liturgy is the source and summit of Christian life, this means that it must be rooted in, and relate back to, the daily struggles of Christians and their neighbors in society.”<sup>46</sup>

The story of Parsifal serves as the introduction to the keynote address Searle gave at the eighth annual Notre Dame Conference on Pastoral Liturgy held in June of 1979.<sup>47</sup> In the

---

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. In a later work, Searle acknowledges that his telling of Wolfram von Eschenbach’s *Parzival* is based on Ann Himmler’s “The Fisher King,” as found in *Parabola* 3:2 (1978) 16-22.

<sup>46</sup> Searle, “Liturgy and Social Action,” 57.

<sup>47</sup> See Mark Searle, “Serving the Lord with Justice,” in *Liturgy and Social Justice*, Ed. Mark Searle (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1980) 13-35. While Searle’s address appears as the opening piece in this collection, other contributors include J. Bryan Hehir, Walter Burghardt, Edward Kilmartin, and Regis Duffy. “Serving the Lord with Justice” also appears as the first essay in A. Koester and B. Searle, *Vision*, 4-22. See also Lawrence Madden, “Introduction to ‘Serving the Lord with Justice,’” in the same volume, 1-3. Madden comments: “Although this piece was written in 1979 it really needs no update. The reason for this, I believe, lies in the fact that Mark Searle was able to go to the heart of things and grasp the essentials with a mind that knew the tradition well and, just as importantly, understood it deeply. His ability to make the connections between liturgy and justice with such clarity and depth, therefore, renders his contribution timeless.” Two years earlier, Christopher Kiesling addressed this topic at the January meeting of the North American Academy of

published version of this address, entitled “Serving the Lord with Justice,” Searle uses the story of the Holy Grail to show that “there has always been a certain tension between the inner life and social reform.”<sup>48</sup> The proven historical danger is that liturgy can provide an escape from the reality of life, while concern for alleviation of society’s ills can often overshadow commitment to prayer, reducing it to a “self-indulgent luxury.”<sup>49</sup> Countering such commonly-held worldviews, Searle writes:

The story of Parsifal offers us a symbolic image in which pursuit of the Grail and concern for the suffering neighbor are intrinsically and inseparably connected, without either being reduced to the other. We have to ask of the needy, “What is your sorrow?” Yet, at the same time we must also raise the question, “Whom does one serve in serving the Grail?” It is not so much a matter of the first question relating to the active dimension of the Christian life and the second to its contemplative dimension, for the Grail is a symbol of total healing—personal, social, spiritual, and communal. Somehow the questions are more closely linked than that. Each is a dimension of the other . . .<sup>50</sup>

However, Searle is not content with simply arguing that liturgy and the social dimension of Christian life must necessarily go hand in hand, rather, he desires to help redefine what justice means when it is held in relationship with liturgy. In other words, Searle believes that in order to renew the Church’s understanding of the inseparability of liturgy from life, it is

---

Liturgy. See Christopher Kiesling, “Liturgy and Social Justice,” *Worship* 51 (1977) 351-361. Recognizing that liturgists have been so focused on the liturgy as to forget the concern of justice, Kiesling outlines three “efforts” that need attention: “First are efforts to celebrate in local congregations liturgies which powerfully express social justice and inspire and confirm zeal for it. Secondly are efforts to provide officially approved liturgical texts and rites which adequately express the relationship between liturgy and social justice, and which local congregations can use as the basis for their celebrations. Finally are efforts to conceptualize or develop a language to talk about liturgy and social justice, so that the one cannot be thought about without the other” (359). Clearly, Searle’s “efforts” will fall into the last category.

<sup>48</sup> Searle, *Serving the Lord with Justice*, 14.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. He writes: “At times, matters of charity and social justice have appeared to be at best appendages to the really important business of saving one’s soul or even as means to that higher end. At other times, including perhaps our own, recognition of the practical and social implications of Christian commitment have rendered the cultivation of the spiritual life suspect as a kind of self-indulgent luxury.”

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

necessary to clarify what justice means as stemming from the liturgy and governing the way Christians live in the world.

Given the climate of rapid social and ecclesial change following the Second Vatican Council, Searle was very much aware of the suspicion held by those leery of the Church's place in politics or in the promotion of social justice.<sup>51</sup> In "Serving the Lord with Justice," he acknowledges the confusion that exists around the concept that liturgy demands justice:

The question we want to ask is this: What has all this liturgical activity to do with the cause of justice? For some people, the answer would be "Nothing." Others would see an indirect link insofar as they believe that churchgoing is a stabilizing influence in society and that religion helps people to keep the law and to live as conscientious citizens. Others again would like to see religion more explicitly endorse specific political options, and the ritual of the Church take on the role of deliberate social consciousness-raising.<sup>52</sup>

Thus, Searle concerns himself with the project of defining the word "justice." He argues that in a pluralistic society, such as the United States, justice ends up being interpreted in a variety of ways, most of which points to legal justice, in which "the struggle for justice

---

<sup>51</sup> See Madden, "Introduction to 'Serving the Lord with Justice'" 1. His introductory paragraph reads: "In 'Serving the Lord with Justice,' Mark Searle demonstrated his profound insights into one of the most important dimensions of the celebration of the liturgy—the relationship between liturgy and social justice. This is an issue that only in recent years is receiving the serious attention it deserves from teachers, catechists, and pastors. Although the relationship between liturgy and social responsibility was one of the unique features of the early American liturgical movement . . . the connection was not easily grasped and was often missed by the rank and file. In fact, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when the Liturgical Conference attempted to link the liturgy with social justice issues at their national conferences, many faithful followers complained in confusion that this effort was misplaced, that the struggle for civil rights and the critique of social structures had little to do with the liturgy." See also Searle, "Grant Us Peace. . . Do We Hear What We Are Saying" in MSP, B16. Here he paints the picture of why some might be skeptical of the relationship between liturgy and justice: "To some, the liturgy is an occasion for preaching about justice and peace: the result is special sermons on the topic. In one parish I know, the pastor is a deeply committed man, with a burning sense of the injustices suffered by black people in his neighborhood. He preaches on the topic incessantly, with the result that not only do the people switch off, having heard it all before, but they complained to the bishop that he, the pastor, was giving their church money away to the blacks. To others, the liturgy is a way of expressing and celebrating the faith of the local community. They feel free therefore to depart from the lectionary and missal and to improvise with so-called 'theme masses,' introducing various visual aids and other things to drive the point home. Once again, however, the exercise is often counter-productive: those responsible for the liturgy are making it the vehicle of their own convictions, to the alienation and anger of many" (7).

<sup>52</sup> Searle, "Serving the Lord with Justice," 15.

means seeking legal redress or Constitutional amendment for situations felt to be unjust.”<sup>53</sup> Even such things as fundamental human rights—i.e. freedom and the right to life—become equated with adherence to civil law. However, this is not the understanding of justice that the liturgy heralds and supports.<sup>54</sup>

“The liturgy celebrates the justice of God himself,” Searle writes, “as revealed by him in history, recorded in the Scriptures, and proclaimed in the assembly of the faithful.”<sup>55</sup> Herein lies Searle’s masterful insight regarding the interconnectedness of liturgy and life: justice is found in the liturgy because it contains divine revelation. In Searle’s own words:

For its own part, the justice of God is not to be understood, as it often is in the popular imagination at least, as a matter of legal enactment or as the expression of a certain divine wisdom in tailoring exquisitely fitting punishment to the crimes of the inescapably guilty. *The justice of God is ultimately God himself, just as he is. It is a justice that is revealed in all that God does to reveal himself.*<sup>56</sup>

It is helpful, therefore, to distinguish human justice, which Searle says “is at best a bridle on evil,” from God’s justice, which is “the flowering of the good.”<sup>57</sup> The “justice of God” is

---

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. See also David Burrell, “Justice . . . What Is It All About?” *Occasional Papers on Catholic Higher Education* 4 (Winter 1978) 12-17. Searle cites this paper by Burrell, in which the author suggests that Aristotle provides a classical understanding of justice based on order for a just distribution of wealth and goods. Burrell writes: “Aristotle suggests that we consider a fair measure of goods one which is proportioned to the relative merit of the individuals involved—however that merit be measured. I have suggested one measure: contribution to a harmonious atmosphere for working and living” (12).

<sup>54</sup> Searle, “Serving the Lord with Justice,” 15. He writes: “But it would be confusing to look to the liturgy for support or insight in the pursuit of legal arguments, for the justice that it celebrates, while not unrelated, is fundamentally of a very different kind.”

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 15-16.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 16. Note that from this point forward the words “justice of God” will be placed within quotation marks to identify it as a specific term used by Searle.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. He continues: “that is why God’s justice must transcend legal justice: ‘I tell you, if your justice goes no deeper than that of the scribes and the Pharisees, you will never get into the kingdom of heaven’ (Matt 5:20). God’s justice is done when arbitration is transformed by reconciliation; when people become more than objects of desire, manipulation, and profit; when poverty is confronted by asking, not how much the poor require, but how much the rich need; when the goods of the earth are looked upon, not as sources of private profit, but as sacraments of divine and human intercommunication.”

accomplished whenever all created things are receptive to God's revelation and correspond to their created purpose. "In short," Searle writes, "the justice of God is satisfied when things conform to the purpose for which he made them."<sup>58</sup>

Thus, Searle not only equates the "justice of God" with divine revelation, he contends that liturgy is the arena in which the "justice of God" is enacted and celebrated; this kind of justice is not proclaimed simply as a future possibility but as a lived reality for the liturgical assembly.<sup>59</sup> This is so because it is a work achieved and manifested in Christ, for as Searle writes:

The justice of God has been revealed among us in many and various ways throughout the course of human history, but above all it has been seen in all its dimensions in the person of Jesus. He was the Just One. He not only spoke about the coming Kingdom, speculatively as it were, but he embodied it in his own person. In his life and activity he modeled the radically different justice which is that of the Kingdom of God. . . . Jesus lived the justice of God. . . . But the fact that such divine justice has been realized in human form upon this earth means that it is no escapist utopia but a real possibility and the object of a well-founded hope. And the fact that the same Spirit that animated him has been poured out upon the rest of humanity means that the realization of such justice may henceforth always be looked for and worked for.<sup>60</sup>

It is through baptism, therefore, that Christians become responsible for revealing the "justice of God." In other words, because the followers of Christ have been re-fashioned into his person, they share in the mission of revealing God's Kingdom.<sup>61</sup> Thus, the "justice of God"

---

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 17. Searle draws the connection in this way: "For the justice of God that the liturgy proclaims *is* the Kingdom of God."

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 17-18. Searle describes the "unenviable responsibility" of Christians in the following manner: "In every generation some people are called by name consciously to serve this Kingdom and its justice as revealed in Jesus. They are called Christians, and together, as a new humanity, they have the unenviable responsibility of representing the hope of a higher justice and working for its realization. It is not that the Kingdom and Justice of God are to be found only among them, but they are called and commissioned in its service. The form



is not a matter of “vague optimism” but rather “is a matter of hope because it has already happened.”<sup>62</sup>

Thus, what liturgy does is to help Christians practice that hope. For Searle, liturgy demands that all participants be caught up in a worldview in which all relationships are rightly ordered and in which all of creation is one with God.<sup>63</sup> The starting point for such a vision must necessarily be the perfection of God. Searle states clearly: “This is not a justice, then, that begins with human rights abstractly conceived, but with a divine economy in process of realization.”<sup>64</sup> What the liturgy intends to do, then, is to rehearse relationships (with God, others, and the material world) as God intends them. Searle writes:

[F]or the members of the worshiping community, relationships with one’s fellow human beings are based not simply upon their common humanity but upon their common humanity as assumed and redeemed by the love and obedience of Jesus, and raised to a new level by the Spirit of Jesus at work in the world. . . . *The liturgical assembly, at least in its ideal form, offers a model of such interaction. It is not a community of equals but a community of God-given and complementary charisms, gifts that cannot be identified a priori by categories of the secular community—age, sex, race—but are*

---

in which they receive that commission is the ritual known as baptism, in which they are called to surrender themselves to the God who revealed himself in Jesus and whom they acknowledge as the Creator of the world and the Lord of history. These disciples of Jesus, who die to the man-made and demonically disjointed world of their times, begin to live according to a new order and according to a new principle: the Spirit of God who enables them to do the works of God.”

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, 17. See also Searle, *Liturgy Made Simple*, 26. Searle writes: “Either to act as if all were accomplished and all were well with the world, or else to act as if the world and all its affairs had nothing to do with a Kingdom that will only be established after death and out of time would be to misunderstand both the nature of Christian life and the nature of Christian liturgy. The liturgy is of the present, but it points to the future. It is of this world, but it points to a reality which transcends present experience. It is of the present, because it celebrates and makes real the presence among us of the God who is saving the world in Christ, but that very presence makes us painfully aware of how far we are from the Kingdom of God. It constitutes a call to live and work for the values of God, which are not the values of a society which takes for granted inequality, competitiveness, prejudice, infidelity, international tension, and unbounded consumption. *The liturgy celebrates the presence of God’s Kingdom, but it is a presence which contradicts us in many ways and calls us into a future that is of God’s making and not a construct of Western civilization.*” Emphasis mine.

<sup>63</sup> Searle, “Serving the Lord with Justice,” 21.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

distributed by God indiscriminately among all for the sole purpose of building up the community in perfect justice.<sup>65</sup>

There are to be no artificial, social distinctions that promote separation within the assembly; instead the worldview of “perfect justice” establishes how relationships are to unfold. In other words, the liturgy “presupposes a group of people who can reach across the social, political, and economic barriers that structure our world to say ‘Our Father’ and to speak of themselves as a ‘we.’”<sup>66</sup>

### ***Image Three: The “Kingdom of God”***

Given the fact that liturgy rehearses right relationships, it is possible to say that it makes the Kingdom of God truly present. This is not to say that the Kingdom of God is limited to the celebration of the liturgy, but rather, it is the Church’s means of sacramentalizing the “justice of God”. In other words, it is a privileged encounter with the Kingdom of God. As Searle poignantly states:

All this may sound idealistic and remote, indeed so remote as to be useless as a guide to action. On the other hand, the justice of God presented in the liturgy is anything but an abstraction, for the liturgy sacramentalizes the presence of Christ, the Just One. *For that reason, and for that reason alone, we can say that the liturgy not only proclaims the justice of the Kingdom of God as something to be done but actually renders it present, not as an achievement of ours but as a gift of God.* In its presence we are confronted with that which we are called to be, with that which God would make us be, if we permit it. Thus the liturgy not only provides us with a moral ideal but confronts

---

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 24. See also Searle, *Called to Participate*, 75. There Searle suggests that enacting the relationships of the Body of Christ is a different process from the societal notion of “building community.” He writes: “This Body of Christ, in which there is neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, slave nor free (Gal 3:28), cannot be true to itself if its unity is predicated on ethnic heritage, male bonding, socio-economic status, or the intimacy of first-name friendships. Indeed, the Body is most clearly visible for what it is when its members are most aware of their social divisions (male vs. female, rich vs. poor, black vs. white), and at the same time committed to not letting those divisions supplant the primary unity created by baptism.”

<sup>66</sup> Searle, “Serving the Lord with Justice,” 25.

us with an ontological reality in the light of which the ambivalence of our own lives is revealed for what it is.<sup>67</sup>

Searle's logic here is clear: because God is revealed in Jesus Christ, and because the liturgy of the Church is the sacramental celebration of the Lord, then the liturgy must necessarily be a living encounter with the Kingdom of God as God intends it. Searle continues: "It (liturgy) proclaims and realizes the saving presence of the Spirit in the world, brings the presence of the Kingdom, and enables us to realize where this is happening even outside the liturgy. *Celebrating the liturgy should train us to recognize justice and injustice when we see it.*"<sup>68</sup> Stated simply, the liturgy rehearses God's Kingdom.

It is important to understand that this does not mean that the liturgy is to be used as a forum for exploiting the agenda of social justice issues, rather liturgy in and of itself imbues participants with an understanding of a way of life based upon the Kingdom of God. Thus, Searle compares the liturgical assembly to a "rehearsal room" in which participants practice their assigned roles again and again. In a vital paragraph of "Serving the Lord with Justice," he writes:

The liturgical assembly, then, is the place where justice is proclaimed, but it is neither a classroom nor a political rally nor a hearing. It is more like a rehearsal room where actions must be repeated over and over until they are thoroughly assimilated and perfect—until, that is, the actors have totally identified with the part assigned to them. *The liturgical action is a rehearsal of the utopian Kingdom first enacted upon the human stage in the meals that Jesus shared with outcasts and sinners.* In it we learn to understand the drama of God's justice as it unfolds in our world and to identify with the role assigned to us so that we may play it effectively in our lives and eventually before the throne of God for all eternity, when his justice will be established beyond all compromise.<sup>69</sup>

---

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 28-29. Emphasis mine.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 29. Emphasis mine.

In another place, Searle reiterates this by saying: “I want to suggest that the liturgy we have inherited is an actual rehearsal of the way of life foretold in the prophets and realized in Christ; not a talking about justice and peace, but a doing of justice and peace.”<sup>70</sup> Once again, the key to Searle’s thinking is that the outline of God’s Kingdom can be found in the doing of liturgical celebration. Several concrete examples from Searle’s writings should serve to illustrate this image.

First of all, the action of gathering as an assembly for the Eucharist is, for Searle, a paramount realization of the “justice of God.” It is not simply a sign of how the Kingdom is to be ordered but is in fact who the assembly is: one Body in Christ.<sup>71</sup> In transcending divisions and in overcoming social boundaries, justice is done, albeit a justice to be perfected in an age yet to come. Searle states succinctly: “We have not yet become what we already are: a new creation.”<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, gathering as an assembly in Christ demands that the

---

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 32. Emphasis mine. Writing almost ten years after Searle, Edward Foley echoes the concept of liturgy as a “rehearsal” of justice. See Edward Foley, “Liturgy and *Economic Justice for All*,” in *Living No Longer for Ourselves: Liturgy and Justice in the Nineties*, Kathleen Hughes and Mark Francis, Eds. (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1991) 116-123. Foley writes: “This is what it means to call liturgy a ‘rehearsal’ of the Christian life. Rehearsal, in this sense, is not simply a dramatic enactment of some long-finished historical event. Nor is it an imperfect repetition of some act in order to get it right. Rather, it is a continual reentry into and further appropriation of a rich and inexhaustible reality. Rehearsal so imagined is neither artificial nor preparatory; it is, rather, ritual engagement with the truth. . . our entry into the Christian mysteries is a rehearsal of the call offered to us in faith as well as a foreshadowing of what our response is to be” (121).

<sup>70</sup> Searle, “Grant Us Peace. . . Do We Hear What We Are Saying?” 7. He concludes this thought by stating that liturgy “is a momentary realization of the peaceable kingdom of justice in a torn and savage world.”

<sup>71</sup> See Mark Searle, “Collecting and Recollecting: The Mystery of the Gathered Church,” *Assembly* 11:1 (1984): 258-259. Here Searle identifies the gathering for worship as the “sacrament of assembly,” in which participants do not attempt to “build community” but rather discover who they are as the Body of Christ. He writes: “The liturgical assembly is not another ‘audience’ and the act of assembling is not just another process of arriving and taking places. The liturgy, we have said, is an act of the Church—the Church as realized in a local congregation—which is the Body of Christ. Thus, this assembled people is itself the primary sacrament of Christ, the outward and visible sign of the presence of Christ in and to the world, the medium of his own continuing mediatorship for the glorification of God and the sanctification of the human race” (258).

<sup>72</sup> Searle, “Grant Us Peace. . . Do We Hear What We Are Saying?” 8.

relationships established and renewed therein are translated into an overall way of life.

Searle states:

The liturgy is a rehearsal of the roles we are called to take upon ourselves throughout life. We are to become what we are. The liturgy puts us into the position we are called to adopt, and week by week rehearses us in our parts as members of the one Body. If we were already perfect, if we had our parts down pat, we would not need the rehearsal: the whole of life would be a celebration of Eucharist, a realization of our identity as the reconciled People of God. But rehearse we must, and each part of the liturgy is part of the vision of peace and a rehearsal of our roles as peacemakers.<sup>73</sup>

The entire celebration of the Eucharist “leads us to rejoice in our relationship with God, with one another and with the material creation.”<sup>74</sup> Thus, the assembly practices the “delight” that marks right relationships, relationships as they exist in the Kingdom of God.<sup>75</sup> Searle concludes: “The Eucharist is not merely a brief weekly prayer: it is rather a rehearsal of the mood in which a Christian is to live in the world under God, a pervasive attitude coloring the Christian life, both personal and communal.”<sup>76</sup> The Eucharist thereby “sensitizes” the Christian community to a life of justice and to a rejection of all that is not of God’s will.<sup>77</sup>

---

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. At the outset of the paper, Searle suggests that “peace” is the perfection of justice. It involves joy and celebration. He writes: “Justice is indivisible; it is a total way of being in the world. And its effect is peace. But peace is more than distributive justice—treating people according to their rights: peace is delight and enjoyment, the happiness of wholeness” (3).

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. Searle write: “At the Eucharistic rehearsal for the Kingdom, we are taught not merely to observe the proprieties of justice, but to delight in our God and in the order he is establishing. The primary expression of this delight is the great prayer of thanksgiving, the blessing of God for his creation, which God has wonderfully made and more wonderfully restored.”

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 10-11. Searle states that the liturgy “refines our consciousness, sensitizes our intuition, stimulates our imagination, so that injustice everywhere becomes intolerable and abhorrent. . . . The very actions of the Eucharist call us to justice. And not only to fight injustice, but to fight ugliness and exploitation and the dehumanization of our cities and the despoliation of the earth. It will prompt us to simpler, more elegant, more frugal lifestyles. It will prompt us to treat gently and gratefully both the bread on our table, the garden we care for, the countryside we enjoy. It will make us heartsick over the conditions under which people work, over the

A second example of the way in which Searle understands liturgy as rehearsing the right relationships of God's Kingdom is found in the inherent dignity that liturgy bestows upon creation. For instance, Searle argues that when Jesus took bread and wine, blessed it, and shared it, he restored its intended purpose—the goods of the earth are meant to be shared rather than hoarded.<sup>78</sup> In a 1981 editorial for *Assembly*, he writes: “Food is food, not for its own sake, but to give life to the hungry. Drink is drink, not for its own sake, but to give joy to the drinker.”<sup>79</sup> Therefore, proper relationship to creation within the liturgy is to be matched with a desire to resist exploiting creation in general so that it may be free to be what God created it to be. “Creation,” writes Searle, “groaning to be redeemed from the homicidal perversions to which our sinful use has subjected it, finds its liberation when it is used as it is

---

conditions under which so many, even in our own country life. It will sensitize us not only to flagrant injustices against human beings, but to the thoughtless and wanton perpetration of ugliness in our landscapes, our cities, our media, our manufacturing and our use of language and music. These may seem trivial things to some, but justice is indivisible and shalom has to do with a wholeness and a completeness of life.”

<sup>78</sup> Searle, “Serving the Lord with Justice,” 27. Searle writes: “But when Jesus took bread and wine or a few fish and blessed God for them and shared them with his disciples, creation found its purpose once again. . . . When Jesus took the bread, said the blessing, broke the bread and shared it, he demonstrated, unforgettably the proper use of all material things. The early Christians realized this: they ‘eucharistized’ their lives by blessing God in all things and by making their possessions available to one another. And when Jesus took the cup and gave thanks to God and passed it among his disciples, he rediscovered for the human race the joy of not claiming anything for one’s own—not even life itself.” See also John Moiser, “A Promise of Plenty: The Eucharist as Social Critique,” *Downside Review* 91 (1973) 298-305. Searle employs Moiser’s thought here in maintaining that the liturgy provides the template as to how material goods are to be handled and distributed in life. Moiser writes: “Built into the Eucharist, therefore, is a demand for the just distribution of the world’s wealth. To share the eucharistic bread is to say, using symbols, that this is how a man should be using all material things: this places sharing at the basis of Christianity. . . . What did happen was that Jesus summed up in his own body the whole creation, and returned it to the Father. He used his own flesh and blood to establish community between God and man and among men. . . . Christ showed us how to use things properly by using them properly himself” (305). See also Enrique Dussel, “The Bread of the Eucharistic Celebration as a Sign of Justice in the Community,” in *Can We Always Celebrate the Eucharist?* Concilium 152, Mary Collins and David Power, Eds. (New York: The Seabury Press, 1982) 56-65. Dussel’s article explores how bread, as the product of human labor, is both a sign of eucharistic offering and of prophetic martyrdom.

<sup>79</sup> Mark Searle, “Bread and Wine,” *Assembly* 8:1 (1981) 143. He continues in the same vein: “Food and drink are creatures which achieve fulfillment in being put at the disposal of others: they exist to serve the needs of others; their destiny is met in their destruction. When the Lord Jesus, shortly before he was betrayed, took bread and wine as symbols of himself and gave them to his disciples he expressed himself perfectly: Bread that we might have life, wine that we might be glad; one bread, broken and shared in friendship, one cup, pledge of a common destiny.”

used in the liturgy: to acknowledge and express the justice of God in the midst of his people, who are being bonded into a community by their common and respectful use of material things.”<sup>80</sup> Thus, the liturgy practices right relationship with all of creation by treating the material goods of the liturgy—bread and wine, oil and water—with awe and respect.

These same attitudes—awe and respect—are rehearsed in the human relationships of liturgy as well. Therefore, a third illustration of rehearsing the justice of God is the practicing of charity which underlies all liturgical action. In a 1978 article entitled “The Washing of the Feet” Searle traces the historical development of the foot-washing rite and connects it to the charitable custom in monasteries of providing hospitality to the poor and to the stranger, hospitality that often included washing the feet of travelers.<sup>81</sup> He suggests that this sense of care was naturally drawn into the liturgical gesture of symbolizing the Lord’s act of washing his disciples’ feet, thus providing “a vivid reminder of the relationship

---

<sup>80</sup> Searle, “Serving the Lord with Justice,” 28. See also Searle, *Liturgy Made Simple*, 58. There Searle draws the connection between the significance of the bread and wine on the altar and on domestic tables: “Even today, men or women will talk of their struggle to support their families as a struggle to put bread on the table. But here is no ordinary table. It is the table prepared by God for his people in the person of his Son. As such it becomes a paradigm for all tables everywhere, making us recognize in all food and drink the fruit of the earth and the work of human hands: the gift of God and of his human co-workers. It makes us see that all human labor is a cooperative venture. . . Besides that, there is something special about Christ choosing food and drink to be the symbols of his self-giving, *because food and drink exist not for themselves but for other living creatures. They surrender their own existence to enter into the lives of others; we might say that food and drink sacrifice themselves so that others might live.*” Emphasis mine.

<sup>81</sup> See Mark Searle, “The Washing of the Feet,” *Assembly* 4:5 (1978) 14-15. Searle writes: “It was in monasteries that the Christian custom of hospitality to the poor and to strangers was most assiduously cultivated, and this hospitality included offering them food, shelter and clothing, and washing the feet of travellers. Obviously this latter had a very functional aspect in days when the poor at least travelled on foot and wore sandals or poorly made shoes; yet this act of service could not but be associated with the deeply symbolic action of Jesus at the Last Supper. Thus, while it was performed regularly throughout the year, it took on a particular significance on Maundy Thursday and was then ‘doubled’ in many places by a more deliberately ceremonial foot-washing undertaken by the leader of the community on behalf of those who were subject to his authority. Thus the *mandatum pauperum* came to be repeated in a *mandatum fratrum*; and just as the washing of the feet of the community took place against a background of reading (from St. John’s Gospel), singing and prayer, so too the *maundy* of the was also ritualized. Nevertheless, even as the ritual expanded and the two kinds of foot-washing came to be merged, the element of real concern for the poor and needy was not forgotten. The monastic customaries, at least, emphasized the provision of food and drink, money and clothing, not just to the symbolic number of twelve or thirteen, but to however many poor and needy people presented themselves.”

between liturgy and life, between ritual prayer and the life of charity.”<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, he contends that the ritual washing of feet on Holy Thursday contains both a “word of revelation” and a “word of judgment”:

As a word of revelation it speaks to us, as Jesus’ original action spoke to his disciples, of the unimaginable condescension of our God. As a word of judgment, it calls into question the clerical domination of the community and challenges the community itself to examine the quality of its own ministry to the world and to one another. Perhaps while retaining the Holy Thursday ritual, we would do well to associate it with other ways of fulfilling the Lord’s command and showing effective care for the poor.<sup>83</sup>

Thus, the foot-washing rite rehearses and enacts right relationships, in which is demonstrated the “effective care for the poor.” In an editorial that appeared in *Assembly* two years later, Searle suggests that the gesture is not so much a social critique as it is an opportunity for contemplation in which the assembly is invited “to enter into it to discover there the ‘divine disclosure’ of the One who humbled himself for our sakes.”<sup>84</sup>

Similarly, a fourth example of Searle’s desire to demonstrate how liturgy rehearses the worldview of the Kingdom of God can be found in his 1979 piece entitled “Contributing to the Collection.”<sup>85</sup> There he puts the words “collection” and “recollection” in juxtaposition with one another and ruminates on whether or not “collected dollars” are more a sign of

---

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>84</sup> This rehearsal of right relationships does not mean, however, that the washing of feet is a celebration of ministry itself. See Mark Searle, “Holy Thursday: Opening of the Paschal Feast,” *Assembly* 6:4 (1980) 88. Searle states: “Yet the temptation to make this evening celebration an occasion for consciousness-raising about the importance or dignity of ministries in the Church is to be resisted. . . . This acting-out of the Gospel on Holy Thursday does not so much invite us to spell out the practical implications of the Lord’s gesture, but rather *to enter into it to discover there the ‘divine disclosure’ of the One who humbled himself for our sakes.*” Emphasis mine.

<sup>85</sup> See Mark Searle, “Contributing to the Collection” *Assembly* 6:1 (1979): 62-64.



alienated giving than it is a true gathering together of the community's gifts.<sup>86</sup> Searle suggests that a restored understanding of the historic purpose of the collection in the liturgy may assist in reuniting the intimate relationship between giver and gift, laborer and product:

Perhaps it is too much to dream of a day when we might all bring to the assembly loaves of bread and bottles of wine, and witness for ourselves the sacramental transformation of gifts which are the fruit of land we ourselves have worked and the work of our own careful hands. . . We are alienated from our work, for most of us have little or no responsibility for the products we are hired to manufacture, or for the goods we sell, or for the services we provide. We are alienated in our giving, for it does not cut deeply enough into our lives to make us really aware of our mutual dependence. We are alienated from the recipients of our gifts, for not only do we rarely meet the poor and see their needs, but we often have no idea what the money is used for, or if it even reaches the poor.<sup>87</sup>

Searle offers no remedy for the "alienation" he describes other than to demand that the liturgical collection must awaken in people's hearts and minds the inherent connection between worship and a Christian worldview. Although still only "a vestigial reminder of what used to be," the collection "may yet serve as a clue to rediscovering the meaning of Christian community and to rediscovering the lost connection between liturgy and life."<sup>88</sup> In short, the collection may be seen as a ritual rehearsal of the assembly striving for wholeness,

---

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 63. See also Searle, "Grant Us Peace. . . Do We Hear What We Are Saying?" 9. Searle writes: "One of the earliest and most indispensable parts of the Mass is the collection. Originally, it was a taking up of all sorts of gifts: not only bread, wine and money, but other foodstuffs, as well as clothing, oil for lighting and cooking, and candles. These gifts were collected by the president or the deacons. Some was set aside for the immediate use of the community in the Eucharistic meal; the rest was distributed by the presider and the deacons to the sick, the imprisoned, the orphans and the widows, that is to say, to the members of the community who could not provide for themselves. What we have here is nothing less than a redistribution of the wealth of the community. . . The collection is intimately connected with the communion. Traditionally, excommunication meant that a person was barred not only from taking part in the act of communion, but also from being able to offer their gifts at the altar. They had cut themselves off by serious sin from the order of justice." In addition see Searle, *Liturgy Made Simple*, 59. Searle offers the following recommendation for the collection: "Today what we often refer to by its old name as 'The Offertory' is properly called 'The Preparation of the Gifts.' By this we mean God's gifts to us and our gifts to God. But really we cannot give anything to God himself unless it be by way of giving to his people. We therefore need to restore the sense of the collection as a realistic distribution of wealth."

a means of realizing that the Body is dependent upon all of its parts for sustenance and survival.

A final example of the way in which Searle sees liturgy as a rehearsal of the “justice of God” and a practicing of the Kingdom can be found in his description of the role of the deacon. He suggests that the modern-day struggle in the Church to understand diaconal ministry is symptomatic of the community’s inability to discover a “lived integration of its liturgical prayer and its life in the world.”<sup>89</sup> Searle contends that the diaconate flourished when the community itself had a lively sense of the relationship between prayer and service:

In its origins, the deacon had been the very symbol and embodiment of the intrinsic connection between the Christian way of life and Christian ritual: both were worship; both were inseparable forms of service. With their gradual separation, the Church became myopic, and the diaconate only survived as a liturgical role usually exercised by people on their way up the hierarchical ladder to higher (and now more obviously useful) ranks of priest and bishop. This historical excursus, sketchy as it is, may at least serve to give some support to my thesis, namely, that the diaconate declined and effectively died out, because the intimate connection between life and liturgy was lost sight of. On the other hand, if this thesis does have something to commend it, then it may also be true that the restoration of the Permanent Diaconate will be successful to the extent that we are also able to restore that connection between liturgy and life.<sup>90</sup>

Thus, Searle calls the deacon the “go-between,” a member of the Christian community who models the attitude of reverence for all persons and all things.<sup>91</sup> “*Diakonia*,” writes Searle,

---

<sup>89</sup> See Mark Searle, “Diaconate and Diakonia: Crisis in the Contemporary Church,” in *A Diaconal Reader* (Washington, D.C.: National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1985) 94. This article first appeared in *Diaconal Quarterly* 7:4 (1981) 16-31. Searle summarizes the lack of identity for deacons as follows: “In the dividing of liturgy from life, the priests have laid claim to owning the liturgy, and the laity are told their responsibilities are in the world, leaving little for the deacon, except to feel he is neither fish nor fowl. To the priests, he sometimes appears as a glorified lay leader. To the laity, he seems like a jumped-up altar boy. To the deacon himself, it must often seem that he belongs to neither world, and that he must try to assure his status by claiming as many clerical prerogatives as he can.”

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

<sup>91</sup> See also Mark Searle, “Living Worship: Putting Liturgy to Work in the World,” unpublished manuscript in MSP, B16. This piece was a talk given to a November 5, 1987 gathering of the Chicago Archdiocesan Liturgy

“is reverence for God’s work and word, which always take the form of people acting and speaking together. It means reverence for people’s experience of life, their faith, their hopes, their sufferings, their joys.”<sup>92</sup> For Searle, therefore, the absence of the deacon from many liturgical celebrations is a source of scandal, not because it may disclose a shortage of priests, but because the deacon provides a tangible, essential witness to the joining of liturgy and life.

“The Christian attitude toward the world, then,” writes Searle, “is not one of condescension, but one of witnessing to the hope of exaltation.”<sup>93</sup> As has been demonstrated in the examples above, Searle believed that the liturgy is where the “values of the Kingdom” are not only proclaimed as something to strive for in hope but as something to be realized in the act of worship itself.<sup>94</sup> Ultimately, Searle heralds the recognition that such “sacramentality” is not simply a principle of worship but a way of life, for as he states in a 1977 piece on the Eucharist:

The liturgy assumes these signs (drawn from experience of the world) and endows them with new meaning, but does not destroy their natural human significance. . . . What the reform of the liturgy ultimately points to . . . is the sacramentality of life itself. What it asks of us is a humble, prayerful, yes, even contemplative receptiveness to the all-

---

Conference. Searle discusses “reverence” in general as a necessary attitude of the liturgy. He writes: “The liturgy teaches us to reverence the assembly as ‘God’s holy people,’ to act with respect for the individual persona, and to handle the things of this world—things like bread and wine and oil and water, yes and even money—in such a way that they become sacraments of our communion with God and of our unity with one another. Nothing is so corrosive of social life as the breakdown of respect for people and respect for the environment” (10).

<sup>92</sup> Searle, “Diaconate and Diakonia: Crisis in the Contemporary Church,” 106. Searle continues to elaborate on this form of liturgical reverence: “It means reverence for the person who speaks, however lowly he or she might be, and reverence for what they have to say. It means using language reverently oneself. It means handling things gently, respecting them, appreciating them for what they are. For all these things are the sacramental signs that constitute the great and terrible liturgy that God is celebrating for himself in human history” (106-107).

<sup>93</sup> Searle, “Serving the Lord with Justice,” 33.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid. Searle states that the realization takes place as surrender occurs: “This hope is realistic only insofar as it is experienced, but it is experienced only by those who have learned to recognize the disparity between the values of the Kingdom and the values by which our world is organized, and who have learned to surrender to the former and break with the latter.”

pervasive and saving presence of God in the material creation and in the lives of men. In the last resort, it is a matter, as someone once said, of not letting the liturgy go to your head, but of really taking it to heart.<sup>95</sup>

Here Searle identifies several important attitudes of the Christian life: humility, prayerfulness, and contemplation. These attitudes are fundamental to those who seek the “justice of God” and strive to fulfill the purpose for which they were created. The rehearsal of Christian attitudes in the liturgy enacts the worldview of God’s Kingdom, and as Searle once wrote: “in our liturgical renewal, we should be more concerned to re-think our basic attitudes towards the liturgy and its relationship to life-in-the-world than to re-vamp our services.”<sup>96</sup>

---

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 19. See also Karl Rahner, “Secular Life and the Sacraments: The Mass and the World,” *The Tablet* 225 (March 13, 1971) 267. The following quote from Rahner clearly sparked Searle’s imagination and appears in his *Called to Participate*, page 78: “The world and its history is the terrible and sublime liturgy, breathing death and sacrifice, that God celebrates for himself and allows to be held throughout the free history of men, a history which he himself sustains through the sovereign disposition of his grace. Throughout the whole length and breadth of this colossal history of birth and death, a history on the one hand full of superficiality, folly, inadequacy and hate—and all of these ‘crucify’—a history, on the other hand, composed of silent submission and joy, heights and sudden falls: throughout all this there takes place the *liturgy of the world*.” Emphasis original. See also Kevin W. Irwin, “A Sacramental World—Sacramentality As The Primary Language for Sacraments,” *Worship* 76 (2002) 197-211. Although this article was written many years after Searle published his thoughts on “sacramentality,” Irwin makes it clear that this is a way of life still to be captured and grasped by the Christian imagination. He writes: “I want to argue here that a major issue that needs rethinking and refurbishing in our day is appreciated sacramentality in general as the framework and ground of celebrating liturgy and the seven sacraments. This means viewing the words, symbolic gestures and actions conducted in our solemn assemblies as rooted in the life we live outside the church buildings. In a sacramental world view the world in which we live is interdependent—all that dwell in it are part of God’s plan for us all. It is also a locus where God is revealed, disclosed and experienced” (199).

<sup>96</sup> See Searle, *Eight Talks on Liturgy*, 9. He maintains that the vocation of the Church is not so much to “absorb the world into itself” as to “further the plan of God for mankind.” He thus concludes: “If mankind is prior to the Church and the world is largely going to be saved without reference to the Church or her sacraments, what is the role of the Church and of the liturgy? Put quite simply, the Church is a community of those called by God’s grace in history to be aware of what God is doing in the world, to celebrate it, to co-operate with and to encourage men to work out in history the peace and reconciliation which is God’s will for all mankind” (14). See also Searle, “Living Worship: Putting Liturgy to Work in the World,” 11-12. Searle writes: “I suggest (that) our liturgy can teach us that we are responsible for the public good, thereby re-casting the old commandment about love of neighbor in forms that go beyond the bonds of the old ethnic neighborhoods to embrace the realities of contemporary social life. Liturgy, too, can teach us respect and reverence for all God’s creatures, thereby allowing them to be for us sacraments of God’s saving and surprising presence even in the world of highrises and expressways, of mass transit systems and shopping malls.”

### *Liturgy as Critique*

In addition to proclaiming the “justice of God” and revealing the Kingdom, Searle maintains that liturgy also provides a critique of both society at large and the Church as well.<sup>97</sup> In fact, he states this view rather succinctly: “Celebrating the liturgy should train us to recognize justice and injustice when we see it.”<sup>98</sup> In his essay “Liturgy as Critical of Society,” Searle holds out that the Sunday assembly is the place of such prophecy:

. . . we also need to work out how each Sunday liturgy can become a challenging and prophetic experience, an experience which will enable us to confront the present in the light of the past, discerning the finger of God in our lives and enabling us to face the future, even to build the future with hope and confidence. In short, we want a liturgy which will acclaim and celebrate the presence among us of Him whom the same conciliar document (*Gaudium et Spes*) calls ‘the goal of human history, the focal point of the longings of human history and of civilization, the centre of the human race, the joy of every heart, and the answer to all its yearnings’ (n. 45).<sup>99</sup>

Thus, Searle likens the liturgy to a parable of Jesus, meaning that it is “to generate insight and to offer a call rather than to impose moral imperatives.”<sup>100</sup> Liturgy, like Scripture in general, does not offer specific instructions on how to deal with modern-day dilemmas of

---

<sup>97</sup> For an example of liturgy as critique see Joseph Gelineau, “Celebrating the Paschal Liberation,” in *Politics and Liturgy*, Concilium 92, Herman Schmidt and David Power, Eds. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1974) 107-119. Gelineau writes: “My thesis is that the celebration of the risen Christ by the assembly of believers is one of the most effective political actions that men can perform in this world—if it is true that this celebration, by contesting any power system which oppresses mankind, proclaims, stirs up and inaugurates a new order in the created world” (107).

<sup>98</sup> Searle, “Serving the Lord with Justice,” 29.

<sup>99</sup> Searle, “Liturgy as Critical of Society,” 5.

<sup>100</sup> Searle, “Serving the Lord with Justice,” 30-31. See also Walter J. Burghardt, *Let Justice Roll Down Like Waters* (New York: Paulist Press, 1998). Burghardt uses the medium of homilies to describe God’s justice, which he believes is simply a matter of “right relationships.” “Biblical fidelity,” he writes, “is, very simply, a question of right relationships. . . Every genuine homily teases out right relationships: to God, to God’s people, to God’s earth. And not in the first instance what the human mind at its best can devise. Primarily the relationships God has revealed: from Sinai to the Sermon on the Mount, through prophets from Isaiah to Malachi and in the ‘signs of the times’ that intimate divine designs for God’s people” (1-2).

injustice, but rather, like a parable, its symbols open up the horizons of the Kingdom to its participants.<sup>101</sup>

Searle contends that liturgy does not provide a critique of society by remaining at a distance from the world but rather by moving the world in the direction of God, thereby allowing the world to see its injustices for itself. Searle looks to the writing of Alexander Schmemmann and to his notion that the world is returned to God through the Lord's ascending to the Father.<sup>102</sup> Schmemmann writes:

Christianity begins to fall down as soon as the idea of our going up in Christ's ascension—the movement of sacrifice—begins to be replaced by His going down. And this is exactly where we are today: it is always a bringing Him down into ordinary life, and this we say will solve our social problems. The Church must go down to the ghettos, into the world in all its reality. But to save the world from social injustices, the need first of all is not so much to go down to its miseries, as to have a few witnesses in this world to the possible ascension.<sup>103</sup>

---

<sup>101</sup> See David Hollenbach, "A Prophetic Church and the Catholic Sacramental Imagination," in *The Faith That Does Justice*, John C. Haughey, Ed. (New York: Paulist Press, 1977) 234-263. Searle praises Hollenbach's thesis which is that participation in the sacramental symbols of the Church can "lead to concrete communal action." Hollenbach writes: "In arguing that the sacramental imagination is a central source of the Church's prophetic action in society, I am not proposing that sacramental symbols drawn from the tradition be used as the first principles for a theory of the Church's prophetic function in contemporary society. My suggestion is that the synthesis of the experience of the joys and struggles of life in all its dimensions with the experience of redemption and grace which occurs in communal sacramental worship is a synthesis which can and should provide insight into the concrete role which the Church should play in society" (256). In other words, practice of right relationship within the confines of liturgy (as enabled through its symbolic landscape) leads to the enactment of right relationship in all dimensions of life.

<sup>102</sup> See Searle, "Serving the Lord with Justice," 33.

<sup>103</sup> Alexander Schmemmann, "Sacrifice and Worship," *Parabola* 3 (Winter 1978) 65. Schmemmann's theology of sacrifice extols the role of all humans to offer up to God. He writes: "The priest is first and foremost the sacrificer—I am not speaking now of priesthood in the church's terms—and so he is the man who can freely transform that dependence: He is the man who can say *thank you*. . . I have always understood the fall (or what is called 'original sin') as the loss of man's desire to be a priest; or perhaps you might say the desire he has *not* to be a priest but a consumer, and then little by little he begins to consider that to eat and to live are his rights, which is a total enslavement, because there is no end to 'rights'" (63). Thus, the work of a priest is one of offering, and offering is always a movement of ascending. See also Alexander Schmemmann, *Sacraments and Orthodoxy* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1965) especially 32. Here Schmemmann speaks of the world participating in a "liturgy of ascension." He writes: "The early Christians realized that in order to become the temple of the Holy Spirit, they must ascend to heaven where Christ has ascended. They realized also that this ascension was the very condition of their mission in the world, of their ministry to the world. For there—in heaven—they were immersed in the new life of the Kingdom; and when after this 'liturgy of ascension,' they

Again, the link between worship and the world, for Searle, is that they both move in the direction of God; neither is about absolute perfection in this life but about final perfection in the life of God. This “Godward” movement prevents the Christian from having to make a dubious choice between the practice of social concern and the performance of liturgy, as both are directed to future life in God. As Searle states in his 1981 article “Attending (to) the Liturgy”: “What the traditional words and gestures of the congregation do is not express our personal faith and feelings, but discipline and shape them in such a way that we are enabled to relate rightly to our God, our neighbors, our world and our selves.”<sup>104</sup>

Seeing that the liturgy is often misconceived as a platform (or even a gimmick)<sup>105</sup> on which to place didactic elements of instruction (with social justice being one of the leading concerns), Searle articulates his desire to demonstrate clearly how the liturgy provides both a teaching and a critical function in a weighty article entitled “The Pedagogical Function of the Liturgy,” which appeared in a 1981 volume of *Worship*.<sup>106</sup> His basic thesis is that the liturgy

---

returned into the world, their faces reflected the light, the ‘joy and peace’ of that Kingdom and they were truly its witnesses. They brought no programs and no theories; but wherever they went, the seeds of the Kingdom sprouted, faith was kindled, life was transfigured, things impossible were made possible.”

<sup>104</sup> Mark Searle, “Attending (to) the Liturgy,” *New Catholic World* 224:1324 (1981) 157.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid. Searle maintains that the liturgical reforms initiated by the Second Vatican Council inadvertently permitted “adaptations and innovations which were not always the result of a profound understanding of the tradition so much as vehicles for people’s own ideas of what the liturgy ought to be. Hence the embellishments of ‘creative liturgies,’ generally characterized by their didacticism and their informality. The Passover Seder overshadows the liturgy of Holy Thursday; people pin their sins to the Cross instead of kissing it on Good Friday; a Sunrise Service offers a popular alternative to the Easter Vigil, to offer just a few examples. *Dramatic attempts to convey a message or arouse a feeling in the liturgy run the risk of overlooking the power of traditional ritual to shape us.*” Emphasis mine.

<sup>106</sup> See Mark Searle, “The Pedagogical Function of the Liturgy,” *Worship* 55 (1981) 332-359. Searle’s positive appraisal for an education that promotes freedom can be found in the following quote from Abraham Heschel’s *The Insecurity of Freedom*, which he typed out and placed in a file entitled “Liturgy as Pedagogy” in MSP, F28, Folder “Liturgy as Pedagogy.” He writes: “The task of counteracting the deflation of man and the trivialization of human existence is incumbent upon every man. But it is the duty of every teacher to teach and to live the claim that every man is capable of genuine love and compassion, of discipline and universality of judgment, of moral and spiritual exaltation. . . We will have to adjust our educational standards to an enhanced conception of man; to rise to an understanding of values compatible with the grandeur of man and compatible with the

is an educational tool, but this education comes essentially from “socialization” rather than “exhortation.” Searle criticizes the traditional method of teaching when he writes:

If education is conceived of in terms of the classroom transmission of information, then a dichotomy is immediately assumed between the teacher (who has knowledge) and the taught (who do not). Education is then conceived to be an exercise in transmitting those educational commodities which the teacher decides the learners need. Correspondingly, the liturgy will be seen as an opportunity for those who claim to understand the things of God to instruct those who do not and to tell them what they need to know. The primary focus will be on such opportunities as the liturgy provides for explicit teaching: introductions, Scripture readings, commentaries, sermons, exhortations. This focus may also be expanded to incorporate prayers and hymns, which can serve as supplementary resources for inculcating moral and doctrinal truths.<sup>107</sup>

However, if the primary teaching function of the liturgy is to form participants in their identity as Christians, it must be admitted that there exist many other means of socialization that compete for influence and adherence.<sup>108</sup> Searle’s concern is that while the liturgical reform of the Second Vatican Council “was undertaken precisely in order to communicate Christian values and to shape Christian attitudes more effectively,” the liturgy has not succeeded in socializing a people who turns to the liturgy as a source of identity; instead, participants are often “manipulated” by “authorities” (the ones with knowledge to impart and

---

challenge and danger of our age; to endeavor to develop an aptitude and personal responsibility in every student for the preservation of the humanistic tradition of the West, a reverence for what man has thought concerning universality, justice, and compassion; that right living consists not only in the satisfaction of personal needs, but also in responding to moral and spiritual demands.” See Abraham Heschel, *The Insecurity of Freedom* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1966) 50.

<sup>107</sup> Searle, “The Pedagogical Function of the Liturgy,” 333.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid. Searle writes: “For one thing, the Christian living in a pluralistic society belongs to a plurality of communities and is consequently subject to a plurality of competing socializations. We are far removed from the ‘total community’ of the medieval village, where the liturgy served to structure people’s lives so much more pervasively than can ever be the case today and where, in turn, so many nonliturgical areas of life lent their support to the same ‘world of meaning.’ Today, by contrast, the weekly celebration of the liturgy represents for many an isolated oasis of contact with the ethos of the believing community.”



thus the keepers of power).<sup>109</sup> For the liturgy to be understood and experienced as the rehearsal of Christian attitudes, it must be a source of freedom rather than a means of manipulation.

In order to develop a new way of describing how the liturgy shapes and teaches Searle employs the pedagogical model of the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire.<sup>110</sup> He utilizes Freire's model to fulfill a twofold goal: first, to discover how reflecting critically on the liturgy can unmask it to be "an exercise of power by one group over another," and second, to discover how the liturgy can play a prophetic role in both the Church and in the world.<sup>111</sup> Beginning with Freire's concept of "naïve consciousness," Searle suggests that this is a

---

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 334. Searle asks: "Is the liturgy really neutral? Is it in fact manipulative? More specifically, is the claim that the liturgical reforms have given their liturgy back to the people an accurate reflection of the current state of affairs, or is it simply an example of the way new rhetoric can camouflage old attitudes?"

<sup>110</sup> See J. Frank Henderson, "Introduction to 'The Pedagogical Function of the Liturgy,'" in A Koester and B. Searle, *Vision*, 49. Henderson comments on Searle's choice of Freire's thought for his own pedagogical model: "As a basis for considering liturgy and Church, Mark Searle chose the pedagogical theory of the Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire, an approach that was related to the liberation theologies of that era. For a variety of reasons, neither liberation theology or Freire's pedagogical theory is as influential now as they once were. Today Searle might instead have chosen to use one of the theories of adult learning that have emerged recently, for example, transformative learning theory or critical reflection theory." See also Bruce Boston, "The Politics of Knowing: The Pedagogy of Paulo Freire," *New Catholic World* (Jan-Feb 1973) 26-27. Boston provides the following biographical details of Freire: "One educator who has devoted himself to the political dimensions of the educational process is Paulo Freire, the radical Brazilian pedagogue whose books and articles, particularly his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), have attracted wide attention on the educational left. Freire, then a professor of the philosophy of education at the University of Recife, Brazil, first gained notoriety in that country when the massive success of literacy campaigns in Cuba inspired Brazilian agencies, both public and private, to an effort in the same field. Freire had been conducting literacy experiments in the Brazilian north-east, a vast territorial expanse peopled by the truly 'wretched of the earth,' where poverty, famine disease, and fatalism are the lords of life, ruling through the landed aristocracy. . . . But Freire's ideas about education, about the ownership of knowledge, turned out to be political dynamite, for he had come to see pedagogy as a process of the self-conscious subversion of the established order. After the 1964 military coup, Freire was briefly imprisoned. Upon his release he vacated Brazil for Chile, where his methods were again employed by the government."

<sup>111</sup> See Searle, "The Pedagogical Function of the Liturgy," 334. See also *Social Themes of the Christian Year: A Commentary on the Lectionary*, Dieter T. Hessel, Ed. (Philadelphia: The Geneva Press, 1983). Hessel suggests that the lectionary provides the means for the Church to discover the prophetic role of liturgy. He writes: "Liberating theological reflection begins with prophetic imagination or alternative consciousness [Brueggemann]—which questions the dominant world view and criticizes the status quo because it is hopeful for a better future. The active community of faith brings to its interpretation of biblical texts and expectation of God's transforming action and an 'exegetical suspicion' that important human social realities have been overlooked in prevailing interpretations of the Bible" (25).

widespread human reality—a way of interacting with the world that is “automatic and conditioned by inherited interpretations.”<sup>112</sup> In other words, rather than “integration” with the world, the pattern of human development generally leads to “adaptation,” a state of development associated with oppression rather than freedom. Freire writes in his work

*Education for Critical Consciousness*:

*Integration* with one’s context, as distinguished from *adaptation*, is a distinctively human activity. Integration results from the capacity to adapt oneself to reality *plus* the critical capacity to make choices and to transform that reality. To the extent that man loses his ability to make choices and is subjected to the choices of others, to the extent that his decisions are no longer his own because they result from external prescriptions, he is no longer integrated. Rather, he has adapted. He has “adjusted.” Unpliant men, with a revolutionary spirit, are often termed “maladjusted.”<sup>113</sup>

Socially speaking, this pattern of human development leads to what may be termed a “closed society,” a society in which the vast majority of the population is oppressed by and manipulated by the few.<sup>114</sup> Freire suggests that the only way out of such a closed society is

---

<sup>112</sup> Searle, “The Pedagogical Function of the Liturgy,” 336. Searle writes: “Given our ‘ontological vocation’ to grow in consciousness through creative interaction with the ‘world,’ it is clear that meaning itself, created through continuing social interaction, should also be in continuous process of reformulation and development. In fact, however, this ideal is not realized. Instead the human tendency is continually to identify reality with a given meaning assigned to it. Meanings become fixed, as human beings act and react in terms of already established definitions and images of reality. Instead of the response to the world being questioning and reflective, it becomes automatic and conditioned by inherited interpretations.”

<sup>113</sup> Paulo Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness* (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1973) 4. See also Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1970) especially 80-81, where he writes that “true dialogue cannot exist unless the dialoguers engage in critical thinking—thinking which discerns an indivisible solidarity between the world and men and admits of no dichotomy between them—thinking which perceives reality as process, as transformation, rather than as a static entity—thinking which does not separate itself from action, but constantly immerses itself in temporality without fear of the risks involved. Critical thinking contrasts with naïve thinking . . . For the naïve thinker the important thing is accommodation to this normalized ‘today.’ For the critic, the important thing is the continuing transformation of reality on behalf of the continuing humanization of men.”

<sup>114</sup> See Searle, “The Pedagogical Function of the Liturgy,” 338. He writes: “Naïve consciousness accompanies a ‘closed society.’ A closed society is characterized, in turn, by the following traits: a rigid hierarchical social structure and the corresponding silence of the masses; by lack of internal markets (because the economy is geared to the interests of the foreign dominator, not of the native people); by a selective educational system

by “critical transitivity” in which the oppressed begin to dialogue with the oppressors rather than simply adapt to their situation in the world.<sup>115</sup> Thus, Freire proposes a pedagogy based on critical learning in which ideas are sustained through dialogue and reflection instead of merely being passed down as instruction from teacher to student (the “banking method”).<sup>116</sup>

It is tempting to ask what does such a pedagogy, drawn from the social dynamic of oppressors vs. oppressed, have to do with the liturgy? Searle argues that the liturgy has mistakenly been viewed for centuries as the vehicle through which the Church passes on a

---

which functions to maintain the status quo; by high percentages of illiteracy and disease; by a high rate of infant mortality and low life expectancy; by high rates of crime.”

<sup>115</sup> See Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness*, 18-19. Freire describes the movement out of naïve consciousness in the following manner: “The critically transitive consciousness is characterized by depth in the interpretation of problems; by the substitution of causal principles for magical explanations; by the testing of one’s ‘findings’ and by openness to revision; by the attempt to avoid distortion when perceiving problems and to avoid preconceived notions when analyzing them; by refusing to transfer responsibility; by rejecting passive positions; by soundness of argumentation; by the practice of dialogue rather than polemics; by receptivity to the new for reasons beyond mere novelty and by the good sense not to reject the old just because it is old—by accepting what is valid in both old and new. Critical transitivity is characteristic of authentically democratic regimes and corresponds to highly permeable, interrogative, restless and dialogical forms of life—in contrast to silence and inaction, in contrast to the rigid, militarily authoritarian state presently prevailing in Brazil, an historical retreat which usurpers of power try to present as a reencounter with democracy.” Freire also uses the word “conscientisation” for this process. See Paulo Freire, “Conscientisation,” *The Month* 7 (1974) 576. He states that “conscientisation” is “a historical awareness. It means a critical insertion into history. It means that men take on a role as subjects making the world, remaking the world; it asks men to fashion their existence out of the material that life offers them. The more they are conscientised, the more they exist.”

<sup>116</sup> See Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 58. Freire describes the “banking method” approach to education in the following terms: “Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat. This is the ‘banking’ concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filling, and storing the deposits.” See also Boston, “The Politics of Knowing: The Pedagogy of Paulo Freire,” 28. He summarizes Freire’s challenge to the “banking method” with the following words: “Freire is convinced that in any historical situation, man must fight to become human. His humanness is his vocation, and the enemies of that vocation are the contradictions within himself, and between himself and his environment. What it takes to make this vocation a real calling is the grounding of all liberation in the development of a *critical consciousness*, a way of looking at the world and man’s situation in it with a questioning eye which takes nothing for granted. Man’s true educational vocation, then, requires not only that he take a step backward from the world to look at it, *but also that he look at how he looks at it: critical consciousness is reflective.*”

“monopoly of truth” to those in need of socialization.<sup>117</sup> In describing the way in which the liturgy served to maintain this monopoly, Searle writes:

On the one hand, its obligatory character, together with its being identified as the exclusive source of contact with the other-worldly which was “really real,” served to ensure the legitimation of the status quo, the “unchanging” dominance of the elite who ruled, taught, and sanctified—and a denial of the relevance or authentic religious values of the secular experiences of the many. On the other hand, when—as always happens—the individual failed to measure up to the expectations determined by the hierarchical Church (for example, by sin, doubts of faith, or simply by suggesting that religious observance was not very satisfying) then the only recourse such persons might have to resolve their anxiety or frustration was to return to the sacraments—thereby further interiorizing the system.<sup>118</sup>

Moreover, the resolution of such an experience of alienation on the part of the faithful “will be overcome not by more aggressive instruction and discipline of Christian people, but by giving the faithful back their voice, in the sense of recognizing their life experience as an authentic source of Christian reflection on the world.”<sup>119</sup> In other words, as stated

---

<sup>117</sup> See Searle “The Pedagogical Function of the Liturgy,” 342-343. See also Joseph A. Bracken, “In Search of a New Pedagogy,” *Chicago Studies* 16 (1977) 249-259. Bracken employs Freire’s pedagogy to attempt to close the “communications gap” that exists between Church authorities and the laity. He writes: “In brief, therefore, if there exists a communications gap within the Catholic Church at the present time, it may be because lay people within the Church are gradually learning to think for themselves and thus, consciously or unconsciously, to resent the continued use of the “banking” method of education in the area of religious instruction and spiritual formation. . . . Admittedly, the Church is a doctrinal society, with, therefore, a clear need for a magisterium or teaching authority in matters of faith and morals. But the style in which authority is exercised often has a greater influence on people, for good or for ill, than the actual decision itself” (252). See also Mark Searle, “Notes on an Educational Policy” in MSP, F28. Searle writes of the Church’s self-understanding: “The supposition was that revelation was something confided to the (hierarchical) Church who thereby had a monopoly of ‘truth’ which it was her duty to ‘teach’ and ‘pass on’ by instruction and authoritative definition. . . . This whole system rested upon the concept of ‘sacred truths’ and ‘sacred mysteries’—or ‘grace’—standing over against the experience of life in the ‘world’” (2-3).

<sup>118</sup> Searle, “The Pedagogical Function of the Liturgy,” 343.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 344.

throughout this chapter, there can be no separation of liturgy from life; the liturgy informs life experience, and life experience informs the liturgy.<sup>120</sup>

Furthermore, the eschatological nature of worship entails critical reflection. This is precisely due to the fact that liturgical formation based upon dialogue rather than exhortation leads away from rigid adherence to any particular ideology (which results in oppression) and leads to the praxis of God's Kingdom.<sup>121</sup> Searle writes:

In this way, too, the eschatological tension inherent in authentic Christian existence is not nullified by recourse to ritual or evaporated into "life after death." Instead, . . . the liturgical celebration of the Christian community, which is a rehearsal of the reality of the death and resurrection of Jesus as a critical unmasking of ideologies and false salvations, will be an objectivization in the language of the community of the communal experiences of that community. Inseparable, therefore, from such celebration will be the denunciation of whatever is "unreal" and dehumanizing and oppressive (and thus contrary to the God-given reality of human existence) and the proclamation of the Good News of our liberation to a fuller life which is not allowed to remain theoretical but becomes the call to praxis.<sup>122</sup>

Searle argues, however, that the "call to praxis," which facilitates the destruction of ideologies, is far from realized in the Post-Vatican II reform of the liturgy. Rather, the Church is caught in a state which he terms "populism," in which an enduring ideology is

---

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 345. Searle writes: "Consequently, revelation and salvation are available to all in their experience of life, if only they can recognize it and respond to it. . . . From this premise, three consequences follow. First, it means that a person's own experience of life in the world is a valid Christian experience and that the 'true' and the 'really real' are not to be located elsewhere as the monopoly of the few. Second, theologizing, or the articulation of faith-experience, is not the occupation of professionals alone and is not restricted to the manipulation of certain imposed patterns of thought and speech. Third, the sacramentality of grace is no longer confined to specific acts confided to the jurisdiction of one class, but escapes the narrow confines of liturgical celebration to permeate all Christian life. In short, all Christians share the functions of Christ as prophets, priests, and rulers, so that these can no longer be conceived as functions simply exercised by some (who have) in favor of others (who have not)."

<sup>121</sup> Freire labels such dialogue as the act of "denouncing and announcing." See Freire, "Conscientisation," 576. He writes: "Only those who announce and denounce, who are permanently committed to a radical process of transforming the world so that men can be more, only they can be prophetic. Reactionary people, oppressors cannot be utopian, they cannot be prophetic, and because they cannot be prophetic they cannot have hope."

<sup>122</sup> Searle, "The Pedagogical Function of the Liturgy," 345-346.

masked in new theological rhetoric that prevents the development of “conscientization” among the faithful.<sup>123</sup> Thus Searle asks: “In short, is the revised liturgy serving the pedagogical role of fostering a genuinely new consciousness, or is it a way of perpetuating the old imperialist theology in a more attractive packaging?”<sup>124</sup>

To develop a theory that moves beyond this impasse, Searle looks to the work of religious educator Thomas Groome and his method of “Shared Christian Practice.”<sup>125</sup> In maintaining that Christian education involves a dialectic between past history and future hopes, Groome contends that freedom is achieved when “the past Story is critically remembered (rather than simply recalled), recreated and developed in and by present

---

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 339. Searle describes “populism” in the following manner: “Populist leadership arises to speak for the experiences of the masses and to represent them in the political process, but failing to overcome the interests of the elite, it ends up manipulating the masses. It does this by winning ‘reforms’ which nevertheless leave the people naive, because it does not address the structural problem of whose definition of reality will prevail. It works within the (elastic) definitions of reality provided by the ‘language’ of the dominant elite. . . . At this populist stage, peasants may be promoted to foremen, natives may be entrusted with middle and lower management positions. They will be encouraged to work hard and to study hard in the hope of winning promotion. In short, instead of questioning the system, they are encouraged to offer their best people to become part of running the exploitative system itself.” Later in the article, Searle suggests that the concept of “lay ministry” is in fact an example of “populism” (See page 347).

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 347. Searle offers the following examples to argue his point: “For example does the shift from the ‘eastward’ to the ‘westward’ position of the celebrant really overcome clerical domination of the liturgical event, or does it serve to give it new life? Does the introduction of vernacular texts, revised lectionaries, and liturgical homilies effectively redistribute the ‘knowledge that is power’ or does it simply provide a new and more palatable form of the *potestas docendi*? Is the concept (and practice) of ‘active participation’ a genuine step towards the redistribution of responsibility in the Church, or is it a means to heading off more radical forms of participatory democracy?” (346-347).

<sup>125</sup> See Thomas Groome, “The Crossroads: A Story of Christian Education by Shared Praxis,” *Lumen Vitae* 32 (1977) 45-70 and “Christian Education: A Task of Present Dialectical Hermeneutics,” *Living Light* 14 (1977) 408-423. Searle employs Groome’s model in analyzing the “praxis” of Christian liturgy, in which “people are engaged in actions which are consciously expressive and, more than merely expressive, which create a new ‘world of meaning. . . the participants commit themselves to a particular set of attitudes, to values which are not those of the social majority, and which are therefore constitutive of a cultural revolution. *They commit themselves to a praxis which is utopian, an act of hope in a genuinely alternative future . . . the future which they celebrate and anticipate in the relationships which they realize in the sacramental actions.*” See Searle, “The Pedagogical Function of the Liturgy,” 354-355. Emphasis mine. See also Thomas Groome, *Christian Religious Education: Sharing Our Story and Vision* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc., 1980) 185. Here Groome defines “Shared Christian Praxis” as: “a group of Christians sharing in dialogue their critical reflection on present action in light of the Christian Story and its Vision toward the end of lived Christian faith.”

experience, and the future Vision [is] posed as the purpose and measure of our remembering and creating.”<sup>126</sup> For Groome, such a process employs the language of a pilgrimage:

It is imperative for pilgrims to remember where they have come from if they are to share a present and build a future together. If we forget where we have been, we will never know who nor why we are and will not remember where we are going. We will be a wandering aimless people locked into the confines of an endless desert. The Story of where our Christian people have been, a Story of God’s intervening in their lives and their responding to his invitation, the myths, the rituals, the symbols that both express and recreate that Story—must all be made present to the people of our time.<sup>127</sup>

Thus, it is possible to see the way in which “anamnesis” (the active remembering of the past in the experience of the present that looks to the future) functions to ensure that liturgical celebrations are occasions of freedom rather than manipulation.<sup>128</sup> For example, Searle uses the actions of liturgical eating and drinking to describe how critical praxis can take place: the “Eucharistic prayer situates the present critically by reference to past (anamnesis) present

---

<sup>126</sup> Groome, “Christian Education: A Task of Present Dialectical Hermeneutics,” 415. Later in the article, Groome defines exactly how he understands such “critical remembering”: “By critical reflection I mean an attempt to unmask the assumptions, interests, ideologies and repressed dialogue that may constitute the basis of our present action. To critically reclaim the past in the present demands a return to the genesis, both personal and social, embodied in present action so that we can come to appropriate our past as a base upon which to build a chosen future. Otherwise the past remains a fetishized and reified control that determines our present and thus our future. We critically attend to the past in our present so that we can intend the future and take responsibility for participation in its creation. To participate in such a process requires, as it also augments, a critical consciousness.”

<sup>127</sup> Groome, “The Crossroads: A Story of Christian Education by Shared Praxis,” 55. Groome continues by suggesting that the pilgrimage language promotes a “fruitful tension”: “By this pilgrimage language there is also highlighted the necessity of maintaining a fruitful tension between conservation and liberation in our educational task. The tension expresses itself in a number of ways. First, like all pilgrims, we must conserve the wealth of our past. Therein lies our conserving interest. But we must conserve it in such a way that our past empowers us to create, not duplicate, our future. The tension also finds expression in the maintaining of the dialectic between the past Story of the community and the present story of the individual in that community. Both dimensions, the community past and the individual experience, must be respected. But both are continually affirming, denying and transcending themselves in the dialectical push forward in our pilgrim progress” (56). Note how the language of pilgrimage is very similar to Searle’s use of the Exodus story as a lens for exploring the connection between liturgy and justice (see footnote 24 above).

<sup>128</sup> See Robert McAfee Brown, “My Story and ‘The Story,’” *Theology Today* 32 (1975) 170-171. McAfee suggests that telling the story is an act of liberation, which takes place when “‘The Story’ and our story are thus interwoven.” Thus, “deliverance is not only an event of the past but a new possibility for the present. Past events are re-lived and become alive once again.”

(epiclesis) and future (intercession). Eucharist then becomes not only memory or ‘real presence,’ but utopian task.”<sup>129</sup>

Certainly, Searle is realistic and honest about the ways in which the liturgy can become an “ideological tool,” in particular when it withdraws from society and thereby “sacralizes” salvation and “privatizes” sin.<sup>130</sup> However, it is also his belief that liturgy can become “critical” and can serve as a critique of political, economic, and social structures that are not emblematic of the “justice of God” (namely when people and creation are prevented from becoming who or what God created them to be). Searle writes:

In short, Christianity is faithfully understood as “utopian praxis” insofar as it is about the Kingdom of God being “at hand” and thereby calls all other kingdoms (“reality constructs”) into question. However, history shows that Christianity is always in danger of being subverted by other views of what is real which claim to be “natural,” thereby masking their cultural relativity which the Gospel message and

---

<sup>129</sup> Searle, “The Pedagogical Function of the Liturgy,” 354. The words in parentheses are Searle’s own. Searle borrows the term “utopian,” which comes from Freire’s pedagogy. See Paulo Freire, *Cultural Action for Freedom* (Cambridge: *Harvard Educational Review*, Monograph Series, no. 1, 1970) 20. There Freire contends that concern for the future can be called “utopian,” maintaining that “the utopian character of our education theory and practice is as permanent as education itself.” See also Freire, “Conscientisation,” 376. Concerning the development of a “utopian attitude,” Freire writes: “For me utopian does not mean something unrealizable, nor is it idealism. Utopia is the dialectisation in the acts of denouncing and announcing—denouncing the dehumanising structure and announcing the structure that will humanise.” For another perspective on the notion of “social idealism,” see A.G. Hebert, *Liturgy and Society: The Function of the Church in the Modern World* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1935) especially 195-203. See also Rosabeth Moss Kanter, *Commitment and Community: Communes and Utopias in Sociological Perspective* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972).

<sup>130</sup> See Searle, “The Pedagogical Function of the Liturgy,” 342-343. Suggesting that the Church has often retreated from the world scene because of its claim to be specifically Roman, Searle writes: “The Church and its work withdrew from history, effectively sacralizing salvation and privatizing sin. In this context, something akin to the economic monopolies of the colonizers began to be operative in the Church. In accordance with the laws of supply and demand, the Church-as-hierarchy was able to maintain the dependence of the faithful by persuading them that they had a need for what she alone could provide. This was achieved by imposing Roman patterns of thought, behavior, and expression upon all Catholics and by persuading them that these were more real and more important than their own historical experiences and their own cultural forms.” Searle relies on the work of Gregory Baum for the notion of the Church producing an understanding of “sacralized” salvation and “privatized” sin. See Gregory Baum, *Religion and Alienation: A Theological Reading of Sociology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1975) especially 193-226 where he spells out his “critical theology.” Baum writes: “In critical theology it becomes imperative to deprivatize and despiritualize the notion of salvation.” See also Tissa Balasuriya, *The Eucharist and Human Liberation* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1979) especially 36-37. Searle cites Balasuriya’s work as providing evidence for the way in which the Eucharist has actually been an “ideological tool” for oppression.



evangelical liturgy should proclaim. The result is that liturgical celebrations provide a forum for “naïve socialization” into these cultures and not into the Christian community with its own vision and task.<sup>131</sup>

Therefore, Searle believes that the liturgy provides a critique only when it is willing to dialogue with life experience; in other words, his liturgical pedagogy is one that promotes reflection and critique, inward not simply outward. Although Searle’s thought may be interpreted by some as posing a direct threat to the leadership establishment of the Church (i.e. hierarchical structures),<sup>132</sup> his method suggests that if the liturgy is to reveal the Kingdom of God then it must be a product of critical reflection.

### ***Conclusion***

It is clear that Searle developed the theme of “critical consciousness” in relation to liturgy as a means of emphasizing that worship entails a deep immersion into the life of the world.<sup>133</sup> Participation in liturgical prayer demands the realization that its ritual expressions

---

<sup>131</sup> Searle, “The Pedagogical Function of the Liturgy,” 357. See also Searle, “The Church Celebrates Her Faith,” 11. Here he writes of the “revival of political liturgy”: “We suffer, too, from an excessively individualistic and spiritualistic approach to life. This means that the Gospel and the liturgy have been interpreted in terms of how I am to save my soul, instead of in terms of what God is doing for the world as such. It is interesting that until the high middle ages Christian eyes were fixed on the second coming and the general or universal judgment, even though it was generally realized after the first few years that His return was not necessarily going to be soon. After the high middle ages, however, all our attention has been fixed on the death of the individual and his personal judgment. For us to restore the balance we must recover a faith which relates to what God is actually doing in and for the world. We will then need a kind of celebration which is the celebration of God speaking to us and active among us here and now, today, this week, this year, in what is happening to us. We may see the revival of political liturgy!”

<sup>132</sup> See for example Gregory Baum’s letter to Mark Searle, dated July 7, 1982 in MSP, F26, Folder “Freire/Groome.” In this letter, Baum responds to Searle’s “The Pedagogical Function of the Liturgy,” and suggests that Searle’s conclusions are too “radical.” He concludes the letter: “I fully agree with you that liturgy and especially eucharist must exercise a utopian or prophetic function in the church and society. But by using Freire in all its nakedness you arrive at radical formulations which seem to unhinge the Catholic tradition and hence have little hope of succeeding in being heard. Is the bishop’s miter a helmet of authority, legitimating patriarchy and monarchy, or is it an anti-environment hat, signaling that the parable about to be told stands against the straight world? It seems to me that the attempts to make the liturgy more prophetic will be unable to remove its ambiguity.”

and spoken words are about “the fundamental and universal human themes which enter into every human life.”<sup>134</sup> Searle maintains:

If the God whom we worship is the God who fathers and pervades all human life; if the Christ in whom we worship is the one who sums up in himself all humanity, redeeming all human experience; then the liturgy we celebrate is not off in a world of its own. *Liturgy, like contemplative life, is not a withdrawal into some other world, but an encounter in depth with the world in which we live.* To join in the celebration of the liturgy is to acknowledge that we belong to the world that God is redeeming, that we share the common human condition and that the whole of humanity is the object of his reconciling and redeeming love.<sup>135</sup>

Therefore, primary among the Christian attitudes revealed and rehearsed in the liturgy is a basic hope in humanity and in the world in general.<sup>136</sup> Liturgy confronts us with the reality of who we are and who God intends us to be, namely a people “who have learned to recognize the disparity between the values of the Kingdom and the values by which our

---

<sup>133</sup> See Searle, “The Pedagogical Function of Liturgy,” 357. He suggests that not only do worshippers separate liturgy from life, but they see this escape as the projection of what is “really real” onto another world apart from the present world. He writes: “The absolute reality attributed to the other world, and the necessity of access to it through the limited channels of esoteric revealed ‘truths’ and narrowly circumscribed ‘channels of grace,’ clearly operates to keep the majority in a relation of dependence upon a small but powerful elite. Such concepts as ‘God,’ ‘the revealed world,’ ‘sacrifice,’ and ‘grace’ are predefined as in the hands of the few and not as being immediately accessible to the many.”

<sup>134</sup> See Mark Searle, “On the Art of Lifting Up the Heart: Liturgical Prayer Today,” *Studies in Formative Spirituality* 3 (1982) 406-407.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 406. Emphasis mine.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 407. Searle writes: “Liturgy, then, invites us to a new perspective on human life and draws us to adopt certain attitudes toward life.” To “adopt certain attitudes toward life,” however, requires that one is engaged in the world and seeks to understand it. Searle continues: “Paradoxically, then, what the liturgy requires is precisely knowledge of life and of the world, the ability to transcend our individual fortune and misfortune and to identify ourselves with the whole human race with whom and for whom we articulate the deep longings, struggles, dreads and joys of human existence in prayers of thanksgiving and entreaty. . . The liturgy celebrates faith as a way of being in the world, as the surrender to the God of life who alone is capable of redeeming our lives.”

world is organized, and who have learned to surrender to the former and break with the latter.”<sup>137</sup>

This chapter has explored Searle’s contribution to the theme of liturgy and images of God’s just Kingdom and has argued that liturgy, as praxis, is not simply the means where justice is contemplated but where it is enacted. Searle labored to demonstrate that liturgy functions not only to critique the values of the world order but seeks to critique itself as a means of leading Christians to greater freedom. He believed wholeheartedly that the rehearsal of Kingdom attitudes would reveal God’s will, allowing us to “be in a position to take up our vocation to be priests and prophets and peacemakers in the society in which God has placed us.”<sup>138</sup> Such a rehearsal depends upon a willingness to discern the “justice of God” as it exists in the “new order” God has redeemed in Christ, for as Searle writes:

Politics has been defined as the art of the possible, but the post to which God has assigned Christians goes far beyond this. What is possible or realistic or prudent for the unconverted is, as we are too well aware, not very much. In this new order, however, we are called to live beyond our own very real limitations. By virtue of the Spirit of God, it is possible to offer hospitality to strangers, to do good without charge, to share one’s bread, to care for the afflicted without seeking to profit from another’s misfortune, to exercise authority in a way that invites free assent instead of compelling grudging conformity. These may not appear to be great matters, but they illustrate in a simple and traditional way the sort of thing that the justice of the world cannot demand but the justice of God requires.<sup>139</sup>

In subsequent writings, Searle will maintain that “liturgical contemplation” requires a way of standing in the world that is full of this hopeful outlook. Such hopefulness necessarily goes hand in hand with regular performance of the contours of God’s Kingdom as they are found

---

<sup>137</sup> Searle, “Serving the Lord with Justice,” 33.

<sup>138</sup> Searle, “Grant Us Peace. . . Do We Hear What We Are Saying?” 12.

<sup>139</sup> Searle, “Serving the Lord with Justice,” 18-19.

in the liturgy. Thus, the second part of this dissertation explores how Searle wished to grapple with culture, especially U.S. culture, so as to better understand what prevents the Christian community from fully rehearsing the attitudes that serve as the foundation of the liturgy.

# Part II

A Groundbreaking Contribution  
To the Study of Liturgy

## Chapter IV

### ***“Pastoral Liturgical Studies”***

As suggested in the previous chapter, the liturgical movement of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries produced a reawakening of the intrinsic bond between liturgy and life. In addition, this reawakening served to validate the call for and increased emphasis on the active participation of all worshippers as a necessary, rather than incidental, component of liturgical celebration. In turn, the consideration of participation supported a “pastoral” approach to liturgy, whereby ritual activity fulfills, in the words of Pope Pius X, “its general purpose of giving glory to God and at the same time edifying and making the faithful holy.”<sup>1</sup> Thus, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* would declare that the “promotion and restoration of the sacred liturgy” may be deemed effectively “pastoral liturgical action.”<sup>2</sup> As the first instruction on implementing *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, *Inter Oecumenici* (September 26, 1964) states, the “pastoral activity guided toward the liturgy has its power in

---

<sup>1</sup> Pius X, *Motu proprio on the Restoration of Sacred Music* (November 22, 1903), in Yzermans, *All Things in Christ*, 201. The Latin original reads: “Musica sacra, prout pars integrans solemnibus liturgiis, huius particeps est finis, qui gloriam Dei et sanctificationem Christianifidelium spectat.” See *Acta Sanctae Sedis* 36 (1903): 389. Emphasis mine.

<sup>2</sup> *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 43 in Flannery, *The Basic Sixteen Documents*. The paragraph as a whole reads: “Enthusiasm for promotion and restoration of the sacred liturgy is rightly held to be a sign of the providential dispositions of God in our time, and as a movement of the Holy Spirit in his church. It is today a distinguishing mark of the life of the church, and, indeed, of the whole tenor of contemporary religious thought and action. Therefore, so that this pastoral liturgical action may become still more vigorous in the church the holy council decrees . . .”

being a living experience of the paschal mystery.”<sup>3</sup> It may be said, therefore, that the very vision itself of Vatican II liturgical reform is “pastoral”; its chief concern is to promote liturgy as a celebration of the real relationship between God and the Church, a relationship meant to govern the whole of daily interaction with the world.

In terms of implementation, this vision dictated that the parameters of liturgical reform would encompass far more than concern for written texts and ritual actions and their proper execution by trained ministers. Rather, the “disposition”—the general attitude of all those participating—in worship was deemed essential in the renewal of Christian liturgy. As *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 11 states:

[I]n 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 (see 2 Cor 6:1). Pastors of souls must, therefore, realize that, when the liturgy is celebrated, their obligation goes further than simply ensuring that the laws governing valid and lawful celebration are observed. They must also ensure that the faithful take part fully aware of what they are doing, actively engaged in the rite and enriched by it.<sup>4</sup>

This obligation on the part of “pastors of souls” has a profound impact on the notion of “pastoral” liturgy; the chief concern is the effects of grace upon the worshipping community rather than precise execution of rubrics and rituals by which that grace is imparted. None of this is to say that the quality of ritual performance is unimportant, but rather, the conciliar vision for renewal hinges upon the liturgy’s ability to “enrich” the lives of its participants.

---

<sup>3</sup> *DOL* 23, number 6. Number 7 states: “The liturgy, it is true, does not exhaust the entire activity of the Church; nevertheless the greatest care must be taken about rightly linking pastoral activity with the liturgy and carrying out a pastoral liturgy not as if it were set apart and existing in isolation but as it is closely joined to other pastoral works.”

<sup>4</sup> *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 11 in Flannery, *The Basic Sixteen Documents*.

While a “pastoral” approach to liturgy may be considered a major aim of the liturgical movement in general, much of the impetus for such an advance comes from the development of a branch of theological studies commonly labeled “pastoral” or “practical.” The ingredients for “pastoral” theological inquiry are taken mostly from the concrete situation of the local Church, or from the actual practice of Christians interacting with culture. Karl

Rahner writes in his *Theology of Pastoral Action*:

Pastoral theology deals with the action of the Church. It is pastoral because it engages concrete circumstances; it is theological because it reflects systematically on the nature of the Church and analyses the circumstances which confront the Church today. . . The work of pastoral theology begins only when Christians here and now and at a local level incarnate the Church’s nature.<sup>5</sup>

In general, it may be said that “pastoral” theology seeks to serve as a bridge between Church and world, attempting to define Christian identity in the midst of a secular culture. As the contents of Rahner’s work suggests, a disputed element of “pastoral” theology is determining

---

<sup>5</sup> Karl Rahner, *Theology of Pastoral Action*, Trans. W.J. O’Hara (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968) 26. Later he writes: “Pastoral theology proceeds from knowledge of the Church’s divinely established beginning to an experience of the dialectic and contradictions which appear in the concrete life of the Church and point beyond themselves to a fuller realization of its nature. As a regulative study for the building up of tomorrow’s Church, pastoral theology can never lapse into a statistical and analytic sociology, a dogmatic ecclesiology of the Church’s essence, a Canon Law, a theoretical moral and ascetical theology, a religious pedagogy, or a psychology of the pastoral care of souls. For what will be genuinely historical tomorrow cannot be deduced from the knowledge of today: pastoral prescription for the future can never be transformed into the maxims of an analytical science” (57). See also Karl Rahner, *The Christian Commitment: Essays in Pastoral Theology*, Trans. Cecily Hastings (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1963). Here Rahner likens the contemporary Christian situation to the Jewish *diaspora*, in which the demise of Christendom forces the Church to embrace a way of existing in the world in which it neither occupies center stage nor maintains world control. Consequently, Rahner hopes that the recognition of its living in the *diaspora* would quiet the Church’s desire to limit the bestowal of God’s grace. Thus, he writes: “A pastoral approach which recognizes only one recipe for everything, which aims at opening every door with one single key, which thinks itself to be in possession of an Archimedean fulcrum from which it can proceed to move the whole world, is refuted by the simple ontological reflection that man is a plural being; that this plurality, despite the fact that man is also a unity, is something that a man himself cannot get beyond; and that (if the existential significance of this plurality is not to be, in practice, denied) there can be no one single point for him from which everything can be surveyed, everything worked out and everything directed” (93). “Pastoral” theology is founded on such a recognition of the reality of pluralism in the human situation.



the proper starting point for reflection.<sup>6</sup> “In the history of pastoral theology,” writes Rahner, “it has been regarded as a self-evident axiom that the hierarchy alone is responsible for the Church’s pastoral action; the laity at most share in this activity, but only in so far as they are called in as helpers by the hierarchy.”<sup>7</sup>

An example of a theological viewpoint that supports this “self-evident axiom” can be detected in Cipriano Vagaggini’s *Theological Dimensions of the Liturgy*. Here he defines “pastoral” quite simply as “the art of leading and conducting the people to Christ and Christ to the people, within the structure of the Church.”<sup>8</sup> For this reason, the hierarchy (those responsible for “leading and conducting the people to Christ”) plays a particularly important role in liturgy. He writes:

Pastoral presupposes, among so many other things, that God deals with men in accord with the law of salvation in community; that this community is the hierarchically structured ecclesial community in which God deals with men through other men, His agents, on whom it is incumbent, by this title, to perform their tasks as instruments of Christ; to be, as it were, shepherds under the supreme Shepherd. Pastoral presupposes, moreover, that God himself has determined, up to a certain point, the modality of His encounter with men and has left further determinations of it to the Church; that in the work of the pastors in the Church it is God Himself in Christ who is working externally, while internally He is operative with His grace.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> See Rahner, *Theology of Pastoral Action*, Chapter Two, pages 64ff. Rahner, in a sense, turns the tables on the established order of roles and responsibility with regard to pastoral action; he opens his reflection with a discussion on the laity and ends with the Pope. He justifies his method accordingly: “Our thesis is that all members of the Church take part in its instrumental saving action because every aspect of the whole being and action of the Church has significance as a channel of salvation: each Christian in all he does as a member of the Church works for the salvation of all other Christians and for the salvation of all men, insofar as the Church itself is of importance for the salvation of the world. *Each member of the Church, therefore, shares in the Church as gift of salvation and in the same measure as channel of salvation*” (66). Emphasis mine.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>8</sup> Vagaggini, *Theological Dimensions of the Liturgy*, 805.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. See also J.A. Jungmann, *Pastoral Liturgy* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1962) 369. Jungmann believes that “pastoral” liturgy is founded upon the activity of the clergy: “The liturgy is the life of the Church as it is turned towards God, of the Church which is the community of all who are joined to Christ in Baptism, and who, led by its priesthood, assemble Sunday by Sunday to keep the memory of their Lord. . . In all ages the

However, while Vagaggini places squarely upon the shoulders of the hierarchy the art of pastoral responsibility with regard to the liturgy, he contends that the goal of “pastoral” liturgy is the active participation of all the faithful. He writes of this more difficult objective: “Liturgical pastoral, therefore, must have for its aim not only a material conducting of the individual into a church so that he may in one way or another participate in the liturgy, but a creating in him of an internal moral attunement with the liturgical reality as sanctification in Christ and worship of God in Christ.”<sup>10</sup>

Thus, the question for “pastoral” liturgy: is the assembly the starting point for theological reflection (assembly as subject) or the end to which that reflection is directed (assembly as object)? In the years leading up to Vatican II and in those that followed, organized efforts were made to address this question through the creation of a systematic

---

priesthood has seen its most sublime function to be the carrying out of public worship at the head of their assembled people. But in the times when the form of the liturgy was in a state of flux they had another special task as well. It had to create these forms and regulate them. What attitudes of mind lay behind the creation of these forms? . . . The answer lies in the care of the hierarchy for the Church as the community of the faithful, for the Church as the *plebs sancta* who, led by its pastors and even during its sojourn on this earth, are to offer worthy service to God and so to be sanctified. This care was decisive in the shaping of public worship. It accounts for everything.” See also James D. Shaughnessy, “The Priest and the Renewed Liturgy,” in *All Things to All Men*, Volume II, ed. Joseph F.X. Cevetello (New York: Joseph F. Wagner, Inc., 1967) 141. Shaughnessy holds up the priest as the “key” to the liturgy: “Without a doubt the most important element to be considered in this entire matter is the celebrant—the person who presides over the community at worship. He holds the key. The celebrant has within his power the opportunity to make worship a live, exciting, fruitful experience—or a dull duty. In this regard, the first thing the celebrant must discover is people—people who live and love and who are anxious to respond generously to God’s call to render him praise and honor. Yet, these same people must be led, inspired, drawn together, and made aware that they are a community at worship. This can be done *only* by the celebrant.”

<sup>10</sup> Vagaggini, *Theological Dimensions of the Liturgy*, 838. See also Vagaggini’s assessment of the need for active participation on page 852. There he writes: “To elevate the people to active participation in the liturgy as it is today is by far the most important and most urgent task of liturgical pastoral, a task of which it will never be absolved. This task belongs by right and by duty to all the clergy under the direction of the hierarchy, and, along with them, under that same direction, there is a role to be played also by Catholic teachers and educators, starting with priests themselves. If the clergy do not fulfill this duty of theirs, the liturgical reforms, even the most beautiful of them, can very quickly be brought to bitter disappointment.” See also Gaetano Cicognani, “Opening Address,” in *The Assisi Papers: Proceedings of the First International Congress of Pastoral Liturgy*, 1-17 (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1957). Concerning a definition of “pastoral” liturgy, Cardinal Cicognani, writes: “The aim of pastoral liturgy is precisely that of leading the faithful to form a closely-knit union in the Mystical Body of which Christ is the Head, and to participate ‘*aequo modo*,’ according to one’s station, in the liturgical rites” (5).

form of liturgical studies that could be called “pastoral.”<sup>11</sup> While Roman Catholic “pastoral” theology was still in a state of infancy in the United States,<sup>12</sup> European theological circles undoubtedly paved the way to establishing it as a very reputable discipline called “pastoral liturgy.” For example, German theologian Athanasius Wintersig, a Benedictine monk from Maria Laach, was the first to publish the term “*Pastoralliturgik*” in 1924 to designate a form of liturgical studies which was empirical in nature and not merely an offshoot of Dogmatic theology.<sup>13</sup> Shortly thereafter, the French *Centre de pastorale liturgique* (founded in 1943)

---

<sup>11</sup> See Domenico Sartore, “Pastoral Liturgy,” in *Handbook for Liturgical Studies*, Volume II: *Fundamental Liturgy*, Ed. Anscar J. Chupungco (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1998) 67-70. He writes: “In the years that preceded and followed Vatican II, alongside a liturgical pastoral action ever more intense and organized some efforts were developed also for systematic reflection in order to define better the basis, the purpose, the method, the formal object, and the constitutive elements of liturgical pastoral studies and their specific placement in the broadest range of liturgical science and pastoral theology” (67).

<sup>12</sup> In the United States, prior to the Second Vatican Council, “pastoral” theology was largely dominated by a Protestant bent. For example, see Paul Waitman Hoon, *The Integrity of Worship: Ecumenical and Pastoral Studies in Liturgical Theology* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1971). From the perspective of a free-church Christian, Hoon envisions a merging of theological consensus with regard to Catholic contributions (principally in the area of liturgical theology) and Protestant input (generally in the area of “pastoral” thought). He writes: “But because the congregation in one form or other is so palpably the reality we must deal with, I also believe that all theology—including liturgical theology—is ultimately to be validated by the empirical Church as it lives and serves in culture. That is to say, I see liturgical theology as both an intellectual discipline and an expression of ecclesial, pastoral, and missionary concern. Or, to use the nomenclature of my trade, I view liturgical theology as a form of pastoral theology in the sense that it is to affirm the Church, care for the Church, judge the Church, and summon the Church to her proclamation in the world. . . . But this orientation means in turn that liturgical theology is also to be validated by reference to what our Catholic friends speak of in a splendid phrase as ‘pastoral theology,’ that is, liturgy conceived and conducted as truly the people’s worship so that their life in the Christian community in all its expressions is rooted and nourished in him who is their Head” (11). See also Seward Hiltner, *Preface to Pastoral Theology: The Ministry and Theory of Shepherding* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1958). A minister in the Presbyterian tradition, Hiltner credits Huldreich Zwingli’s 1524 book *The Shepherd* as the providing the foundation for Protestant reflection on “pastoral” theology, which he defines as “the branch or field of theological knowledge and inquiry that brings the shepherding perspective to bear upon all the operations and functions of the church and the minister, and then draws conclusions of a theological order from reflections on these observations” (15). See also C.W. Brister, *Pastoral Care in the Church*, Third Edition, Revised and Expanded (San Francisco: HarperCollins Publishers, 1992). Representing a Baptist perspective, Brister defines “pastoral” theology as “that branch of ‘practical theology’ that studies human development in spiritual, moral, and behavioral perspective, reflects upon the church’s caring functions in light of the Christian faith, enhances pastoral caregiving tasks, and in the process, contributes to the larger body of Christian knowledge. . . . *Pastoral* theological reflection distinctively moves from pastoral practice to theology; then from theology back to ministry once again. In this sense, pastoral caregiving, properly understood, advances the course of theological reflection” (8).

<sup>13</sup> See Athanasius Wintersig, “Pastoralliturgik. Ein Versuch über Wesen, Weg, Einteilung und Abgrenzung einer seelsorgswissenschaftlichen Behandlung der Liturgie,” *Jarbuch für Liturgiewissenschaft* 4 (1924) 153-167. See also Birgit Jeggle-Merz, “*Pastoralliturgik*: Eigenberechtigter Zweig oder Anwendungsdisziplin der

began to herald the study of signs (“semiotics”) and communications theory as an important contribution to the study of liturgy.<sup>14</sup> Finally, Italian input on “pastoral” liturgy—centered mainly at the *Instituto di liturgia pastorale di S. Giustina* (founded by the Benedictines in Padua in 1966)—worked largely to solidify the connection between the “practice” of the liturgy and the “practice” of the offices of the Church, with the emphasis being on how liturgical praxis is culturally relevant for teaching, sanctifying, and governing.<sup>15</sup> All of this demonstrates that the call for “liturgical pastoral action,” heard at the Second Vatican

---

Liturgiewissenschaft?” *Archiv für Liturgiewissenschaft* 29 (1987) 352-370. In response to Wintersig’s appraisal of pastoral liturgy, Jeggle-Merz interprets liturgical studies according to a “Praxeologie” that challenges local enactment of liturgical rites and provides data as to how the universal prayer of the Church might be reformed. See also Heribert W. Gärtner and Michael B. Merz, “Prologomena für eine integrative Methode in der Liturgiewissenschaft,” *Archiv für Liturgiewissenschaft* 24 (1982) 165-189.

<sup>14</sup> See for example Joseph Gelineau, *The Liturgy Today and Tomorrow*, Trans. Dinah Livingstone (New York: Paulist Press, 1978). Gelineau writes: “It would be a mistake to think it is only a question of revamping Christian rites which possess their own inner consistency and permanence, in other words to think that the reformed books give us the substance and the content of the liturgy, simply by allowing individual communities to decide what language, what music, bodily movements and other variations to choose. *With symbolic signs, in ritual, as in art, form and content are inseparable*. The medium is also the message” (16). Emphasis mine. See also Rainer Volpe, “La liturgie en tant que comportement social: Réflexions en vue de l’élaboration de méthodes empiriques de recherches,” *Social Compass* 22 (1975) 157-174. The author suggest that a semiotic study of sociological behavior in the liturgical celebration will add more meaning to the nature of liturgy than intended by the written text. The article appears in MSP, C16, Folder “Liturgy: Empirical Studies (Germany).” See also A.M. Roguet, “La pastorale liturgique,” in *L’Eglise en prière: Introduction à la Liturgie*, ed. A.G. Martimort (Tournai, Belgium: Desclée and Company, 1961) 231. He defines “pastoral” liturgy as an “art” that consists of the participation of the faithful. He writes: “La pastorale étant l’art de gouverner, d’instruire et de sanctifier le peuple fidèle, la pastorale liturgique est la partie de cet art qui consiste à le faire participer activement et consciemment à la célébration de culte, si bien qu’il puise à sa source le véritable esprit Chrétien.” See also Yves Congar, “Pour une liturgie et une prédication ‘réelles,’” *La Maison-Dieu* 16 (1948) 75-87. He writes: “Une liturgie vivante ne consiste pas en une exécution impeccable de cérémonies, en une restauration de toutes les formes extérieures de culte, même en leur perfection. . . Une liturgie ‘réelle’ est une liturgie apte à être intériorisée, à produire vraiment sa *res* dans l’âme du peuple fidèle, à être reçue et personnalisée dans la conscience des hommes” (80). He concludes by suggesting that “pastoral” liturgy does not need studies that are less academically rigorous, but ones that account for the reality of people’s lives: “Ce dont nous avons besoin, ce n’est pas d’études moins intellectuelles, moins scientifiques et rigoureuses, moins traditionnelles, c’est d’études telles qu’elles aboutissent à penser les réalités, à répondre aux besoins réels d’hommes réels, et pax seulement au maniement plus ou moins brillant d’un langage conventionnel, bref de purs *sacramenta*, et donc de rites” (86-87).

<sup>15</sup> See Domenico Sartore, “Concetto di pastorale liturgica: Riflessione epistemologica a partire dal dibattito contemporaneo,” *Rivista liturgica* 79 (1992) 15. Sartore summarizes the thought of Italian theologian Luigi della Torre: “Il *fondamento* della pastorale liturgica è colto nei tre ‘munera’ della Chiesa, ma con la premessa che essi sono studiati da discipline diverse, mentre l’agire ecclesiale si svolge attorno ad oggetti concreti, sui quali convergono le varie discipline. L’A. preferisce parlare di tre ‘pratiche’ della Chiesa: la pratica della Parola, la pratica della celebrazione cristiana, la pratica dell’orazione e verifica ecclesiale.”

Council, was already being worked out decades earlier through the efforts of scholars in various liturgical centers around the world (mostly European) to define concretely the meaning of “pastoral” liturgy and to formulate methods for its study.

### ***Setting the Stage for Searle’s Vision of “Pastoral” Liturgy***

As stated in the biographical sketch of his academic career,<sup>16</sup> the early-1980s were among Mark Searle’s most prolific years for writing and publishing. This occurred simultaneously with greater administrative responsibilities at the University of Notre Dame as well as the holding of other scholarly posts, such as serving as a consultant to the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (beginning in 1979) and being elected vice-president and subsequently president of the North American Academy of Liturgy (1982-1983).

Among his most well recognized contributions, a work published during this fruitful period, is the small guide for parish liturgy committees, *Liturgy Made Simple*, which was first published in 1981.<sup>17</sup> This concise work follows the structure of the Eucharist, as it describes in a nutshell the purposes of the gathering rite, the Liturgy of the Word, the Liturgy of the Eucharist, and the dismissal. However, perhaps its greatest significance is that it provided Searle with the opportunity to launch some of his observations and recommendations about liturgical reform fifteen years after the close of the Council.

Concerning the principle of liturgical participation, he writes:

---

<sup>16</sup> See pages 6-7 of the “Introduction.”

<sup>17</sup> See Mark Searle, *Liturgy Made Simple* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1981). See also James D. Shaughnessy, “Review of *Liturgy Made Simple*,” *Worship* 55 (1981): 467-469. Shaughnessy writes: “This excellent little book is not unlike the ‘buried treasure which a man found in a field.’ It certainly is a little treasure, and if put to proper use it could be a great asset to those seriously interested in producing parochial liturgies that involve the people of the present age” (467-468). *Liturgy Made Simple* has been reprinted several times by The Liturgical Press and has also been translated and published in Spanish.

Active participation in the liturgy was one of the battle cries of the liturgical movement and one of the guiding principles of the liturgical reform. It is rooted in the fact that God does not choose and save individuals as such, but that he has created and is creating a people for himself, to witness as a community in the midst of a divided and antagonistic world. It was because the old Latin liturgy did not adequately express that, although it was full of vestiges of such awareness, that it had to be revised.<sup>18</sup>

He goes on to suggest that the work of revising and translating rites and rubrics is a minor task in comparison to the work of internalizing the liturgy: “It is quite a different matter—and a far more difficult one, we are discovering—to develop the corresponding attitudes and acquire a sense of ourselves as a people.”<sup>19</sup> In *Liturgy Made Simple*, Searle expresses concern that liturgical planners of the post-Vatican II era have become so obsessed with trivial details and the drive for creativity that they sometimes overlook the overall vision of liturgical celebration, which is to create space in which Christ can draw a community of believers unto himself.<sup>20</sup>

While the pages of *Liturgy Made Simple* were written for a popular audience, Searle published a piece in *Worship* the following year (1982) that would establish himself as a critic of the path that liturgical reform—especially in the U.S.—was forging. At the outset of “Reflections on Liturgical Reform,” Searle states that twenty years of liturgical reform have

---

<sup>18</sup> Searle, *Liturgy Made Simple*, 90.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. Searle connects active participation to the understanding of the inseparability of liturgy from life. Thus, active participation is not a matter of individual choice but a dimension of who we are as a people: “The continuity between liturgy and life is not something each of us can simply forge for ourselves within the privacy of our own hearts and intellects. It has to find visible expression in our common life and work” (91).

<sup>20</sup> See for example page 29 where Searle writes: “For as we all know too well, we can get so preoccupied with the details that we lose sight of the whole and find ourselves proposing liturgical changes without much sense of the larger shape of things.” On the next page he writes: “Liturgy does not always have to be different. The temptation of all liturgy planners is to look for new and exciting ways of doing things. But liturgy is ritual, not entertainment. It is meant to form us, not to have us on the edge of our seats. The liturgy keeps bringing us back to old *words* until we begin to understand them, and to old *signs* until we begin to see what they mean. Our care should be to let the words be heard, to let the images shimmer, to let the gestures be done so clearly that they speak for themselves.”

been mostly about “the introduction of changes which were, for the most part, assimilated into existing structures—physical, managerial, and conceptual—without transforming them.”<sup>21</sup> Here Searle identifies three “fortunes” and two “failures” of Vatican II liturgical reform. The successes are the use of the vernacular, people’s reclaimed ownership of the liturgy, and the “new experience of the presence of Christ among his people,” and the failures are a breakdown of leadership and the lack of liturgical spirituality.<sup>22</sup> In addition, Searle points to several “unexpected developments” that are rather bleak in nature: a sense of being “massed out” from the multiplication of masses, the “staggering decline” in numbers participating in the sacrament of penance, a “bankruptcy of catechetics” in which American Catholics failed to be trained in the Catholic faith, and the rise of sustenance-providing sources outside the Church.<sup>23</sup>

In assessing Searle’s concerns with the implementation of liturgical reform, one might jump to the conclusion that the work of the Second Vatican Council was a miserable failure. However, Searle himself is not so pessimistic and maintains that liturgy, as experienced in the American Church, is at an impasse, in which uncertainty with regard to the future is accompanied by the hope for even greater renewal. He writes:

*Stalemate* is perhaps not too strong a word to characterize our present liturgical situation. We have lived through turmoil of high expectations dissolving into sad disillusionment, through surges of newly released energy and unexpected conflicts, through gimmicks and craziness and patient, plodding dullness. Liturgically, the Church seems now largely quiescent, for the most part untroubled by the distant cries of feminists, ecumenists, and other discontents. Yet there are new dreams stirring even as we sleep, new realizations which may

---

<sup>21</sup> Mark Searle, “Reflections on Liturgical Reform,” *Worship* 56 (1981): 412. This essay was prepared for the Notre Dame Symposium on the Catholic Parish.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 417-424.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 424-427.

draw us on toward a deeper comprehension of the mysteries we celebrate.<sup>24</sup>

Searle concludes this insightful article by urging the Church to restore a sense of “reverence” in its liturgical practice. However, Searle’s understanding of reverence extends itself beyond activity at the altar, rather, it must be a “reverence for the word as well as the sacrament, for the world as well as the Church, for the people of God as well as for the ordained and vowed.”<sup>25</sup> For Searle, “reverence” is a total worldview, a way of approaching all relationships in the world—it is a way of being that must continually be relearned through liturgical practice.<sup>26</sup>

These two pieces of writing—*Liturgy Made Simple* and “Reflections on Liturgical Reform”—undoubtedly set the stage for Searle’s development of what he would call “pastoral liturgical studies.” On the one hand, the pages of *Liturgy Made Simple* would serve to demonstrate his strength in being able to describe in accessible language and style the essential characteristics of the Mass for priest celebrants and laypeople alike (thereby providing what might be considered a valuable “pastoral” tool). On the other hand, the critique offered in “Reflections on Liturgical Reform” would prove Searle to be an academic liturgist who is able to look honestly at the contemporary challenges that prevent the liturgy from being the lifeblood of Catholics. In other words, in light of the instability of the

---

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 428.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 430. See also Gerard Austin, “Introduction to ‘Reflections on Liturgical Reform’,” in A. Koester and B. Searle, *Vision*, 78-81. Austin concludes that Searle’s heralding of “reverence” in liturgical practice and in the life of the Church in general demonstrated his “total vision” for liturgical renewal, and Austin comments: “It is a vision much needed today as we implement the new *Missale Romanum* of 2002 with its introductory *Institutio Generalis*” (81).

<sup>26</sup> See Edward Fisher, *Everybody Steals from God* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977) 124. Searle cites the following quote in his article: “Religious educators need to work harder at communicating the idea that the way something is done is at the very foundation of religious life. No activity is religious if it lowers life, and none is secular once it lifts life. How a thing is done is rock-bottom communication that goes beyond all words and turns an act into one of worship or into a blasphemy.”



liturgical scene of the early 1980s, Searle was able to provide both practical advice on the meaning of liturgical celebration and simultaneously issue the call for a deeper scientific exploration of what true participation in the liturgical project is all about. All of this sparked his imagination to formulate for professional liturgists a more innovative, albeit more demanding, approach to the study of liturgy that would transcend the boundaries of traditional historical and theological methods that had long occupied center stage for the endeavor of liturgical investigation.

### ***Searle's Method for "Pastoral Liturgical Studies"***

The fact that the liturgical renewal authorized by the Second Vatican Council did not produce a definite change in the attitude of Catholics with regard to their participation in liturgy and correspondingly to their approach to life in general out of the pattern of liturgical prayer led Searle to the conclusion that a new means of teaching the liturgy had to be developed for the good of the Church. It was the occasion of his address as Vice-President of the North American Academy of Liturgy meeting in January 1983 that gave him the floor to articulate his vision.<sup>27</sup> Searle's talk, entitled "New Tasks, New Methods: The Emergence of Pastoral Liturgical Studies," urges members of the Academy to use their "power"<sup>28</sup> as

---

<sup>27</sup> Searle's vice-presidential address to the 1983 North American Academy of Liturgy is published in the July issue of *Worship*: Volume 57, Number 4 (1983): 291-308.

<sup>28</sup> See Walter Burghart, "A Theologian's Challenge to Liturgy," *Theological Studies* 35 (June 1974) 233-248. Burghart suggests that liturgists are "men and women with uncommon power," and he states: "Here, I submit a basic challenge to the theologian of the liturgy. Worship confronts him with a problem like the problem with which doctrine confronts me: a sacred past and a unique present. Liturgists will tinker with the liturgy, will be little more than rubricists, will be dangerous conservators or innovators, if they do not develop a reform theology based on historical thinking. More accurately, whether they like it or not, at this moment liturgists do have styles of historical thinking (perhaps unreflective); these styles of historical thinking affect their theology of reform (perhaps unreflective); this reform theology dictates what they are ready or willing to change in today's liturgy, how far they are will to go, where they believe they must say 'Thus far and no further' (240). Searle suggests that such "enormous power" is often viewed with suspicion: "Yet there are many, both members of the churches at large and even liturgists themselves, who have wondered about the propriety of so much influence being given to liturgical scholars" (see Searle, "New Tasks, New Methods," 292).

liturgists to embrace a new system of study, namely “to grapple with the question of how the liturgical celebrations of the church actually operate today in the worship life of local congregations.”<sup>29</sup> This is precisely Searle’s chief concern, as he was convinced that liturgical studies needed to embrace the realities of the contemporary human dimension of assemblies in their actual performance of the liturgy.

When the “full, conscious, and active” participation was a non-issue, such a turn to the assembly was unimportant and irrelevant for liturgical studies. However, issues affecting the assembly can no longer go unexplored, as they are essential to the liturgical act itself.

Searle suggests that among the most pertinent issues are:

the polyvalence of the term “community” as applied to parish or congregation in contemporary American society; the various forms of interaction which might correspond to the term “active participation”; the various definitions of the terms “sign” and “symbol” and their relative usefulness for understanding the expressiveness and operativity of liturgical functions; the kind of religious imagination extant in our congregations through which the hearing of the word and the experience of the rites are filtered; the compatibility or incompatibility of aspects of American culture or subcultures with the “world” of the liturgy and what in fact happens when they conflict; the relative importance of what is *said* and what is *done* in liturgy, in terms of their impact upon participants; the role of such facts as age,

---

<sup>29</sup> Searle, “New Tasks, New Methods,” 291. By proposing a new method for the study of liturgy, Searle in no way discounts the necessary role of history and theology. His method provides a complement to the traditional approach. He writes: “The massive reforms of the church’s actual practice of worship were both promoted and made possible on the basis of liturgical history and a newly recovered theological understanding of the liturgy of the church. To this day, the field of liturgical scholarship is properly dominated by the historians and theologians among us.” What Searle wants to add to the discussion is the reality of what liturgy truly is to people in their actual lives and how it impacts their worldview. See also James Tunstead Burtchaell, “A New Pastoral Method in Theology,” *Commonweal* (January 27, 1984) 44-49. Burtchaell defines “pastoral” as the “skill in discerning just what it is that people do believe.” He continues to write: “What we are less liberally provided is some way to discern how penetratingly the faith we profess in credoling chorus is assented to in our private selves and souls. How well has the tradition impregnated our bones? How consistently does it embody itself in what we do? . . . I would think it an invaluable strategy to be able to scan the gestures and ventures of life that are more intuitive than verbal, more preoccupied than alert, more original and less conformist, and to descry whether there are any struts of solid Christian belief serving as the load-bearing supports of our people’s lives. This is a pastoral method which is worth our while to develop” (48-49). This article appears in MSP, F12, Folder “Method.”

sex, psychological type, education and social status in the way different people relate to different styles of liturgical celebration.<sup>30</sup>

Searle posits these concerns as a result of the realization that, while the liturgical reforms of the Second Vatican Council were largely successful on the level of structural change, the ways in which contemporary assemblies have responded to, embraced, and been shaped by the liturgy since Vatican II are questionable and demand assessment. As Searle states: “In short, historical awareness and theological depth were enough to persuade church authorities to reform the liturgy, but they were insufficient to ensure any controlled connection between the reform of the liturgical books and the renewal of Christian life.”<sup>31</sup>

Therefore, Searle maintains that liturgical studies must incorporate the scholarly findings of other fields, specifically within the human sciences, in order to address the concerns that arise when the dynamics of the assembly are put into the domain of inquiry.<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> Searle, “New Tasks, New Methods,” 293. Searle’s list of issues is tailored to the study of liturgy in the United States. However, authors in other parts of the world have discerned similar issues. See for example François Morlot, “Le colloque de Louvain: Questions posées,” *La Maison-Dieu* 91 (1967): 152-162. One of the concerns Morlot raises that Searle does not address (surprisingly) is the relationship between liturgy and creation. Morlot writes: “Comment le rite eucharistique peut-il manifester que le sens de la création ne se découvre pas en dehors du Christ et de son mystère pascal?” (160).

<sup>31</sup> Searle, “New Tasks, New Methods,” 292-293. See also Angelus Häussling, “Liturgiewissenschaft zwei Jahrzehnte nach Konzilsbeginn,” *Archiv für Liturgiewissenschaft* 24 (1982): 1-18. Häussling notes the dialogue between liturgical studies and the human sciences: “Wichtig ist die geforderte, eigentlich theologisch konzipierte Methoden—und Grundlagentheorie zu einem Zeitpunkt, in dem nach allgemeiner Überzeugung Liturgiewissenschaft nicht allein mehr mit dem herkömmlichen Themenkatalog auskommt, sondern, dank neu oder erneut aufnehmen muß. Es genügt da nicht eklektisch Methoden und Ergebnisse aus Psychologie, Soziologie, auch Politologie und anderen Wissenschaften zu übernehmen” (8).

<sup>32</sup> See Searle, “New Tasks, New Methods,” 293. He states: “Given that these are genuine problems for the church’s celebration of the liturgy today, and given that our ultimate loyalty is to the service of the worship life of the church, it is surely not permitted to us to absolve ourselves of all responsibility and to return to the contemplation of our palimpsests. If confronting such questions lies beyond the limits of our competence as historians or theologians, then it is for us to extend our competence.” See also Collins, “Liturgical Methodology and the Cultural Evolution of Worship in the United States,” 85-102. Collins writes: “For we are in an era of liturgical flux, when neither traditional historical methodology nor theological methodology is capable of providing integrated and comprehensive control over the phenomena of worship. We must look to other disciplines for help” (93). And later, she contends that liturgical studies must learn the dynamics of field study: “As armchair anthropologists had to move out of libraries and studies and become field anthropologists to refine their procedures, so contemporary liturgical study which has begun in libraries and seminaries must,

His answer to the need to extend beyond the limits of historical and theological methods, with regard to liturgical research, is to be found in what he coins “pastoral liturgical studies.”<sup>33</sup> Searle contends:

In short, I am arguing that the study of the liturgy in the life of the church today is too important to be entrusted to anyone else but liturgists, but that we as liturgists have the responsibility to recognize the limitations of our traditional resources and to see the need to address new problems in new ways. *Alongside liturgical history and liturgical theology there is room and need for a third branch of scholarship, that of pastoral liturgical studies, or pastoral liturgy, for short.*<sup>34</sup>

Searle bases his method upon Romano Guardini’s thesis that the subject of liturgical studies is precisely “the living, offering, praying Church, which accomplishes the mystery of grace, considered in terms of her actual worship in practice and her statements concerning it”<sup>35</sup> In other words, the liturgical event itself is understood in an incarnational view as revelatory of God’s grace.

“The specific focus of pastoral liturgical studies,” Searle writes, “is on the sacramental or communicative potential of the human words and actions which constitute both the form of the mystery of grace and simultaneously the human response to that

---

for the collection of the data of contemporary liturgical history and the clarification of procedures, move into the places where Christians assemble to worship” (101).

<sup>33</sup> Note that heretofore whenever the term “pastoral liturgical studies” is used outside of a direct citation of Searle it will appear in quotation marks in order to establish it as a unique and original thought.

<sup>34</sup> Searle, “New Tasks, New Methods,” 294. Emphasis mine. In footnote 6, he expresses concern over misconceptions of what he means by “pastoral liturgy”: “The use of the term ‘pastoral liturgy’ is obviously coined on the basis of the affiliation of the program proposed here to the larger agenda of pastoral or practical theology, though it is to be hoped that the more clearly delimited object of pastoral liturgy will save it from the crisis of purpose and identity which has afflicted pastoral theology.”

<sup>35</sup> This is Searle’s translation of the original German. See Romano Guardini, “Über die systematische Methode in der Liturgiewissenschaft,” *Jarbuch für Liturgiewissenschaft* 1 (1921) 104. Guardini writes: “Gegenstand der systematischen Liturgieforschung ist also die lebendige, opfernde, betende, die Gnadengeheimnisse vollziehende Kirche, in ihrer tatsächlichen Kultübung und ihren auf diese bezüglichen, verbindlichen Äußerungen.”

mystery.”<sup>36</sup> Thus, “pastoral liturgical studies” examines the way in which liturgical celebration relies upon language, symbol, gesture, and human interaction in order to experience God’s actual presence, and at the same time, it critiques the way in which the elements of liturgical celebration serve to cloud, or mask, the realization of God’s grace. Searle posits that the purpose of “pastoral liturgy” is “to study the liturgical event as a human activity, using models drawn from the human sciences, in order to better understand empirically how it functions and the different dimensions in which it might be operative.”<sup>37</sup>

Clearly, this is a very different notion of “pastoral liturgy” than the “self-evident axiom” of earlier approaches to “pastoral” theology criticized by Rahner, in which the assembly was conceived as the *object* of liturgy rather than as the *subject*.<sup>38</sup> In fact, the very idea of “pastoral” is often reduced solely to the notion of implementation or execution—the “how to” of liturgy enacted from the top-down—with a sense of kindness towards the needs of the community. However, Searle wishes to go beyond understanding “pastoral” as a form of ministerial empathy to interpreting it as the way in which a community is engaged in the liturgical celebration.

In other words, according to Searle’s definition “pastoral” liturgy does not begin with what a minister does for the assembly (i.e. ministry conducted *towards* the needs and experiences of the community) but rather with the assembly’s participation itself. “Insofar as

---

<sup>36</sup> Searle, “New Tasks, New Methods,” 294-295.

<sup>37</sup> Mark Searle, “Pastoral Liturgy” (Course Syllabus) in MSP, F2, Folder “Course Outlines + Bibliographies.

<sup>38</sup> See footnote 5 above. See also Vagaggini, *Theological Dimensions of the Liturgy*, 808. Vagaggini writes: “The object to which pastoral is directed is the people. . . The Church has the duty of leading and conducting every single human being to Christ.” See also Joseph Gelineau, *Dans vos assemblées: Sens et pratique de la célébration liturgique*, vol. I (Paris: Desclée & Cie, 1971), x. There Gelineau describes “pastoral liturgy” as pastors laboring to ensure that the reform of the Council is enacted: “Tout d’abord ‘les pasteurs doivent être attentifs à ce que, dans l’action liturgique, non seulement on observe les lois d’une célébration valide et licite, mais aussi à ce que les *fidèles participant* à celle-ci de *façon consciente, active et fructueuse*’ (SC 11). . . Aux rites symboliques et efficaces que l’Église propose, chacun doit pouvoir s’identifier aussi pleinement que possible.”

*pastorale liturgique* implies . . . that the ministers of the church are regarded as the dirigents and the faithful as the objects of such an approach to the liturgy and the larger life of the church,” writes Searle, “pastoral liturgical studies are not the same as *pastorale liturgique*.”<sup>39</sup> Thus, for Searle, the academic discipline called “pastoral liturgical studies” examines how an assembly participates in order to provide insight into the nature of liturgy itself. He writes:

The proper starting point for pastoral liturgical studies is the liturgical activity of the whole assembled community. It is concerned to study the various forms and degrees of engagement exemplified by all the participants, to analyze the claims made for such participation by the participants themselves as well as by the church’s authorities and by theologians, and to identify whatever discrepancies may be occurring between what the rites and texts are supposed to communicate and what they may actually be communicating. *But it is not, per se, dedicated to the implementation of existing liturgical forms . . .*<sup>40</sup>

Furthermore, Searle is very careful to guard the term “pastoral liturgical studies” from any suggestion that it has to do with the work of developing a set of necessary skills that makes the liturgist a type of artist.<sup>41</sup> Because art is always a subjective reality and often promotes individual creativity and interpretation, “pastoral liturgical studies” cannot fit into this category. “It is precisely to protect the worship life of the church from ill-advised experimentation and unhelpful advice,” asserts Searle, “that the development of scholarly research under the umbrella of pastoral liturgical studies is so important.”<sup>42</sup>

While Searle readily acknowledges that the application of findings from the human sciences and other academic disciplines to the study of liturgy had been mapped out

---

<sup>39</sup> Searle, “New Tasks, New Methods,” 295.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. Emphasis mine.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. Searle writes that “pastoral liturgy” is often used to mean “the supervision or actual carrying out of worship in our churches. As such, pastoral liturgy is something of a practical art, a set of skills required of all participants . . .”

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 296.

previously by other scholars,<sup>43</sup> he envisions his contribution (his “new task, new method”) as the systematic designation of three objectives that comprise the “fledgling discipline of pastoral liturgical studies.”<sup>44</sup> These three tasks can be identified according to the questions they pose: (1) the empirical task seeks to answer “what is going on?” (2) the hermeneutical task explores the question “what does it all mean?” and (3) the critical task asks “who is doing what to whom and how?”<sup>45</sup> Searle believes that focusing on these three tasks, “distinguished formally” yet not “entirely separated,” produces a “synchronic,” or a distinctly broadened, approach to liturgy that serves to enhance the interpretation and meaning of the liturgical event.<sup>46</sup> These three components of Searle’s conception of “pastoral liturgical studies” are examined in depth below.

---

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. It is clear that Searle has surveyed the written material regarding the impact the human sciences have on liturgical studies. He writes: “The suggestion that liturgists should undertake serious and methodical study of the human dynamics operative in the church’s worship, and should do so using the findings and methods of the human sciences, is nothing new. A number of proposals in this direction have already been made by members of this Academy (here he cites Mary Collins, “Liturgical Methodology and the Cultural Evolution of Worship in the United States,” and David Power, “Unripe Grapes: The Critical Function of Liturgical Theology”) and, more explicitly, by recent German literature (here he cites Angelus Häussling, “Die kritische Funktion der Liturgiewissenschaft” and several other German writers). Even more significantly, a review of liturgical literature in recent years confirms the experience of this Academy in revealing a growing openness toward the consideration of contemporary liturgical problems and the corresponding development of new paradigms for use in liturgical studies” (here he credits the contribution of *La Maison-Dieu*, stating that “the French have nevertheless made the most significant contributions to the dialogue between liturgical studies and the human sciences”).

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 297.

<sup>45</sup> These questions are first attached with their accompanying task in Searle’s Fall 1985 syllabus for his Pastoral Liturgy graduate seminar. They are not found in his 1983 article “New Tasks, New Methods.” Note that the headings of the next three sections are taken from the 1985 syllabus. See Appendix 2, which contains a syllabus from a summer course Searle taught in 1980 and the syllabus from the Fall 1985 course. The latter clearly reflects the organization of his method found in “New Tasks, New Methods.” Interestingly enough, Searle adds a fourth and final component called “Prayer,” to which he posits the question: “Is it possible to participate in liturgical prayer?”

<sup>46</sup> Searle, “New Tasks, New Method,” 307. He contends that attention to the three tasks of “pastoral liturgical studies” does not strip away the need for historical studies but actually produces a greater need for historical research: “More attention to social and cultural history, and particularly to the history of the liturgy as the history, not just of the rites, but of the people who used them and more attention to the place of specific rites in the lives of ordinary people, would be most helpful.”

***The Empirical Task: “What Is Going On?”***

In order to study the liturgy in the modern era, Searle believed that tools needed to be developed which might help illustrate and record what actually takes place when a community celebrates a particular liturgy. He calls this the “empirical task” of pastoral liturgy, which is “simply the function of describing what is going on in worship.”<sup>47</sup> However, because the details of any liturgical event are difficult to study after enactment, Searle argues that pastoral liturgists can learn from the social sciences how to incorporate such techniques as field work, surveys, participant observation, and interviews.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, it may be said that the objective of the “empirical task” is to create a “text” out of liturgical action that can be studied, compared, and critiqued.<sup>49</sup>

Searle’s primary concern here is to address the problem of interpreting liturgical celebrations too literally. Thus, he addresses this concern with a two-fold project: first, the insights of those working in the area of “model theory” could serve to open up a new way to

---

<sup>47</sup> Searle, “New Tasks, New Methods,” 297.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> See Paul Ricoeur, “The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as Text,” in *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, ed. and trans. J.B. Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 197-221, especially 209-211. Ricoeur argues that the social sciences can employ the methods involved in literary criticism, since both involve the process of trying to create an overall picture of what is being communicated. Just as a written work is composed of various parts with different intended meanings, so any social reality can be described and evaluated only through trying to compose some sort of meaning. Ricoeur describes this as the movement from understanding to explanation. He writes that “to understand a text is not to rejoin the author. . . . The reconstruction of the text as a whole necessarily has a circular character, in the sense that the presupposition of a certain kind of whole is implied in the recognition of the parts. And reciprocally, it is in construing the details that we construe the whole. There is no necessity and no evidence concerning what is important and what is unimportant, what is essential and what is unessential. The judgment of importance is a guess” (210-211). Searle cites Ricoeur’s article in “New Task, New Method” pages 297-298. See also Peter E. Fink, “Three Languages of Worship,” *Worship* 52 (1978): 561-575. Fink provides a helpful rendition of Ricoeur’s thinking, especially his notion of “second naiveté,” which is a “return from thought to symbol.” Fink writes: “This return is characterized by an openness to and respect for the symbol as a giver of meaning which is aided and even urged by the intervening reflective process. One does not return to the symbol knowing already what it means. This alone would rob the symbol of its depth. The return demands a wager that, if one engages the symbol again, that person will find in a deeper way the meaning which thought has evolved and more” (566). This article appears in Searle File C33: “Ritual as Language.”



talk about liturgy as metaphor, and second, the role of imagination (and thus the place of images and symbols) must be afforded greater study and attention.<sup>50</sup> It is because liturgy is intrinsically a “communications event” that it becomes necessary to talk about liturgy using the language of metaphor.<sup>51</sup> This means that liturgy is not simply something that communicates information, but rather, it is “an encounter with mystery, generating both insight and commitment.”<sup>52</sup> In his 1981 article entitled “Liturgy as Metaphor,” Searle incorporates an influential axiom of Romano Guardini, and he writes:

The study of metaphor, however, reveals the inadequacy of such an understanding (viewing liturgy as simply imparting information) and can help us “relearn a forgotten way of doing things and recapture lost attitudes.” If that happens, the reform of the rites will then appear simply as a necessary prelude to the more significant phase of liturgical renewal, that of a renewed understanding of the language of the rite and a recovery of its communicative potential. *In short, we are starting from the supposition that the role of liturgical language is not simply to convey supernatural “facts,” but to engage us in relationship; and that the actions of the liturgy are not undertaken for*

---

<sup>50</sup> It is important to note that Searle intends both the “model theory” and the role of imagination to be rooted in the people’s actual experience of liturgy. In other words, how people experience worship is as valid, if not more important, as how theologians describe the meaning of the rites. See Searle, “New Tasks, New Methods,” 299, where he states: “We are far too glib in making theological claims about what liturgy is or does. Yet, if those claims have any substance to them, they can be verified. Grace cannot be measured with any precision, of course, but grace, like fleeting events, leaves its mark on people’s lives and that mark is as available to the investigator as is the shadow of nuclear war. . . . People’s attitudes, outlooks, lifestyles and behavior are all open to investigation, as are also their understanding of what liturgy is for, the motives with which they participate, and the account they give of the place it has in their lives.”

<sup>51</sup> See Mark Searle, “Liturgy as Metaphor,” *Worship* 55 (1981) 98-99. He writes: “The ground and justification for any such attempt (studying metaphor in relationship to liturgy), of course, is the conviction that the liturgical event is best understood as a communications event. It rests upon the conviction that a liturgical service as a whole, together with all its constitutive elements, says something. It supposes that liturgical actions, whether undertaken by the leadership or by the community as a whole, are expressive actions, and that even the silences are eloquent. Thus, when I speak of the metaphorical character of liturgical language, I do not thereby intend to restrict my meaning to the verbal elements of praying and preaching and reading and singing, but to include all the nonverbal elements and the totality of the service as a whole. *Thus, my aim is not so much to explore the use of metaphor in the liturgy as to look at the liturgical event in its entirety as having a structure which is intrinsically metaphorical.*” Emphasis mine.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

*the purpose of getting a job done, so much as to constitute and express attitudes.*<sup>53</sup>

Thus, Searle identifies the heart of the problem as the “preoccupation with causality, rather than signification,” suggesting that an understanding of liturgy based on metaphor adjusts how reality is embraced; thus a movement from literalism to symbolization.<sup>54</sup> Returning to

---

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 101-102. Emphasis mine. See also Guardini, “A Letter from Romano Guardini,” 237-239. Guardini questions modern people’s ability to understand and engage in the “liturgical act.” Searle often quotes Guardini’s quandary: “The question is whether the wonderful opportunities now open to the liturgy will achieve their full realization; whether we shall be satisfied with just removing anomalies, taking new situations into account, giving better instruction on the meaning of ceremonies and liturgical vessels or *whether we shall relearn a forgotten way of doing things and recapture lost attitudes*” (237-238). Emphasis mine. Later in the same piece Guardini states: “Some wise educationists have pointed out that modern man needs more than mere talk, intellectual explanations, and formal organizing. The faculties of looking, doing, and shaping must be fostered and included in a formative act; the musical element is more than merely decorative; the communal body of the congregation is more than a mere sitting together, but rather a solidarity of existence, and so forth” (239). See also Romano Guardini, “Some Dangers of the Liturgical Revival,” in *Unto the Altar: The Practice of Catholic Worship*, Ed. Alfons Kirchgaessner (New York: Herder and Herder, 1963) 13-22. Most pertinent to the present discussion is Guardini’s caution against what he calls “liturgical dilettantism” (meaning liturgical “dabbling”). He writes: “Attempts were made to create what is with more or less justice called a popular liturgy. In all this there was much which was not only well-meant but also correct in its approach; at the same time, however, disastrous inadequacies were revealed. Above all, the attempts made were often unconnected and arbitrary ones, varying in form from place to place, so that confusions perforce arose. Often the most elementary prerequisites were lacking. Many of those who ventured into this field had no conception of the amount of historical, theological, philological and musical knowledge required to bring out more clearly the essence of a symbolic action or to compose a tune which is both in the tradition of the plainchant and truly part of the life of the people” (17).

<sup>54</sup> Searle, “Liturgy as Metaphor,” 103-104. Searle writes: “Thus symbolization has come to be seen as the most fundamental characteristic of the human enterprise and its study has come to occupy a central place in every discipline which touches upon the complexities of human life. Despite wide areas of disagreement in defining a term like ‘symbol,’ the importance of symbolization is nevertheless universally recognized, and this in turn is altering our ideas about how we relate to reality and how truth is mediated.” See also Theresa F. Koernke, “Introduction to ‘Liturgy as Metaphor,’” in A. Koester and B. Searle, *Vision*, 23-26. Koernke appraises the contemporary values of Searle’s work in symbolization, stating that “Liturgy as Metaphor” is “as significant to today’s liturgical concerns as it was over twenty years ago. By exploring the meaning of metaphor, symbol, and speech acts, Mark Searle provides a fresh view of the significance of the public worship of the Church as divine-human engagement, names the source of flatminded literalness regarding the sacraments, provides insight into the skewed notion of what ‘communion’ means, as well as the bases for the practice of preaching mystagogical homilies rather than informational sermons” (24). See also John Shea, “The Second Naïveté: Approach to a Pastoral Problem,” in *Concilium 81: The Persistence of Religion*, eds. Andrew Greeley and Gregory Baum (New York: Herder and Herder, 1973), 106-116. Searle quotes Shea on page 101 of “Liturgy as Metaphor.” Shea describes the modern drive for explanation over mystery in the following terms: “The scientific mode of knowledge is popularly considered the only way to the real. This cultural mood induces a flat-minded literalism where religious symbols are not allowed to function symbolically but are frozen into statements about an ontological deity. They do not configure and mobilize human experience but are considered solely as independent entities susceptible to detached scrutiny. *In this way religious symbols are victimized into literal language designated invisible objects*” (109).

the agenda of the empirical task, it is necessary to see that liturgy as metaphor requires literal-minded observers to adopt a different form of participation.

Searle reveals his conviction that a proper understanding of liturgy as metaphor could be enhanced by the ever-popular “model theories” that serve to promote encounter with mystery precisely by the juxtaposition of various images.<sup>55</sup> Shifting from Scholastic literalism to tensive pluralism in liturgical studies prevents any one concept from staking a claim on capturing the infinite, rather, a plurality of images serves to deepen insight.<sup>56</sup> For Searle, such an “interaction theory” of models (and metaphors) does not simply provide a language to talk about liturgy in a way that avoids the dangers of literalism, rather, it offers new insight.<sup>57</sup> In his formulation of this theory, Searle relies upon the writing of Max Black

---

<sup>55</sup> See Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, expanded edition (New York: Doubleday Image, 1986) 12. Dulles writes: “The method of models, or types, I believe, can have great value in helping people to get beyond the limitations of their own particular outlook, and to enter into fruitful conversation with others having a fundamentally different mentality.” Thus, the plurality of models is essential to this theory. See also Kevin W. Irwin, *Models of the Eucharist* (New York: Paulist Press, 2005) 32-35. Although written more than a decade after Searle’s death, Irwin’s description of models helps to solidify the effectiveness of the “models theory.” He writes: “In endorsing this understanding of the way a ‘models’ approach to theology should be used with regard to the Eucharist, I specifically want to go beyond the rhetoric of an ‘either...or’ approach to church teaching that can characterize, not to say caricature, another approach to Catholic truth that might be equally valuable and valid. When ‘traditional’ ‘Catholic’ concepts about the Eucharist, such as real presence and sacrifice, are juxtaposed with equally traditional concepts about the Eucharist, such as sacrificial meal and foretaste of the totally ‘real’ presence of Christ in the kingdom of heaven (among others), then a clarity of vision and an integral understanding of what the Eucharist is and means can result. My overriding concern here is that what can be regarded as truly Catholic components of Eucharistic theology need to be placed in dynamic and mutually enriching relationships. *A ‘models’ approach is not meant to leave one with a ‘pick and choose’ option. It is intended to offer a series of concepts which when taken together offer rich insight into the reality that is the Eucharist*” (32-33). Emphasis mine.

<sup>56</sup> See for example James L. Empereur, “The Theological Experience,” *Chicago Studies* 16 (Spring 1977): 46. He writes: “It is very important to realize that when liturgy is described in terms of theological models one is talking about it in metaphorical terms. One is using images that have an evocative power. The use of models in a liturgical theology is only an attempt to speak of worship analogously in terms of life experiences. Such images and symbols are able to focus the human experience in a new way because they so exceed the powers of abstract thought. *These models convey a meaning which is apprehended in a nonconceptual way and which have a transformative effect on the horizons of human life.*” Emphasis mine. This article appears in MSP, F14, Folder “Models (Ramsey)” and is also listed among the readings on Searle’s 1982 “Pastoral Liturgy” syllabus (See MSP, F2).

<sup>57</sup> See Searle, “Liturgy as Metaphor,” 106.

who criticizes those who look at models as a “mere crutch” or as “mere decoration or ornament,” preferring to see them as “a distinctive mode of achieving insight.”<sup>58</sup> Metaphors and models succeed when interaction occurs:

A memorable metaphor has the power to bring two separate domains into cognitive and emotional relation by using language directly appropriate to the one as a lens for seeing the other; the implications, suggestions, and supporting values entwined with the literal use of the metaphorical expression enable us to see a new subject matter in a new way. The extended meanings that result, the relations between initially disparate realms created, can neither be antecedently predicted nor subsequently paraphrased in prose. . . (The use of a model) may also help us to notice what otherwise would be overlooked, to shift the relative emphasis attached to details—in short, to *see new connections*.<sup>59</sup>

Searle uses the simple expression “the autumn of life,” as an example of an interaction of two very different realities that produces a new reality: a time of the year becomes a way of talking about life—insight is achieved in an imaginative way.<sup>60</sup>

One might ask how delving into the literary world of metaphor and the sociological realm of model really furthers liturgical studies? Searle answers: “Sacraments, like

---

<sup>58</sup> Max Black, *Models and Metaphors* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1962), 236.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 236-237. Emphasis author’s.

<sup>60</sup> See Searle, “Liturgy as Metaphor,” 106. To this “interaction theory” Seale adds the work of Philip Wheelwright and suggests that sometimes metaphors are able to produce insight when two literal meanings interact so as to produce a conflict that sparks the mind to create new meaning. See Philip Wheelwright, *Metaphor and Reality* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1962), 70-91. Here Wheelwright identifies two “ways” of metaphors. First is the “ephiphoric,” which “starts by assuming a usual meaning for a word; it then applies this word to something else on the basis of, and in order to indicate, a comparison with what is familiar” (73). Second is the “diaphoric,” which produces meaning through “juxtaposition alone” of two very different realities (78). In this latter way, it is the conflict that is important. For example, Wheelwright provides the following anti-patriotic poem as an example of a “diaphor”:

My country ‘tis of thee  
Sweet land of liberty  
Higgledy-piggledy my black hen.

There is clearly nothing anti-patriotic about these lines when they are taken apart and examined individually. However, when they are set in relationship, the communication is clearly one of anti-patriotism. (See Wheelwrights analysis on pages 78-79).

metaphors, are successful to the degree that they succeed in pointing beyond their literal meaning, yet also like metaphor they cannot dispense with that literal meaning.”<sup>61</sup> Liturgy, in fact, relies heavily upon the juxtaposition and the conflict between various images in order to lead worshipers deeper into mystery by producing what Searle calls an “explosion of insight.”<sup>62</sup> He writes:

When Christ took bread and said “This is my body,” two significant units, one an object and the other a verbal phrase, were set in uncomfortable juxtaposition, forcing the disciples to move beyond the literal meanings to a new kind of seeing. . . . To address God as “Lord” and “Rock” in the same breath is to conjoin irreconcilable literal references in such a way as to force the mind beyond them to a transcendent reconciliation of opposites, to the disclosure of something which has features in common with lordship and rockfastness, but which cannot be identified with any lord or any rock that we would recognize.<sup>63</sup>

Here Searle suggests that the liturgy is full of “clashes of meanings” which operate to awaken the imagination to a new disclosure. Literal meaning operates together with metaphorical meaning to produce a new meaning for the sacramental symbol. For example, in baptism, the act of immersion conveys the literal meaning of drowning and thereby serves to symbolically demonstrate baptism as a death to self; the use of a trickle of water simply cannot convey this literal meaning.<sup>64</sup> “Yet the experience of metaphor in language,” Searle

---

<sup>61</sup> Searle, “Liturgy as Metaphor,” 107.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 107-108. Searle states that “the use of an absolute minimum of water in Christian baptism serves at best to domesticate the metaphor and at worst manages to sever any connection between the meaning of the rite and human associations of water as both sustainer of life and agent of destruction.” Searle suggests later in article that liturgical symbols have become too other-worldly and thus disconnected with everyday experience—a way of saying that they have lost their literal meaning. He writes: “And it is not only worlds, but the actions themselves which have lost their metaphorical tension: the act of coming together as Church, the act of baptizing, the act of breaking bread, the act of anointing, the act of kneeling—they have all lost their grounding in common human experience to become steno-symbols of otherworldly realities. . . . Only when the

writes, “goes to show that metaphors fail when their literal meaning is no longer recognized and that it is the context, not the symbol itself, which makes it impossible to stick at the literal reference.”<sup>65</sup>

Therefore, Searle’s use of models and metaphors in the empirical task of “pastoral liturgical studies,” underscores the fact that mystery must always be preferred over static explanation.<sup>66</sup> To this end, he incorporates Ian Ramsey’s notion of “cosmic disclosure” that “yields a kind of undifferentiated knowing which transcends the particular categories within which we may thereafter speak of it.”<sup>67</sup> He summarizes this idea as follows:

First, there is a hunch or intuition: A person watching a mother with her child, or someone fascinated with the way the waves swirl and crash upon a cliff, or someone seeing an empty shoe lying discarded in the street is struck by the intuition that there is something about reality itself, about life and existence, about the universe, which transcends this particular woman or rock or worn-out shoe. That is the hunch, the insight, the encounter with reality itself. Secondly, the image of the woman or the rock or the shoe remains as an image to be lived with, savored, mulled over. Thirdly, the image gives rise to discourse to

---

bread is real bread will it again be possible to be surprised by its metaphoric meaning as body. Only when there is enough water to allow baptism to recover its original contact with drowning and death will its claim to be the sacrament of life grip us as something more than a tired cliché” (117-118).

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>66</sup> Searle employs the work of Ian Ramsey who calls metaphors and models the “basic currency for mystery.” See Ian T. Ramsey, *Models and Mystery* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), 53. Ramsey later suggests that metaphors and models only thrive when there exists a diversity of imagination: “So the diversity of the Church may well arise because of the diversity of routes to God in Christ. One community, for example, may take for its key concept, its dominant model, the confession that Jesus is Messiah; another community will have for its model apostolic ordination, or baptism, and so on. But no one should ever suppose still less work for, one single all-exclusive route, any more than anyone would ever suppose that one metaphor could do full justice to the inspiration of some sunset. It would be just as absurd to suppose this, as to suppose that one metaphor could do full justice to human love and affection. *We need only think on the contrary of the countless metaphors which have been currency for human love. What we have to learn is that there is no single inward track to mystery, and no single outward road from the infinite*” (65). Emphasis mine. Furthermore, Ramsey suggests that metaphors and models do not simply provide for a subjective interpretation, but instead, they reveal an “ontological reference,” or a “cosmic disclosure.” He writes: “So whether it be metaphor or model we have ways of being articulate about what is disclosed to insight. But I must emphasize already that for me it is not merely a matter of insight or imagination. I would stress what insight or imagination reveals, *the ontological reference of model and metaphor alike*” (54-55). Emphasis mine. Searle cites Ramsey beginning on page 108 of “Liturgy as Metaphor.”

<sup>67</sup> Searle, “Liturgy as Metaphor,” 108.

speaking and thinking about reality in terms of the mother's care of the child, the steadfastness of the rock, of the untold yet piteous story of the shoe. Thus the birth of a metaphor moves from the intimation through the image to the discourse, and the discourse tries to do justice to the image while the image calls up other images to help it hold and reveal the insight. Thus in its operativity the metaphor moves from discourse to image to insight. When we hear someone else's metaphor, we move from the discourse (speech or text) to the literal meaning which constitutes the image, in the hope of glimpsing the original insight and experiencing the encounter with reality which gave rise to it.<sup>68</sup>

In brief, metaphors are born in intuition, take shape in discourse (speaking and thinking), and ultimately produce insight. Such a process entails the dual requirement of what Searle calls "engagement" and "loyalty."<sup>69</sup> In the first place, metaphors require a sense of contemplation, "a suspension of disbelief, a closure of critical distance, a commitment of trust to this way of seeing."<sup>70</sup> In the second place, metaphors demand a change in attitude in which one is loyal to the insight and willing to abide by its demands. "In short," Searle contends, "a good metaphor not only carries cognitive content but it also has attitudinal import. . . In that sense, metaphors, like models in science, permit of verification. They are verified by their fruitfulness not only for understanding life, but for living it."<sup>71</sup> The application of metaphors to the realm of "pastoral liturgical studies" becomes abundantly clear with these two requirements: it should be possible to measure the effect that metaphors have in the liturgical

---

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 110-111. Searle suggests that the dual requirement of "engagement" and "loyalty" depend upon a prior condition of metaphors, namely, that they are rooted in the ambiguity of life experience: "The most powerful metaphors in human language are those that touch on areas of experience which clearly engage our own mystery, opening up for us the wonder and ambiguity of human existence . . ." (110).

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. Searle writes: "In the first place, metaphor requires the *engagement* of those who would understand it. . . It thus constitutes an invitation to look at reality in a particular way. It requires an act of contemplation, rather than analysis which takes it apart and destroys it, dissipating its power. Contemplation, on the contrary, suggests an entering into that which is contemplated, a kind of in-dwelling. In this sense, metaphor calls for the hearer or reader to yield his ground, to part with his usual descriptions of variety, to move over onto the ground of the image, to live inside it, to look around and get the feel of it."

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 111.

setting, since true engagement in them must produce a noticeable change in the way life is approached and lived.<sup>72</sup>

Searle suggests, however, that part of the reality of metaphors is that they are susceptible to change as the language itself changes.<sup>73</sup> The more a society objectifies a metaphor, the less the metaphor will communicate through ambiguity and tension. “In the area of liturgy,” writes Searle, “the problem manifests itself as a problem of participation.”<sup>74</sup> He maintains that the demise of outright objectivity and the reclaiming of imagination is essential for liturgical participation to take place:

Metaphor, in the first place, calls for a certain amount of trusting imagination, the willing suspension of disbelief. The reader or hearer has to overcome critical distance and let the metaphor teach him to see. We have to enter into the metaphor with a certain measure of sympathetic expectation and to linger with it until it yields up its secret. The dawning of insight, the gradual realization of disclosure, comes slowly and unpredictably to one who becomes immersed in the metaphor, plays with it, savors it imaginatively.<sup>75</sup>

---

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 111-112. Searle states this in terms of “ultimate reality.” “This understanding of how metaphor works and what it yields is of greatest interest for Christian liturgy. All Christian liturgy plays out a single root metaphor, that of the death and resurrection of Jesus as the disclosure, for those who will enter into it, of ultimate reality. For the Christian, Jesus is the metaphor of God and all other experiences and the metaphors to which they give rise are shaped and qualified and reinterpreted in the light of this one.”

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 113. Searle references the American philosopher and literary theorist Philip Wheelwright, who demonstrates in his *The Burning Fountain* the ability of metaphors to lose their power due to the growth of language. See Philip Wheelwright, *The Burning Fountain: A Study in the Language of Symbolism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1968), 120. Regarding the “fate that eventually overtakes radical metaphors” he states: “The grow old and moribund, losing the vital tension of opposed meanings, dramatic antithesis paradox, which was theirs at their inception. They become fossilized and enter into everyday speech as steno-symbols (symbols that derive from mere logic) which have lost their one-time allusiveness and power to stir. Familiar words like *skyscraper*, *bulldozer*, *arm* of a chair, *leaf* of a book and countless others have by now lost all trace of the semantic tension they must have had for their inventors and first users; consequently they are no longer living metaphors, but merely ex-metaphoric corpses, steno-terms, units of literal language.”

<sup>74</sup> Searle, “Liturgy as Metaphor,” 114. He continues: “In remarking on the parallel between the emphasis on the objectivity of truth statements and language and the stress on the objectivity of sacramental causality in liturgy, we noted that this created problems for participation which the revision of the rites has not itself been able to resolve.”

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.



Not only with words does the liturgy disclose through metaphor, but with gestures as well; it seeks to communicate and to call forth both *engagement* and *loyalty*. Searle states: “We kneel to confess, stand to salute and to praise; we bow; we beat the breast, we raise our hands, we genuflect, we make the sign of the cross—and in all this we discover the meaning of the rite by putting ourselves as best we can into what we are doing.”<sup>76</sup>

In sum, exploring how imagination and contemplation are fostered and developed for the liturgical assembly in its active role of participation is the central task of the “empirical” component of “pastoral liturgical studies.” The objective is to overturn the quest for literalism in liturgy in order to validate its foundations on symbol. “The temptation to explain these images,” writes Searle, “is something that has to be resisted: it is not explanation we need, but contemplation; not ideas but disclosures.”<sup>77</sup> Furthermore, such disclosure should not be interpreted as a moment of “instant gratification” but rather as encounter that comes with regular practice to “those who persevere and who give their eyes time to adjust to the light.”<sup>78</sup> Once the concept of metaphor in liturgy has been accepted, the next task becomes the exploration of what has caused metaphors to “fade” as well as what

---

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 115. Thus, the entire body and not just the tongue become vital in terms of metaphorical language: “In all these ways and more, the liturgy encourages us to try on the metaphor; not just to stand there, but to body it forth.”

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 116.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. Searle continues: “That, I think, is what the liturgy can engender in those who frequent it and give themselves to its discipline. In brief, just as metaphor can only operate as metaphor for those who recognize its metaphorical character, so liturgy can only act as a disclosure of God to those who surrender their claim to know beforehand what it means and who allow its literal meaning to serve each time afresh as the starting point for the discovery of further meaning” (116-117). See also Roy A. Rappaport, “The Obvious Aspects of Ritual,” in *Ecology, Meaning, and Religion*, ed. Roy A. Rappaport, 173-221 (Richmond, California: North Atlantic Books, 1979). Searle employs Rappaport’s essay in “New Tasks, New Methods” on pages 298-299 to suggest that regular participation in liturgy should work to prevent the dulling of the senses to the “obvious aspects of ritual.” In other words the pastoral liturgist not only observes the liturgy in terms of metaphor but also in terms of “surface elements” that generate meaning as well. Rappaport writes: “If an expedition into the obvious calls for justification, it may be suggested that in their eagerness to plumb ritual’s dark symbolic or functional depths, to find in ritual more than meets the eye, anthropologists have, perhaps increasingly, tended to overlook ritual’s surface, that which does meet the eye. Yet it is on its surfaces, in its form, that we may discern whatever may be peculiar to ritual” (174).

allows metaphors to stay “fresh.” What is needed is a re-grounding of metaphor in the lived experience of the contemporary assembly in order to avoid a form of communication that “has become so otherworldly as to be of no earthly use at all.”<sup>79</sup> This leads to Searle’s second task for “pastoral liturgical studies,” namely the “hermeneutical.”

### ***The Hermeneutical Task: “What Does It All Mean?”***

Searle defines hermeneutics as “the study of how the symbolic words and gestures of the liturgy operate when they engage the believing community.”<sup>80</sup> What is most important

---

<sup>79</sup> Searle, “Liturgy as Metaphor,” 119.

<sup>80</sup> Searle, “New Tasks, New Methods,” 300. See also Mark Searle, “Liturgy as a Pastoral Hermeneutic,” 140-141. In this piece published the same year as “New Tasks, New Methods” (1983), Searle employs the writing of Richard Palmer to explain clearly what he means by “hermeneutics.” See Richard E. Palmer, *Hermeneutics* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1969), 12-43. In Searle’s reading of Palmer, hermeneutics can be explained in terms of three dimensions: (1) performance, (2) explanation, and (3) translation. From these dimensions, Searle develops the following definition: “[P]astoral hermeneutics I assume to be the project of relating the liturgical event and the situation of the participants in such a way that they mutually interpret one another and thereby open up new horizons for Christian living. In other words, the import of the adjective ‘pastoral’ is such as to relate the hermeneutics to Christian praxis rather than simply to the enlargement of Christian understanding, such as would be the case with fundamental or systematic or historical theology” (141). See also Paul Ricoeur, “The Hermeneutics of Symbols and Philosophical Reflection,” *International Philosophical Quarterly* 2 (1962): 191-218. On page 202, Ricoeur writes: “Beyond the horizontal intelligence of the phenomenology of the comparatist, there opens up the field of hermeneutics properly so-called: interpretation applied in each case to an individual text. It is in modern hermeneutics that are bound together the symbol’s giving of meaning and the intelligent initiative of deciphering. Hermeneutics makes us share in the battle, the dynamics, by which symbolism is subject to being itself surpassed. Only by sharing in this dynamics does understanding enter the properly critical dimension of exegesis and become a hermeneutics.” This article appears in MSP, F16, Folder “Hermeneutics (Ricoeur, etc.).” Although written much later than Searle’s writing, Bridget Nichols offers a helpful delineation of the difficulties encountered when trying to discern meaning in liturgy. See Bridget Nichols, *Liturgical Hermeneutics: Interpreting Liturgical Rites in Performance* (New York: Peter Lang GmbH, 1996), 18. Nichols writes: “At the present time, scholars in fields such as anthropology and sociology are beginning to apply theories of language and, central to this inquiry, textual hermeneutics, to their research into liturgy. This is a necessary and creative development, but it remains at a provisional stage. It is the aim of liturgical hermeneutics to show where a methodological claim for projects that seek ways of interpreting the performative aspects of worship might be staked.” Likewise, another helpful source that was written after Searle’s contribution on the subject is a short but in-depth study by Joyce Ann Zimmerman. See Joyce Ann Zimmerman, *Liturgy and Hermeneutics* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1999). Zimmerman writes: “All communication requires at least some interpretation, even if it is so minimal that the interlocutors are hardly aware of their interpretive activity. Most everyday conversation would fit this description. But a great deal of our communication is far more complex. Anytime we try to describe an idea or concept, a dream or religious experience, or try to relate to others our experience of art or music, we are well beyond ordinary language use and into the realm of language as a symbol system. *Since symbols have both a literal, at hand meaning and another level of meaning available only through interpretation, much of our communication is hermeneutical*” (8). Emphasis mine.

about this definition is the word “how”: symbols are not to be studied in a vacuum but must be interpreted according to the way they interact with the living community. As Searle states, this second task of “pastoral liturgical studies,” demands asking “all the kinds of questions which refer not so much to what the liturgy means but to how it means.”<sup>81</sup> The issue of “how” symbols mean will ultimately come down to the effect they have on those who interact with them.<sup>82</sup> For example, how do ritual texts become prayer for the believer? Or how does the assembly actually hear the Word of God in the spoken Word? These are the kind of difficult and often overlooked questions that liturgical studies investigates in assisting people’s participation in worship.

The issue of pedagogy, raised in the last chapter, certainly comes into play here, for Searle argues that symbolic meaning within the liturgy suffers when it is imposed on the faithful from the top down. Such a method can even be seen in the liturgical movement in which educated church leaders instructed the faithful on the meaning of the liturgy.<sup>83</sup>

---

<sup>81</sup> Searle, “New Tasks, New Methods,” 300. At the very outset of describing the hermeneutical task, Searle raises the importance of communications theory and its impact on liturgical studies. Searle points to the work of Gerald Lardner. See Gerald V. Lardner, “Communication Theory and Liturgical Research,” *Worship* 51 (1977): 299-306. Similar to Searle, Lardner looks at symbols in terms of “pragmatics.” He writes: “It has been pointed out that most liturgical research to date has been semantic or syntactic, but the semiotic approach indicates that there is yet a gap to be filled: pragmatics. Pragmatics is the study of the symbol-to-user relationship; pragmatics studies the behavioral effects of symbols. . . Pragmatics studies *what actually goes on*; it asks not what symbols ‘mean,’ but what is their effect in this present context?” (302-303).

<sup>82</sup> See Jurgen Ruesch, *Semiotic Approaches to Human Relations* (The Hague: Mouton & Company, 1972). Ruesch’s study suggests that semiotics not only examines the relationship of symbols among themselves but it also explores the relationship between symbols and human interpretation. He calls such a process “metacommunication,” and he writes: “A musician who wishes to play a piece of music which is new to him has to first identify the key and the clef in which the notes are written, for both represent instructions to the player regarding the interpretation of the musical symbols. In direct person-to-person communication without mediation through a musical score the same relationship exists. A person who perceives a message divides it into two parts: one part might be labeled the content of the message; and the other, the instructions. The instructions which refer to the interpretation of the message constitute communications about communication, or ‘metacommunication’” (76).

<sup>83</sup> See Stephen Happel, “Classicist Culture and the Nature of Worship,” *Heythrop Journal* 21 (1980): 291. Happel argues that holding onto a “classicist” view of culture in which the Church provides for culture will no

Therefore, it is critical to see the “hermeneutical” task of liturgical studies apart from the notion of catechesis. As Searle states:

The hermeneutical function of pastoral liturgy, then, is not to be identified with catechesis, as that term is usually understood. Instead, it will undertake a study of how symbols operate and how symbolic language communicates. On the basis of such broad studies, it will be able to examine [a] the effectiveness of the contemporary presentation of liturgical symbols in communicating the mystery of grace and [b] the capacity of modern people for receiving such communication.<sup>84</sup>

Thus, Searle posits two major concerns in the search for how meaning is communicated.

First, he maintains a “concern for quality,” in that symbols must be able to produce the desire for contemplation on the part of liturgical participants. Secondly, however, he wishes to step back and ask the underlying question: are liturgical participants truly able to engage in symbolic language? Even prior to experiencing liturgical symbols, how does the predominant culture work against worshipers’ ability to understand what symbols are communicating?

---

longer work in a world that recognizes a plurality of cultures; thus, culture necessarily impacts liturgy. He writes: “What has become clear in the century between the origins of the liturgical movement, the historical investigations that it encouraged, and the promulgation of the Decrees of Vatican II, is that the relation between liturgy and culture in the Western tradition has been extraordinarily complex. If the post-Tridentine Church largely envisioned liturgical form as ‘a-cultural,’ historical studies show that prior to that, the relation of culture and worship was often an insertion of cultural forms into the worship and not vice versa.” Searle cites Happel’s article on page 300 and offers this assessment: “Just as ‘culture’ was once identified with a particular elitist way of being in the world, yet regarded as something to which all should aspire, so there has been a similar ‘trickle-down theory’ (to use another metaphor) where popular understanding of the liturgy is concerned. It has been assumed that some people—church leaders, liturgists and theologians—knew what it meant, and that they were to instruct the clergy so that the clergy could instruct the people as to what the liturgy was really about.”

<sup>84</sup> Searle, “New Tasks, New Methods,” 300. See also Avery Dulles, “The Symbolic Structure of Revelation,” *Theological Studies* 41:1 (1980): 51-73. Dulles writes: “Our problem, then, is to reconcile the worldly mediation of revelation with its power to bring us into the sphere of the divine. The key to the solution, in my opinion, lies in a distinction (not a separation) between two general kinds of knowing. On the one hand, there is objective knowledge, obtained by observation and abstraction from the world we see about us. . . (On the other hand,) we know our own body not by looking at it . . . but rather by dwelling in it, but using it, by relying on it” (60). Dulles calls this second kind of knowledge “participatory knowledge,” and he states that this knowledge is gained by using symbols. He concludes: “Symbol, then, gives not objective but participatory knowledge” (61).

Searle addresses these concerns in a 1984 article that he published in *The Way*, entitled “Images and Worship.”<sup>85</sup> It is Searle’s thesis that while liturgy is largely an act of the imagination, contemporary participants approach it from a perspective formed by “habits of literalism.”<sup>86</sup> He suggests that the restoration of the imagination was behind the work of the pioneers of the liturgical movement, who saw the strengthening of Christian imagination as synonymous with a renewed understanding of what it means to be Church. Searle makes the case:

It is clear, at least in retrospect, that the liturgical movement was a movement for the renewal of the Christian imagination. It originated in a Church that envisaged sacraments simply as causes of graces administered by the few to the many, in which liturgy was thought of as a set of more or less dispensable ceremonies designed to honor the

---

<sup>85</sup> Mark Searle, “Images and Worship,” *The Way* 24 (1984): 103-114.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 103. Searle states in the opening paragraph: “It is difficult to speak of images and worship without conjuring up visions of image-worship, or to speak of liturgy and imagination without appearing to detract from the seriousness of the liturgy. Yet it will be the contention of this article that religion is inescapably the honoring of images and that worship is, above all, an act of the imagination. Conversely, it will be suggested, the problems faced by religion in our culture and by liturgy in our churches spring largely from habits of literalism which have wasted our powers of imagination.” See also Margaret Mary Kelleher, “Introduction to ‘Images and Worship,’” in A. Koester and B. Searle, eds., *Vision*, 122-125. Kelleher writes: “It is widely accepted that sacraments operate as symbols, a particular kind of sign. However, if those who are participating in liturgical worship have a naïve and literal way of thinking, in which the sign and signified are collapsed into one another, there is no hope of grasping the sacramental nature of such realities as the Eucharist or the ordained priesthood. Mark Searle was convinced that the current educational system plays a major role in shaping individuals with such a literal way of thinking. He concluded that such literalism was a significant cause of the liturgical crisis that was faced by the Church, and he called for an intellectual conversion that would allow people to move beyond such literalism” (122-123). See also David Power, *Unsearchable Riches: The Symbolic Nature of Liturgy* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1984). This work, fresh off the press at the time, appears as the chief reading for the hermeneutical section on Searle’s “Pastoral Liturgy” course syllabus for the Fall 1985 (See Appendix 2). What most likely appealed to Searle was Power’s willingness to look extensively at the crisis of symbols in the post-Vatican II Church. Power writes: “*The liturgical renewal is not a simple matter of reviving what history tells us are more authentic rites, nor of working out a better grasp of the meaning of core symbols. The Christian communities must meet the challenge of relating contemporary experience to a symbolic heritage, transforming that experience in the power of the Spirit, and projecting the kind of future for humanity that is promised in the symbol of God’s kingdom and in the memory of Jesus Christ*” (30-31). Emphasis mine. See also David Power, “Theological Trends: Symbolism in Worship: A Survey, I,” *The Way* 13 (1973): 310-324. At the beginning of the article, Power writes: “It is not the purpose of liturgical language to explain or to hold discourse about what is happening, but to carry the participants along and absorb them in the mystery. The second Vatican Council enunciated the didactic principle that rites and signs should be simple and easy to understand. Unfortunately, this often seems to be followed in such a way that ceremonies are reduced to the banality of advertisement posters, and have as much appeal as the algebraic signs indicating the equation,  $x = y + z$ . This is a long way from Augustine’s warning that religious symbolism, though simple, is of no purpose unless it makes the mind soar above what is seen . . .” (310).

sacrament and edify the observant; and in which devotion was identified with exercises of individualistic interiority. . . . What the liturgical movement worked for was not so much change in the liturgy itself (though pressure for such change built up as the movement progressed), as an alteration in the way people related to the liturgy and, ultimately, in the way they saw themselves as Church. *Liturgical renewal was, from the beginning, a function of ecclesial renewal, and ecclesial renewal meant a renewal of the Christian imagination.*<sup>87</sup>

As noted earlier, Searle believed that the Church was experiencing “something of a stalemate” in liturgical—and therefore ecclesial—renewal fewer than twenty years after the close of the Second Vatican Council because imagination was not made the “subject of conscious and critical reflection.”<sup>88</sup> In order to break through this “stalemate,” and thus remove the obstacle of literalism, the Church would need to discover anew what liturgical activity is—namely an act of the imagination that comes with a renewed “desire.”<sup>89</sup>

Once again, the work of Romano Guardini plays a major role in Searle’s understanding of the liturgy as a symbol-based activity that relies upon healthy imagination. The following words of Guardini exemplify his ruminations on a type of liturgical

---

<sup>87</sup> Searle, “Images and Worship,” 103-104. Emphasis mine. Also, see above pages 141-142.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid. 104. Here Searle references the work of Ray Hart who introduces the term “sedimented imagination.” See Ray Hart, *Unfinished Man and the Imagination: Toward an Ontology and a Rhetoric of Revelation* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968). Hart suggests that the only way out of literalism is “imaginative shock” that employs “first-order language” (i.e. symbol) that produce a new perspective or way of seeing the world. He writes: “Whether in preaching, sacrament, or whatever mode of worship, the sole intent of proclamation is to lay the ontological potency of the Christ-event upon the hearer as his ownmost potency of being man in the world, and that in first-order language. . . . It is the sole rationale of the church to speak first-order language of this initial circumspection in a contemporary idiom. Both the proclaiming church and the activated hearer stand under the constraint of what both are summoned to re-enact. Nothing works against that constraint so much as the church’s repetition of its own sedimentations” (217). See also footnote 27 and Searle’s use of the word “stalemate” in his 1982 article “Reflections on Liturgical Reform.”

<sup>89</sup> See Searle, “Images and Worship,” 105. Having cited on the previous page the poem *Listen to Love* by Archibald Macleish in which the author elaborates on “a failure of the spirit to imagine and desire,” Searle states that the liturgical crisis of the day is brought on by “our not desire.” He writes: “The crisis of our time, liturgically, is not a crisis brought about by poor texts and shoddy ceremonial. These are mere symptoms. The crisis is a crisis provoked by *our not desiring*, not even knowing, the kind of activity liturgy is: an activity of the imagination.” Emphasis mine.

performance that fails to embrace the imagination, and Searle's repetitive use of this quote suggests how influential it was in his own thinking:

. . . those whose task it is to teach and educate will have to ask themselves—and this is all-decisive—whether they themselves desire the liturgical act or, to put it plainly, whether they know of its existence and what exactly it consists of and that it is neither a luxury nor an oddity, but a matter of fundamental importance. Or does it, basically, mean the same to them as to the parish priest of the late nineteenth century who said: “We must organize the procession better; we must see to it that the praying and the singing are done better.” He did not realize that he should have asked himself quite a different question: how can the act of walking become a religious act, a retinue for the Lord progressing through his land, that an “epiphany” may take place?<sup>90</sup>

Interpreting Guardini's writing as the issuance of a call for the renewal of Christian imagination as something more pressing than the reworking of ritual texts and rubrics, Searle simultaneously echoes Bernard Lonergan's appeal for the reawakening of “intellectual conversion.”<sup>91</sup> To be converted in this manner means un-learning the way of thinking literally that has been formed in us since childhood and fostered through the education

---

<sup>90</sup> Guardini, “A Letter from Romano Guardini,” 238 (as quoted in Searle, “Images and Worship,” 105). Some of the other places in Searle's corpus where this quote by Guardini appears are: “Liturgy as Metaphor” (1981) 115; “New Task, New Methods” (1983) 301; *Called to Participate* (2006) 58. See also Romano Guardini, *Prayer in Practice*, Trans. Prince Leopold of Loewenstein-Wertheim (New York: Pantheon Books, Inc., 1957), 222. For Guardini, the heart of the problem is the loss of “those powers so long neglected and those faculties which he has allowed to atrophy.” He continues: “He must learn afresh not merely to think about symbolic forms but to see and enter into them; not, during holy ceremonies, to ask what this or that detail means, but to join in with them and thus fully partake of their meaning and contents.”

<sup>91</sup> Searle, “Images and Worship,” 105. See Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), 238. “Intellectual conversion,” writes Lonergan, “is a radical clarification and, consequently, the elimination of an exceedingly stubborn and misleading myth concerning reality, objectivity, and human knowledge. The myth is that knowing is like looking, that objectivity is seeing what is there to be seen and not seeing what is not there, and that the real is what is out there to be looked at. . . . The world of immediacy is the sum of what is seen, heard, touched, tasted, smelt, felt. It conforms well enough to the myth's view of reality, objectivity, knowledge. But it is but a tiny fragment of the world mediated by meaning. For the world mediated by meaning is a world known not by the sense experience of an individual but by the external and internal experience of a cultural community, and by the continuously checked and rechecked judgments of the community. Knowing, accordingly, is not just seeing; it is experiencing, understanding, judging, and believing.” Thus, Lonergan's theory is that “intellectual conversion” requires allowing the world of symbols to impact one's understanding of what is objectively real, because the meaning of symbols belongs to a cultural community rather than to an individual alone.

system, for as Searle observes “we have to be educated to literalism, it does not come naturally.”<sup>92</sup>

As a response to the need for “intellectual conversion” in the Church, Searle contends that what is needed is not “creative liturgies” or “imaginative alternatives to the rites we have received” but rather what he calls a “hermeneutical catechesis” which is “geared less towards content than towards the proper development of the religious imagination in older children and adults.”<sup>93</sup> He employs the example of the praying assembly to demonstrate what is demanded by this type of catechesis:

Although theologically the liturgical assembly has been re-vindicated as a primary sacrament of the presence of Christ and as the primary celebrant of the liturgy, it is not at all clear that in catechesis and practice we have been taught what to make of this, or how to make anything of it. For centuries the sign value or sacramental quality of the congregated faithful has simply been ignored, and much contemporary effort at encouraging “active participation” seems intent on continuing to ignore it. The question is: does “active participation” merely mean joining in, doing what everyone else is doing? Is loud

---

<sup>92</sup> Searle, “Images and Worship,” 106. Searle employs here the thinking of John Dominic Crossan who offers a theory of the development of the imagination in terms of images appropriated in the time of childhood being brought into adult life and presented as “paradox.” See John Dominic Crossan, “Stages in Imagination,” in *The Archaeology of the Imagination, Journal of the American Academy of Religion, Thematic Studies*, 48:2, ed. Charles E. Winquist (Ann Arbor, MI: Edwards Brothers Inc., 1981), 56ff. He writes: “If one understands the metaphorical to be an abnormal exercise of the normal literal imagination . . . one is unlike to take the paradoxical imagination very seriously. But the more profoundly and radically one submits to the rule of metaphor, the more pressing becomes the problem of paradox. My suggestion here is that the paradoxical imagination is not just one possible mode of imagination but is the highest stage and final level of imaginative development” (56).

<sup>93</sup> Searle, “Images and Worship,” 107. Searle likens such catechesis to a “new” mystagogy, in which “what is required is a conversion of the imagination, a re-awakening of the imagination as a desire for the ‘Reality’ mediated by the words, signs and gestures of the rite.” As such, symbols help produce this sort of “intellectual conversion” when they are juxtaposed. See F.W. Dillistone, “The Function of Symbols in Religious Experience,” in *Myth and Symbol*, ed. F.W. Dillistone (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1966), 14. He writes: “Are there symbols appropriate to this type of religious experience (reconciliation)? Only, it seems to me, those which stand between and hold together the stark contradictions, the paradoxical absurdities, the tragic alienations of human life. One thinks of the fire, both warming and purging, the sacrifice, both consuming and renewing, the water, both inundating and regenerating, the cross, both judging and saving. These are the great symbols of reconciliation through which the conflicts between love and hate, life and death, power and weakness, hope and despair, begin to find their resolution. Confronted by such a symbol man may suddenly see through to the reality of an ultimate reconciliation in which his own life and the life of his world find their true meaning.”



singing and a boisterous exchange at the kiss of peace really what we are after?<sup>94</sup>

Searle's means of measuring liturgical participation is rooted in the assembly's awareness (or lack thereof) of how its use of liturgical symbols (speech, gesture, art, smell, etc.) allows it to enter into a deeper reality, the mystery of God. "The first step," he writes, "must surely be to make the gathered congregation an object of reflective awareness as a visible sign of invisible realities, instead of being just the context within which (or to which) things are done."<sup>95</sup>

Beyond establishing a sense of communal contemplation, which comes about through individual self-surrender, Searle raises the issue of liturgy as "rehearsal of attitudes" and suggests the repetition of such attitudes requires great "discipline," or "the kind of self-control which frees one from distraction and preserves one from dissipation."<sup>96</sup> Thus, what Searle wishes to demonstrate is that the words and actions of liturgy are not so much intended to produce "thought" as they are to "mediate encounter."<sup>97</sup> Liturgy invites its

---

<sup>94</sup> Searle, "Images and Worship," 108.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid. In the several pages that follow, Searle attempts to address what such a corporate "reflective awareness" might look like. He first of all addresses the issue of communal "contemplation." In this context, he quotes the work of Evelyn Underhill who talks about the individual mystic in the following manner: "The condition of all valid seeing and hearing, upon every plan of consciousness, lies not in a sharpening of the senses, but in a particular attitude of the whole personality: in a self-forgetting attentiveness, a profound concentration, a self-merging which operates a real communion between the seer and the seen—in a word, in *contemplation*." See Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness* (New York: The Noonday press, 1955), 300.

<sup>96</sup> Searle, "Images and Worship," 110. He continues by detailing what such discipline necessarily entails: "Ritual behavior is a prime example of such discipline. By putting us through the same paces over and over again, ritual rehearses us in certain kinds of interaction over and over again, until the ego finally gives up its phrenetic desire to be in charge and lets the Spirit take over. The repetitiousness of the liturgy is something many would like to avoid; but this would be a profound mistake. It is not entertainment, or exposure to new ideas. *It is rather a rehearsal of attitudes, a repeated befriending of images and symbols, so that they penetrate more and more deeply into our inner self and make us, or re-make us, in their own image.*" Emphasis mine.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid. Searle provides the following examples of participation in the images of liturgy as "encounter": "Kneeling, for example, is not an expression of our humanity: it is more an invitation to discover what reality looks like when we put ourselves in that position. The texts of scripture and the images of the liturgy are not

participants to put on or to live in the attitude conveyed by the symbol. Searle beautifully summarizes the assembly's "discipline" in the following paragraph:

So there is a discipline of listening, looking and gesturing to be learnt: ways of standing, touching, receiving, holding, embracing, eating and drinking which recognize these activities as *significant* and which enable us to perform them in such a way that we are open to the meaning (the *res*) which they mediate. In terms of the assembly, the primary signifier, there is a way of being together with others in the liturgy—a way of which all these ritual activities are a part—which goes beyond mere juxtaposition of bodies and beyond the pain or pleasure of orchestrated responses, and which leads to the loss of self in favor of profound union with the Body. One acts without acting, speaks without speaking, sings without singing: for it is Christ who prays, blesses, touches and sings in the Body to which my own body is given over.<sup>98</sup>

In addition to "contemplation" and "discipline," Searle believes that preaching and catechesis that move away from moralism and mere explanation toward the agenda of sparking the imagination will also serve the "reflective awareness" of the assembly. The "discipline" of self-surrender to the attitudes of the liturgy in preaching and catechesis multiply (not define) the "associations evoked by ritual and prayer, showing how the image opens on to a larger world of reality than meets our eye or ear."<sup>99</sup> Searle concludes his exposition of the way in

---

didactic messages wrapped up in some decorative covering which can be thrown away when the context is extracted. *They are images and sets of images to be toyed with, befriended, rubbed over and over again, until, gradually and sporadically, they yield flashes of insight and encounter with the 'Reality' of which they sing.*" Emphasis mine.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid. See also Searle, "Liturgy as a Pastoral Hermeneutic," 144. He writes: "The proclamation of Scripture as Word of God, the organized response of fixed prayer, confession, thanksgiving, and intercession, the choreography of processing and stillness, of sitting and kneeling, of standing and bowing, rehearse us as whole persons in the primary language and images of the Christian imagination, so that we might see differently. There is admittedly something circular and repetitive about ritual celebration: the same texts, the same feasts, the same gestures. *But it is through such repetition that the Christian imagination is formed.*" Emphasis mine.

<sup>99</sup> Searle, "Images and Worship," 112. Here Searle praises the method of the great mystagogues of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries who opened up the mystery of the sacraments by reflecting upon the experience of the neophytes. For a similar appraisal see David Regan, *Experiencing the Mystery: Pastoral Possibilities for Christian Mystagogy* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1994), 7. Concerning the relationship between mystagogy and pastoral initiatives, Regan writes: "Experience is the element which recommends the practice of mystagogy to pastoral concern, and if experience is more difficult to analyse than theological statements, it has more potential for uniting. The human personality can find in experience an integration which is sought in vain in ideas and a

which the imagination is expanded for the assembly by suggesting that participation in symbols leads to daily transformation, with a new way of looking at the world.<sup>100</sup>

However, in order to rejuvenate a sense of lively imagination among liturgical participants, Searle believes that “pastoral liturgical studies” must necessarily examine the realities that make engagement with symbols difficult (or nearly impossible) in an American context. Thus, he can pose the question: “Is the average North American Christian *liturgiefähig*?”<sup>101</sup> To assess this dilemma, one must understand the obstacles posed by contemporary culture, which Searle sums up as the following:

our cultural experiences of time; our relationship to place and to the physical universe; the structures of social life and the forms of belonging which exist today and which are so different from those in which the liturgy developed; the functionalism or pragmatism of our culture; expectations about how authority should be exercised and about the freedom of the modern individual to create his/her own world and lifestyle through personal choices; the related privatization of religion and the corresponding pluralism of beliefs, practices and lifestyles.<sup>102</sup>

---

haphazard group can become a community through common religious experience . . .” Furthermore, for a comparative study of the mystagogies of Cyril of Jerusalem, Ambrose of Milan, John Chrysostom, and Theodore of Mopsuestia see Hugh M. Riley, *Christian Initiation*, Studies in Christian Antiquity, Volume 17, ed. Johannes Quasten (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1974).

<sup>100</sup> Searle, “Images and Worship,” 112-113. He writes: “To shatter, or even to stretch, the horizons of the imagination is to challenge the intellect and to set new desiderata before the energies of the will. *To transform the working of the religious imagination is to enable people to situate themselves differently in the world, to challenge their values, to bring them to question their accepted patterns of behavior.* . . . Were there more widespread awareness of the kind of activity liturgy is, and of the discipline it requires of those who would participate in it, it might yet contribute to a renewal of our self-understanding, or rather of the images we have of our place in the world.” Emphasis mine.

<sup>101</sup> Searle, “New Tasks, New Methods,” 301. The German word *liturgiefähig* might best be defined as “liturgically competent.”

<sup>102</sup> Ibid. See also Searle, “Liturgy as a Pastoral Hermeneutic,” 147. Here Searle describes a collective failure to be transformed through the imagination: “This closure of the imagination is not merely to be laid at the door of the individual, for the individual himself lives largely in the imagination of his culture, as he lives in the language of his culture. It is as the cultural level above all that the imagination tends to become fixed, that ways of seeing, judging and acting are accepted as ‘natural’ or ‘objective.’ It is at the level of the culture, too, that resistance to new ways of imaging occurs with the result that prophets, religious or secular, are notoriously unpopular. Thus, for conversion to occur in the individual, the cultural imagination and its secular faith must themselves be called into question.”

Admitting that not all aspects of culture impact liturgical celebration in a negative way and that “pastoral liturgical studies” must also examine cultural realities that can positively contribute to that celebration, Searle contends that the human capacity for symbolic communication must be tested.<sup>103</sup> “It is by attention to form rather than to content,” he writes, “that pastoral liturgy will contribute to the liturgy’s ability to communicate effectively as both expressive of the faith of the community and formative of it.”<sup>104</sup>

Therefore, closely tied to the issue of the Christian imagination in worship is the study of communication in general, an interest that Searle turned to in several of his academic articles in the early to mid 1980s.<sup>105</sup> For example, in his 1982 article, “The Narrative Quality of Christian Liturgy,” Searle suggests that the analysis of narrative structure, a communications method made popular by biblical scholars, might contribute to liturgical studies as well.<sup>106</sup> He writes:

---

<sup>103</sup> Searle, “New Tasks, New Methods,” 301. While the description of the situation takes place in the “empirical” task, the “hermeneutical” task assesses both cultural contributions and blockades to active participation. Searle writes: “Obviously, these factors have an impact on Christian and ecclesial life far beyond the liturgical celebration, but they become particularly crucial there. Nor do I wish to suggest that everything in contemporary society constitutes an obstacle to symbolic communication in the liturgy, or that there may not be elements which need to be incorporated into our symbol system. But that is precisely what the hermeneutical dimension of pastoral liturgical studies needs to explore.”

<sup>104</sup> Searle, “Images and Worship,” 113.

<sup>105</sup> See for example Mark Searle, “The Narrative Quality of Christian Liturgy,” *Chicago Studies* 21:1 (1982): 73-84; Mark Searle, “The Uses of Liturgical Language,” *Liturgy* 4:4 (1984): 15-19; and Mark Searle, “Christian Liturgies and Communication Theory,” *Media Development* 31:3 (1984): 4-6.

<sup>106</sup> See Searle, “The Narrative Quality of Christian Liturgy,” 80. Regarding the move to incorporate structural analysis into the study of the liturgy, Searle writes: “The failure of the translation and reform of the rites to rejuvenate the Church in the 1960s led to the realization that there was more to the liturgy’s failure to communicate than the mere use of an ancient tongue. It was then that liturgical studies began to turn to the human sciences for help in understanding the communication processes involved in liturgical celebration. Among the models which then began to be used was that of the structural analysis of narrative, a scientific account of how narrative works first developed by Vladimir Propp at the beginning of the century and taken further in France by A.J. Greimas in the 1960’s.” See also Stephen Crites, “The Narrative Quality of Experience,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 39 (1971): 291-311. In an attempt to say demonstrate that all of humanity attempts to establish meaning through the order and reordering of “stories,” Crites distinguishes between what he calls “mundane” stories and “sacred” stories, with the former being stories that are universally understood and the latter being those that “lie too deep in the consciousness of a people to

Now the application of the structural analysis of narrative to forms of liturgical prayer presupposes that prayer forms have some structural similarity to narrative and can be treated, in fact, as a kind of narrative discourse. What this means, basically, is that in prayer as in stories, there is a beginning, a middle, and an end. Put more precisely, there is an initial situation, the onset of crisis, and finally the resolution of crisis. . . . What structural analysis of narrative does, is enable us to appreciate the narrative character—and the specific prayer character—of such texts as a collect or a Eucharistic Prayer. It helps us to read or to hear these texts and to understand them not only in terms of the individual words or phrases they contain, but in terms of the structural relationships suggested by the text to be inherent in the story of our salvation.<sup>107</sup>

More exploration of Searle's work with "structural analysis" will take place in Chapter Six on the topic of semiotics, but in the present context, what is most important is that Searle contends that knowledge of the way in which liturgy communicates is not simply the work of experts but is fundamental to all who participate in the act of worship. In Searle's words: "The narrativity of the liturgy supposes that members of the praying community have a corresponding, if not necessarily articulate, grasp of the narrative quality of Christian experience itself."<sup>108</sup>

---

be directly told" (295). Searle, mainly interested in the "sacred" stories, cites Crites' article on pages 74-75 of "The Narrative Quality of Christian Liturgy," and proposes how Crites' differentiation of the types of stories influences liturgical studies: "This is helpful for the light it sheds on the narrative quality of liturgical texts, for while it may be objected that a collect is not a story, nevertheless it should be obvious that a collect—or a hymn or a psalm or a Eucharistic prayer—does allude, quite often explicitly, to the larger story of the divine plan unfolding in history. Phrases such as 'from age to age you gather a people to yourself,' or even 'grant that we who eat this body and drink this cup may become one body, one spirit in Christ,' clearly refer to a story that the community of the faithful believes to be taking place even now. That the liturgy presupposes the story-that-cannot-be-told is obvious enough. What is less obvious is how that story comes to light in the liturgy itself. Different accounts of how it happens are possible."

<sup>107</sup> Searle, "The Narrative Quality of Christian Liturgy," 80-81.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 83. Searle also concludes the following: "The shift from understanding the text to interpreting every detail of a complex sequence of liturgical rites may serve to remind us of the multiple sources of meaning in the rites. Although we have concentrated mainly on the narrativity of prayer forms, the Christian story is also carried on more or less explicitly, more or less adequately, in hymns and chants, in ritual gestures and the admonitions of the rites. . . . The recognition of the narrative quality of the liturgy, and the acknowledgement of where the narrativity is properly to be found, should offer some help at least to remaining true to the tradition we have received while at the same time discovering it anew in the fresh versions of each new generation" (84-85).

In addition to analyzing language in terms of the way in which it communicates a story (with a beginning, a middle, and an end), Searle's writing displays much attention devoted to expounding the "performative" nature of liturgical language. Following the lead of the English philosopher, John L. Austin, whose groundbreaking book *How to Do Things with Words* (1975) was instrumental in analyzing speech according to the way in which it performs as action, Searle sought to demonstrate that the "performativity" of liturgy is neither to communicate information or specific thoughts, but to "do something."<sup>109</sup> What is this "something" in terms of liturgy? For Searle, it is the ongoing modification of relationships; the language of liturgical prayer makes real a "newly-configured relationship" with God and others.<sup>110</sup> Such an understanding of the language of prayer actually

---

<sup>109</sup> Searle, "The Uses of Liturgical Language," 16. He writes: "[I]t is a fallacy to suppose that the sole, or even primary, function of language is to communicate information or to convey thoughts. On the contrary, when we speak, it is not merely to say something but to do something: we order, pledge, bet, promise, dedicate, apologize, congratulate, urge, judge, flirt, rebuke, and perform a thousand other actions by our words. These words are not only used to describe and communicate existing states of affairs; they can also bring about new states of affairs. To say, in such instances, is to do." See also John L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975). First appearing in 1962 and comprised of twelve lectures, this book sets out to show how "to say something is to do something" (12). Austin's work appears on Searle's 1985 course syllabus for "Pastoral Liturgy." See Mark Searle, "Pastoral Liturgy Seminar: Reading Liturgical Texts" (Course Syllabus; Spring 1985) in MSP, F4, Folder "Pastoral Liturgy Seminar 682." See also Peter Donovan, *Religious Language* (New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1976), 78-90. This work also appears on Searle's reading list for his 1985 course (See MSP, F4). In this book, Donovan categorizes "performative" language according to the following actions: Worshiping, Reminiscing, Committing, Solemnizing, Invoking, Praying, Blessing, Exhorting, Inspiring, and Religion as Language-Games. He introduces the way in which language performs these actions by stating: "The words we use perform for us—they do things, or get things done, things which count as our actions, and for which we take the credit or blame. By using words, then, a good deal of the time we are doing things: entering into commitments, making and dissolving human relations, obliging ourselves to behave in various ways, and carrying out or breaking those obligations. *A large part of our language-use, in other words, is for acting and involving ourselves, rather than for the mere passing on of information or asserting of beliefs*" (80). Emphasis mine.

<sup>110</sup> See Searle, "The Uses of Liturgical Language," 16-17. He writes: "As a result of what I say (in making a promise or issuing an order or praising a friend), the network of relationships that constitute my world are subtly, even profoundly, altered. The one who makes a promise and the one to whom the promise is made stand in a different relationship to each other after the promise is made than they did before. *Speech-acts, therefore, hold human society together and keep it in continual movement, as relationships are continually enacted, affirmed, modified or broken.* . . . Because the life of the church is rooted in the life of God in Christ, the acts done in the name of the church have repercussions at the deeper level of life with God. *The speech-act and its social effect upon life in the church is the sacramentum of the newly-configured relationship with God which, theologically, is said to be the effect of the sacrament.*" Emphasis mine.

accomplishing something rather than simply saying something has major implications for the idea of authenticity in liturgy, for as Searle states:

Human speaking, or speech, is hardly if ever the pure communication of information or the mere externalization of private thoughts and feelings. Yet that is the model usually implied in “meaning what you say.” The effect, in liturgical practice is to feel uncomfortable with preformulated prayer and this, in turn, has two results. First the celebrant will alter the prayers to make them more expressive of what the celebrant thinks or feels, or thinks the community ought to think or feel. Second, liturgical planners and presidents will feel it incumbent upon them to work the congregation up so that they do feel the appropriate feelings.<sup>111</sup>

However, Searle argues that what matters in liturgy is not that one’s feelings are articulated in the actions (or the language) of the liturgy, “what matters is that they are done.”<sup>112</sup> For example, the utterance of the words “I confess” in the *Confiteor* is not the articulation of “some presumed guilt-feelings” but rather is the practicing of the action of confessing. The words rehearse the assembly’s humility, and the relationship between God and the Church is reestablished.<sup>113</sup>

Thus, for Searle, the hermeneutical task of “pastoral liturgical studies” serves to expose the true nature of liturgical language (including gestures): it has very little to do with personal feelings and emotion but rather functions to enact communal commitment, or make real the attitude of the assembly. As Searle contends:

---

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 17-18.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>113</sup> From this example, it is clear that the performative language of liturgy is about attitudes rather than feelings. For a technical differentiation between the “language” of feeling and the “language” of attitude see Donald Evans, *The Logic of Self-Involvement: A Philosophical Study of Everyday Language with Special Reference to the Christian Use of Language about God as Creator* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), 79-141. This book appears on Searle’s Spring 1982 course on “Pastoral Liturgy.” See Mark Searle, “Pastoral Liturgy—Readings in Performative Language; Spring 1982” in MSP, F2.

What is involved here is more a matter of *attitude* than of appropriate feelings. Such is the nature of speech acts, or performative language. *To mean what you say is to be willing to go along with what the words commit you to.* This may not sound like much—or it may sound like a lot—but it is crucially important to liturgical prayer for this reason: it de-centers those who pray. This does not remove all responsibility from our shoulders, for our presence and participation is, in the first place, our more or less free response to the God who calls us in convoking the assembly. *But, once we are there, the prayer is not our own.* We are invited to lend ourselves to the prayer, rather than to pray out of our own meager resources. We are invited, not to express our feelings or thoughts, but to submit to the convention of this common prayer, to try it on, to adapt ourselves to its demands: “It has a personality five times that of ours.”<sup>114</sup>

There is yet one further layer of this skin to peel away in order to understand fully the significance of performative language for the study of liturgy. Because the words of liturgical prayer are communal acts (effecting the relationship between God and the Church), and because the Church prays as the Body of Christ, liturgy itself is the prayer of Christ to the Father.<sup>115</sup> “It is the fact that the prayers are not our own,” writes Searle, “but are given to us to try on, which makes us aware that it is not we who pray in the liturgy, but Christ who prays.”<sup>116</sup> Moreover, “the attitudes of praise, confession, trust, pleading, confident hope and so forth to which we commit ourselves in the speech-acts of the liturgy are the attitudes of Christ himself.”<sup>117</sup>

---

<sup>114</sup> Searle, “The Uses of Liturgical Language,” 18. Emphasis mine.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid. See also Kevin Donovan, “Liturgy and Communication,” *The Way* 12:2 (1972): 91-98. In this article, which is included in Searle’s course syllabus for his Summer 1980 “Pastoral Liturgy” seminar. See Mark Searle, “Pastoral Liturgy—A Course Syllabus; Summer 1980” in MSP, F2. Donovan discusses liturgy as “today’s self-communication of God and our human response,” both of which “are made in and through Christ” (96). He suggests that such communication involves learning the language that is Christ’s: “The place where people, that is, Christians continue to learn the language of Christ is above all in the place where communication through Christ takes place most explicitly. . . The liturgy provides us with a gradual education in biblical culture. It is a school of prayer in which we learn by imitating and by doing” (96).

<sup>116</sup> Searle, “The Uses of Liturgical Language,” 18.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid. Such recognition allows Searle to call Christ “the only liturgy,” as well as to make the plea that our catechesis should focus less on what liturgical prayers say than on how we pray them, namely, with the attitudes



Beyond exploring the language of liturgy in terms of narrative (story) and “performative” speech, Searle also extends his application of communication theory to liturgy in a 1984 article entitled “Christian Liturgies and Communication Theory,” in which he puts forth a “transactional” model of liturgy.<sup>118</sup> Such a model holds that all communication serves to alter the relationships of the “sender” and the “receiver” (as opposed to an action model in which information is imparted by the “sender” to be absorbed by the “receiver”) as well as the context in which the communication occurs. Searle offers the following example to demonstrate his point:

Thus the communion rite will not be seen just in terms of Christ feeding the believer through the agency of a minister; nor even in terms of the interior or exterior response of the believer duly activated by such an action; but in terms of the transformation of relationships among the participants (all of them), the bread, Christ, the larger world, etc. They all undergo reciprocally defined changes in the course of the ritual event. Such a way of understanding communion approximates to a symbolic interactionist view of how meaning is not merely applied or transmitted, but is actually created in the process of human intercourse.<sup>119</sup>

---

of Christ. Thus, he concludes: “It is the fact that the texts and rites of the liturgy do not always express who we think we are that constitutes their potential to transform us. Were we to allow ourselves to grow into them, to let ourselves and our minds be transformed by them, then the liturgy’s impact upon life might be rather greater than anything we can hope for by jazzing up the music or anointing the prayers with doses of our own personal unction—all of which merely leaves us celebrating who we are in our own eyes” (19). See also Edward A. Fischer, “Ritual as Communication,” *Worship* 45 (1971): 73-91. This article is included in Searle’s course syllabus for his Summer 1980 “Pastoral Liturgy” seminar (see Searle, “Pastoral Liturgy”—A Course Syllabus; Summer 1980). Fischer argues that because ritual is living communication, it must be performed with the care and concern of an artist. The nature of liturgical prayer as belonging to Christ himself demands that its participants “do it well”; Fischer writes: “It is especially depressing when something is badly done in the name of God: shabby ritual, a disheveled parochial school, a sloppy church supper. All these things communicate something to people. If only Christians could learn from the Buddhists the value of doing small things well. Anything that lifts life—even the way tea is served—becomes ritual because it does honor to God by enhancing the world that God has made. This is the attitude seminaries should seek to develop” (83).

<sup>118</sup> See Searle, “Christian Liturgies and Communication Theory,” 4-6.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 5. Several paragraphs later, Searle offers another description: “The transaction model, as we have seen, offers an approach to liturgy which sees it less as a linear sequence of utterances and responses than as a system or ecology in which relationships are mutually constituted and adapted through communication. In the process of communication, kaleidoscopic sets of relationships are continually defined, altered, even transformed, as the redescription of existing elements or the introduction of new elements make their impact felt upon the system as a whole. Consequently, baptism will be studied not simply in terms of what the minister says

Searle suggests that in a transactional model people participating in liturgy are continually interpreting the “world” around them, not so much in a descriptive way but in a relational way, and in doing so they learn to situate themselves in this world in a new (transformed) way.<sup>120</sup> Perhaps a more theological way of stating this is that because the liturgy celebrates a world transformed in the death and resurrection of Christ, its images, words, and gestures ideally lead to the transformation of the worldview of its participants. For example, Searle writes: “The fact is that prayer texts describe not merely the way things are, but they constitute for those who pray them a rehearsal of attitudes and an invitation to assume certain specific kinds of relationships. They constitute an invitation to a lived interpretation of the world.”<sup>121</sup>

Clearly Searle’s overarching goal in the hermeneutical task of “pastoral liturgical studies” is to root the search for meaning in the quest for effective communication in

---

*or does to the candidates, but also in terms of what the candidates bring to the Christian community and the accommodations the community itself has to make to incorporate them.” Emphasis mine.*

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 6. Searle writes: “People, places, times, events, even abstract concepts, have symbolic value insofar as they are bearers of meaning. They are bearers of meaning insofar as they serve as clues to the sense of the real that colors a given society and to the values, feelings and attitudes that characterize the behavior of that society. In this sense, the whole human world is typically symbolic and requires ongoing interpretation. . . In the context of this lived interpretation which precedes critical reflection, the distinction between word and sacrament, or the verbal and the non-verbal tends to be faced. On the one hand, every encounter with the world requires interpretation (making sense of what is encountered) and every interpretation is unavoidably linguistic, for language is the medium in which we grasp what is going on. On the other hand, that act of interpreting is not merely an act of describing: it is simultaneously an act of relating to what is going on. Language enables us to ‘realize’ what something means by relating it to past and future, which are only attainable in language. But in situating the world in this way, we also situate ourselves in a larger context of acting, in the larger story.”

<sup>121</sup> Ibid. Thus, an examination of the ways in which liturgy alters relationships is essential to Searle’s understanding of the hermeneutical task of “pastoral liturgical studies.” He writes: “While communications theory can be immensely serviceable to liturgy in helping clarify the various acts of communication that occur during the rite, it can go much further. As we have tried to suggest here, the full potential of communication studies will be realized when they help us to examine the ways in which the ritual of the church serves to create, sustain and transform the community that celebrates it. To do this, the whole liturgical event needs to be examined and its place in the life of the church, itself understood as a culture or system of communication of meaning. There will be room for establishing the degree to which different Christian communities represent more or less closed systems and how this is reflected in their liturgical celebrations. However, one would rather anticipate that the ability of a community to flourish will depend upon the openness of its communication network, or the permeability of its boundaries, in both directions.”

liturgical celebration. Because the primary concern of the pastoral liturgist is the promotion of the assembly's participation, gathering data on the effectiveness of symbolic language and collecting facts on the cultural realities that inhibit participation must occur. In Searle's words:

On the basis of such research, it might be possible to develop forms of catechesis and mystagogy in which direct communication through the medium of the liturgy's symbolic complex might once again become possible. Perhaps the empirical study of what goes on in liturgy will help us see how to proceed. Perhaps work done in language theory and in literary criticism will help us see better what is involved. Perhaps a phenomenology of symbols will enable us to relate the symbols of the liturgy more obviously to the limit situations of human life. *But the research will have to be done before the catechesis can be developed, and it is this research that is properly the task of the hermeneutical dimension of pastoral liturgical studies.*<sup>122</sup>

Undoubtedly, Searle believed that engagement with the hermeneutical task of "pastoral liturgical studies" would help reduce what might be considered bad catechesis as well as minimize the desire for unwarranted creativity in the liturgy.<sup>123</sup> The completion of this task

---

<sup>122</sup> Searle, "New Tasks, New Methods," 302. Emphasis mine.

<sup>123</sup> "Bad" catechesis might be considered that which is purely didactic in nature. See Mark Searle, "Perspectives on Liturgy and Religious Education," *Assembly* 10:5 (1984): 251. Here Searle articulates how liturgy provides a different outlook on catechesis: "By putting liturgy back in the larger context of ritual practices, even while according it exceptional importance, it should be clear that while liturgy is formative, it is not didactic. It does not so much teach *about* the Church as expose us to the experience of the Church in the act of assembly. It does not teach us about God so much as have us stand before God in Christ, united in the Spirit received in baptism. It does not teach a theology of sin and grace, so much as heighten our sensitivity to these realities through the seasons of the Church's year, through the sacrament of penance, through the celebrations of the catechumenate and the liturgy of baptism. It draws us into an ethos, a way of being in the world together. *It provides a primary interpretation of the data of human experience within the taken-for-grantedness of the Christian world which it symbolically presents, i.e. makes present for us to enter into and identify with.*" Emphasis mine. For an idea of Searle's strong opinions on the lack of success of liturgical creativity as a means of fulfilling the mandate for Vatican II reform see his "Reflections on Liturgical Reform," 421-422. "What worked in the sixties is less likely to work today, as people seem to have tired of high-spirited liturgies and begun to look for something more substantial and more sustaining. . . Having been led to expect liturgies to be 'meaningful' and engaging, the faithful find themselves frustrated by celebrations which are dull and listless or full of the distractions of forced bonhomie. It is as if we have had to work a number of things out of our systems, to discover the shallowness of some of our earlier understandings and expectations, and to emerge from it all with a real hunger for the life of the Spirit mediated through the liturgy of the Church."

moves the pastoral liturgist out of a neutral stance in order to formulate and offer prescriptions regarding liturgical practice—the “critical” task of “pastoral liturgical studies.”

***The Critical Task: “Who Is Doing What to Whom and How?”***

Thus, the third undertaking of “pastoral liturgical studies,” according to Searle, is to demonstrate how liturgy, in its actual performance as well as in its theological vision, serves as critique and is subject to criticism itself. In fact, he labels the “pastoral liturgist” the “one who fosters critical praxis of the liturgical life of the local church.”<sup>124</sup> As demonstrated in the previous chapter, Searle believed that liturgy enacts the “justice of God” and thereby contains a vision of the social order and of the Church as well. Searle’s words serve as a refresher:

It has been argued here that the justice proclaimed in the liturgy is the justice of God and of his Kingdom. Further, such justice involves right relationships between human beings and God, between human beings themselves as individuals and as communities, and between human beings and material creation. Such relationships are right insofar as they allow each party to be what it is: allowing God to be God, human beings to be human, and creation, whether animate or inanimate to be treated gratefully and respectfully. Moreover, the justice of God and the integrity of the human person are such that failure in one set of relationships constitutes a failure in all—justice is indivisible.<sup>125</sup>

After a particular liturgical event has been interpreted (the empirical task) and with a subsequent reflection upon how its symbols operate (the hermeneutical task), pastoral liturgy then looks to the historical tradition as well as theological claims to determine how liturgy serves as a support or as a challenge (the critical task).<sup>126</sup> In other words, Searle argues that

---

<sup>124</sup> Mark Searle, “Pastoral Liturgy—A Course Syllabus; Fall 1985.” See Appendix 2.

<sup>125</sup> Searle, “Serving the Lord with Justice,” 28.

the critical task is essential to “pastoral liturgical studies” because it moves beyond mere description and offers a prescription that impacts the pastoral life of the Church.

Searle targets four areas that call for the study of the pastoral liturgist. First, “pastoral liturgical studies will be scholarly only to the extent to which they are self-critical.”<sup>127</sup> Second, it evaluates the contemporary cultural climate in which liturgy finds itself today. Third, liturgical study must provide a critique of the function of religious imagination, since “it is through the imagination, rather than through professed beliefs and conscious attitudes, that religious understanding and behavior are filtered.”<sup>128</sup> Finally, the pastoral liturgist seeks to understand how liturgy is both “alienated and alienating.”<sup>129</sup> Searle believed that pastoral liturgy would necessarily distinguish itself apart from the official reform since it would always seek to challenge the lived reality of the Church. “Precisely because of this final critical function,” contends Searle, “it should be obvious that pastoral liturgical studies cannot lend themselves to the agenda of implementing official liturgical reforms, for its task must include a critical evaluation both of the official reforms and of their mode of implementation.”<sup>130</sup> These four agenda items for the critical task are now briefly explored.

---

<sup>126</sup> Searle, “New Tasks, New Methods,” 302. He writes: “By accepting the normativity of history and theology, or rather of the tradition which they make available, pastoral liturgy both differentiates itself from the other, nontheological, disciplines whose methods and findings it uses and also acknowledges the sacramental character of the economy of salvation. It is thus quite different from the sociology of religion, or the psychology of religion, for however much its procedures may approximate to theirs, it remains ultimately a theological enterprise and moves from a purely neutral, descriptive stance to make recommendations about pastoral liturgical practice.”

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 303.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 304. Searle clarifies his perspective: “By alienation is meant the reservation of the right to define what is real to a small and powerful elite at the expense of the majority’s sense of reality. In short, where the experience and capacities of the many are excluded in favor of the authority of the few there is alienation.”

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 305.

Whereas in his earlier attempts to define the critical function of liturgy, Searle focused largely on the pedagogy of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire,<sup>131</sup> he now relies heavily on the work of prominent liturgical theologians. For example, Searle employs the thought of Angelus Häussling to support his theory that “pastoral liturgical studies” functions critically when it guards against limiting meaning according to one “attractive” model or the insights that it produces; a “reductionist explanation of the liturgy” is to be avoided.<sup>132</sup> Thus, Searle heralds the value of a “conflict of interpretations” as a method for critical study:

[W]hether the pastoral liturgist begins with a liturgical problem and looks for appropriate models to elucidate it, or whether the liturgist comes across some theory which appears to shed light on certain aspects of human behavior and then asks what its application might be, the area of applicability needs to be clearly defined in order to avoid unlawful generalizations. It is here that the use of more than one model is useful, so that a certain conflict of interpretations is generated. *Without such a conflict of interpretations, the way is left open for the sort of reductionist claim which takes a narrowly based hypothesis as its starting point and then proceeds to draw unwarranted inferences about liturgy in general.*<sup>133</sup>

What Searle is arguing here is for the avoidance of what David Power calls “false rationality,” or the domination of one symbol over a wide array of images.<sup>134</sup> Therefore,

---

<sup>131</sup> See above page 118ff. See also Robert Krieg, “Memo to Mark Searle dated April 23, 1981,” in MSP, F28. Here Krieg suggests that Searle deliberately move away from the radical approach of Paulo Freire. Krieg asks: “Is there a way that you can work with Freire’s ideas while maintaining a bit more distance? For example, I do not find the language of oppressor-oppressed to be your language.”

<sup>132</sup> See Searle, “New Tasks, New Methods,” 303. See also Angelus Häussling, “Die kritische Funktion der Liturgiewissenschaft,” in *Liturgie und Gesellschaft*, ed. H.B. Meyer (Innsbruck: Tyrolia-Verla, 1970), 103-130. Häussling warns against studying liturgy as a means of defending a particular ideology: “Wir müßten uns und unsere wissenschaftlichen Aussagen darauf abfragen, ob sie nicht latent im Interesse einer Expertenkaste aufgestellt sind und an den Menschen, wie si einmal sind, vorbeigehen, sie sogar repressive überfahren” (114).

<sup>133</sup> Searle, “New Tasks, New Methods,” 306. Emphasis mine.

<sup>134</sup> See David Power, “Unripe Grapes: The Critical Function of Liturgical Theology,” *Worship* 52 (1978): 394. Power defines “false rationality” as the “point where there is a passage from a verbal symbol to a conceptual symbol,” and he goes on to write: “The image is conceptualized, originally perhaps to allow the concept to stand for a whole range of meaning as the image previously did, but it is then prone to be offered as ultimate theoretical explanation to which further use of symbols is then submitted.” He employs the example of the symbol of the “stain” of original sin. As this symbol gradually became synonymous with the sacrament of

even though the empirical task of “pastoral liturgical studies” describes what is going on through the use of models and metaphors, the pastoral liturgist seeks to open the horizon of meaning through a plurality of interpretations.

Furthermore, Searle focuses the attention of “pastoral liturgical studies” outward, as it has the obligation to dialogue with contemporary culture.<sup>135</sup> It is not sufficient for “pastoral liturgical studies” to examine liturgical performance alone, rather, it must also explore how social realities can both contribute to and detract from the liturgical life of a community and vice versa. Searle writes:

[P]astoral liturgical studies will have to undertake a critical evaluation of contemporary culture. It will rely on sociocultural studies of contemporary society to identify the dominant features of our age, but it will then proceed to subject them to theological criticism, particularly with a view to their possible impact on contemporary celebration. Talk about cultural adaptation of the liturgy to North America has hitherto been largely meaningless, because those aspects of culture to which adaptation might be made have not been identified and scrutinized. Conversely, it is also true that the same lack of a developed cultural critique is probably permitting considerable cultural assimilation to go on unconsciously and therefore unchecked.<sup>136</sup>

---

baptism, other symbols and understandings of the Church’s practice began to wither and lose their ability to produce imaginative insight. Searle cites Power’s contribution on page 303 of “New Tasks, New Methods.”

<sup>135</sup> This obligation arises from the mystery of the Incarnation, in which the Church not only has the obligation to lead the world into future glory but to challenge the way in which the present world makes the manifestation of Christ’s presence a difficult reality. Searle calls this the “vocation” of the Church (“New Tasks, New Methods, 303) and cites Heinz Schuster, “Die Methode der Pastoraltheologie als praktische Theologie,” in F.-X. Arnold, ed. *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie*, Book 1 (Freiburg: Herder, 1964), 93-114. He states simply: “Das primäre Ziel der praktischen Theologie ist, allgemein und grob formuliert, die *Planung* des Vollzugs der Kirche für die Gegenwart und Zukunft” (104).

<sup>136</sup> Searle, “New Tasks, New Methods,” 303. See also Jonathan Z. Smith, “The Influence of Symbols upon Social Change: A Place on Which to Stand,” *Worship* 44 (1970): 457-474. Smith explores the power of religious symbols in maintaining order and harmony in the world as well as providing a sense of chaos. He does not deal with Christian liturgy *per se*, but his evaluation of symbols helps to underscore the way in which symbolic language can establish a way of looking at the world as well as a means of challenging the ways of the world. Smith concludes by quoting Suzanne Langer’s *Philosophy in a New Key* (page 287): “Therefore our most important assets are always the symbols of our general *orientation* in nature, on the earth, in society and in what we are doing: the symbols of our *Weltanschauung* and *Lebensanschauung*” (474).

A recurring example of the absence of critique upon culture that can be found in Searle's writings is his charge that Sundays have become for Christians a "merely cultural institution: time off, or time for overtime."<sup>137</sup> For Searle, Sunday—according to the pattern of Christian liturgy—is a time of "life-after-death," while contemporary culture makes every effort to disguise death and all its ramifications and turns Sunday into a day of personal satisfaction.<sup>138</sup> He writes: "To the degree, however, that we understand the Gospel to offer us an alternative vision of the future—and thus to demand an alternative set of present values, an alternative way of living in time—Sunday itself will have a specifically Christian meaning, embodying that vision, proleptic of that future, and gathering to itself those whose loyalties are to that alternative way of living in time."<sup>139</sup> Thus, "pastoral liturgical studies" seeks to reveal the "ambivalent attitudes about the things of life" adopted by contemporary culture (and thus often by Christians themselves) and challenge them with a "critical image of what we are called to be."<sup>140</sup>

In keeping with the hermeneutical task, which attempts to probe how a worshipping community engages in symbolic language, Searle believes that a third dimension of the

---

<sup>137</sup> Searle, "Introduction," in *Sunday Morning: A Time for Worship*, 8. He continues: "Thus the importance of Sunday goes far beyond the mere sociological one of how to get our churches filled. It has to do with allowing our culturally compromised understanding of the Gospel itself first to be shattered and then fashioned anew, that we might be faithful to it into the future" (9). Searle reiterates this theme in his essay found in the same volume: "The Shape of the Future: A Liturgist's Vision," 129-153. Also see Mark Searle "Sunday: The Heart of the Liturgical Year," in *The Church Gives Thanks and Praise*, ed. L.J. Johnson (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1984), 13-36.

<sup>138</sup> See Searle, "Sunday: The Heart of the Liturgical Year," 23-24. He concludes: "Our sense of identity is derived largely from participation in our communities, but community is a matter of shared imagination: a common way of understanding the world and our own place in it. *Sunday, I have argued, exists to shape the Christian imagination, but it is suffering unfair competition from all the images of self and society which exist in our culture and which owe nothing to the gospel*" (32). Emphasis mine. See also Searle, "The Shape of the Future: A Liturgist's Vision," 132. He writes: "Put very bluntly: Sunday can be lived and appreciated only by those who have died, for *Sunday is the time of life-after-death*." Emphasis original.

<sup>139</sup> Searle, "Introduction," in *Sunday Morning: A Time for Worship*, 8.

<sup>140</sup> See pages 132 and 142 of "The Shape of the Future: A Liturgist's Vision."



critical role of “pastoral liturgical studies” is the offering of a critique of religious imagination in general. Similar to his experience of the Church in Europe, Searle observed that the North American Church was well on its way to adopting the culture’s drive for realism and, in the process, was losing its religious imagination. Searle writes:

Thus it could be extremely important to compare the imaginative world projected by the liturgy with the imaginative world out of which North Americans operate. On the basis of such comparison and of theological reflection, it might be possible to identify certain common distortions that occur while also identifying those elements of contemporary religious imagination which lend themselves to incorporation into the liturgy itself. For example, the quasi-linear concept of time might be found to be dominant in the American religious imagination, thus creating problems for the way the liturgy is related to past events, but also offering a basis for understanding the eschatological dimension of the liturgy which the official Church has not made much of.<sup>141</sup>

Here, Searle mentions “time” as an issue for comparing its place in the religious imagination and, correspondingly, in contemporary culture. However, another basic topic of concern for Searle was liturgical music in the context of American culture. For example, in a two-part article that appeared in *Liturgy 80* entitled “The Liturgy of the Cantor,” Searle writes: “Music and liturgy have something profoundly important in common: they are givens, they are repetitive, they demand to be learned, they require our obedient attention.”<sup>142</sup> The critique Searle offers is that the servant quality of music (and the cantor) is overshadowed when liturgical music becomes a matter of performance rather than a means of drawing the assembly “deeper and deeper into the prayer of the church.”<sup>143</sup> Liturgical music, by its very

---

<sup>141</sup> Searle, “New Tasks, New Methods,” 304.

<sup>142</sup> Mark Searle, “The Liturgy of the Cantor,” *Liturgy 80* 14:3 (1983): 2.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid. Searle argues that our singing does not create the liturgy but draws us into contemplation. “On the contrary, the best we can do is attend to it (liturgy) carefully, attune ourselves to its prayer, synchronize our actions with its gestures, and harmonize our voices with its song. And this is, fundamentally, the role of the cantor. A bad cantor is one who is trying to make the liturgy work; a good cantor is one who is content to let

nature, is a direct challenge to the zeal for individualism, as the religious imagination contemplates the assembly as praying and singing not as a group of individuals but as Christ himself.<sup>144</sup>

The fourth way in which “pastoral liturgical studies” fulfills a critical role is to reflect honestly on how liturgy can be an experience of alienation.<sup>145</sup> Searle cites Cyrille Vogel’s article, “An Alienated Liturgy,” in which alienation is summed up as follows: “Liturgy, which ought not to be anything other than the authentic expression of the community (lest it deny its very nature), has gradually been detached from the community throughout the centuries.”<sup>146</sup> Searle approaches the issue quite similarly: “In short, where the experience and capacities of the many are excluded in favor of the authority of the few there is alienation.”<sup>147</sup> Elsewhere Searle states:

Pastoral liturgy as a discipline has the responsibility for continual critical reflection upon the interpretation of liturgical symbols in the

---

the liturgy be what it aspires to be, through the song he or she is entrusted with. . . . The cantor does not set out to perform liturgical music, but discovers to her amazement that God sings his own liturgy through the voices of his people.” This example of the cantor’s role of contemplation is a wonderful example of the religious imagination at work.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 3. Searle writes: “Our unity is not that of an aggregate—stones in a heap, individuals in a crowd—but it is organic. Transcending our individuality, our cultural and ethnic identities, and deeper than our individual differences of age, temperament and life stories, is our common life in Christ, our baptismal identity with him. *What the liturgy requires as we assemble is not so much the joining together of our individual hearts and voices as it is a descent into that deeper level of our self-awareness where it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.*” Emphasis mine.

<sup>145</sup> See Searle, “New Tasks, New Methods,” 304.

<sup>146</sup> Cyrille Vogel, “An Alienated Liturgy,” in *Concilium 72: Liturgy: Self-Expression of the Church*, ed. Herman Schmidt (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), 11. He goes on to write: “The progressive alienation of liturgy from the community has been recognized not primarily by professional historians but by those engaged in pastoral practice” (12). See also Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1957). In his treatment of literary criticism, Frye describes how alienation results from the pursuit of a more perfect culture: “As soon as we make culture a definite image of a future and perhaps attainable society, we start selecting and purging a tradition, and all the artists who don’t fit (an increasing number as the process goes on) have to be thrown out. So, just as historical criticism uncorrected relates culture only to the past, ethical criticism uncorrected relates culture only to the future, to the ideal society which may eventually come if we take sufficient pains to guard the educating of our youth” (346).

<sup>147</sup> Searle, “New Tasks, New Methods,” 304.

modes of contemporary celebration. It will draw upon theological and non-theological disciplines in order to keep open the interaction between the imagination of the liturgy and the imagination of the culture, *so that there is contact without absorption, confrontation without alienation*. It will also have to feed into pastoral practice, developing the imaginative skills among pastors and people which will allow them to look, to listen and to act symbolically, i.e. with an openness to what will work with evangelizers and catechists to ensure that those coming to Christianity are invited by its revelatory images and not dominated by some masked ideology.<sup>148</sup>

For Searle, an obvious example of alienation is the talk of “building community,” which can often serve to mask “real divisions existing in the community.”<sup>149</sup> He argues that true “community” exists when the liturgy is contemplated as an entrance into the oneness of Christ. “Too much effort seems to be spent today on ‘building community,’” writes Searle, “and too little guidance given on how to discover the community we already are.”<sup>150</sup> In short, the pastoral liturgist questions how the liturgy either facilitates or inhibits the discovery of this identity established in Christ. In this manner, “pastoral liturgical studies” fulfills its critical task and makes a judgment on the distribution of “power” within the community.

---

<sup>148</sup> Searle, “Liturgy as a Pastoral Hermeneutic,” 149. Emphasis mine.

<sup>149</sup> Searle, “New Tasks, New Methods,” 304.

<sup>150</sup> Searle, “Collecting and Recollecting: The Mystery of the Gathered Church,” 259. “In other words, it is assumed that, beneath the individual differences which make us all unique, there is a stratum of common experience which we share with Christ and with all other human beings. The realization of this common identity with every other person, rich or poor, relative or stranger, male or female, young or old, is basic to Christianity. To know ourselves as sharing the same fallen yet redeemed condition is to know our common sinfulness and our common hope, to know in ourselves the tragic flaws of all humanity, the inevitability of suffering, the fate of death and the saving promise of redemption. It is at that sort of level, I would suggest, that we know the meaning of Church, as the community gathered from the scattered children of God and the redemptive death of Jesus. *That sort of participation in the human condition would seem to be the prerequisite for living in the mystery of the Church as the Body of Christ and for engaging in the equally profound and mysterious activity which we call the liturgy.*” See also Andrew Greeley, “Religion and Symbolism, Liturgy and Community,” in *Concilium 62: Liturgy in Transition*, ed. Herman Schmidt (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971), 56-69. On page 68, Greeley writes: “Community can never be effectively sought as an end in itself. Much of the ‘search for community’ in the modern world is doomed to failure precisely because intimacy is not an end but rather a result. A group of human beings come together to accomplish some common purpose.”

## ***Conclusion***

As Mark Searle was busy setting up his career at Notre Dame, establishing a popular voice on the speaking circuit, and offering leadership to one of North America's most prestigious liturgical academies, he never lost sight of the pastoral needs of the parish. In fact, as Searle moved into the mid-1980s, his attention was drawn largely to the dilemmas faced by local communities as they continued to implement the liturgical reforms of the Second Vatican Council. Always maintaining his academic perspective, Searle articulated what he considered to be the overarching concern, namely, the lack of integration of the parish liturgy on Sunday with a way of being Catholic in the world. As he writes in the "Introduction" to a collection of scholarly essays on the future of parish life (1981):

Too often, parishes lack any clear sense of direction and purpose; the liturgy, which could provide both vision and inspiration, then becomes itself rote and uninspiring. Moreover, what happens at the level of parish life is reflected in the personal lives of the faithful. If parish liturgy is just one more parish activity, going to Mass remains at the level of one of the things Catholics have to do; but if the liturgy of a parish in fact finds its roots in the wider life of the community, then the people themselves will be brought to overcome what Vatican II denounced as the disastrous split between the faith we profess and our experience of life in the world.<sup>151</sup>

For Searle, liturgical reform must focus on the reality of parishes today rather than on "grandiose visions of a new Church for tomorrow."<sup>152</sup> For this to occur, however, studies would have to be conducted on participation and performance in actual liturgical events. Just as the academic discipline of anthropology discovered the need to move from the classroom

---

<sup>151</sup> Mark Searle, "Introduction," in *Parish: A Place for Worship*, ed. Mark Searle (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1981), 6. This is actually the second of two overarching concerns Searle has about the parish liturgy. The first is simply that for most Catholics the parish is more a place than it is a relationship. He states that "for most Catholics their sole point of contact with the Church is the liturgical assembly. In other words, whatever other priorities the clergy and staff may have in their pastoral ministry, the majority of their parishioners consider the parish to be preeminently a place for worship" (5).

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

to the field—in order to research human behavior in a real life setting—so too did liturgical studies need to broaden the scope of its study to encompass the issues and dynamics of the living, breathing assembly.<sup>153</sup>

Such concern for the practical reality of the future of parish life led Searle to create what he considered to be a “new method” for the study of liturgy, what he called “pastoral liturgical studies.” Wishing to revivify the concept of “pastoral”—which had (and continues to suffer from) a negative history of being merely the imparting of practical skills for ministry—Searle used the term to indicate his starting point and the centerpiece of his reflection, namely the assembly. In other words, rather than beginning with the presider of the liturgy as the principal actor, “pastoral liturgical studies” launches from the perspective of the praying assembly and attempts to discern meaning from this vantage. With this starting point, Searle develops a systematic method composed of three fundamental objectives: first, the empirical task seeks to find a language that describes the liturgical experiences (the use of models and metaphors); second, the hermeneutical task strives to determine *how* the assembly comes to develop a particular meaning of the liturgical event (communications theory, performative language, and semiotics); finally, the critical task attempts to provide a challenge to how relationships are established in the practice of liturgy and in the wider society as well (theories of critical praxis and pedagogy).

---

<sup>153</sup> One of Searle’s earliest attempts to demonstrate the fruits of interdisciplinary contributions to liturgical scholarship was the 1980 summer conference of the Notre Dame Center for Pastoral Liturgy, entitled *Parish: A place for Worship*. (See the collection of essays mentioned in footnote 158). In the “Introduction,” Searle writes: “The contributors to this book represent specializations in American Church history, ecclesiology, sociology of religion, liturgical history, and liturgical theology; as well as pastoral practitioners in widely differing context from the ghettos of the Northeast to the cornfields of the Midwest” (7). See also Searle, “New Tasks, New Methods,” 305. Concerning the relationship of the three tasks of “pastoral liturgical studies,” Searle states that “what they all have in common is the requirement of interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary research, a requirement deriving from the multidimensionality of the liturgical event itself.”

For students of the liturgy, Searle envisioned the practice of “pastoral liturgical studies” to be a complement to the necessary disciplines of liturgical history and theology. However, he believed that his method would issue two important “demands” on liturgical historians and theologians. First, it would push historians away from exclusive focus on ritual texts to pay more attention to cultural and social history.<sup>154</sup> Second, Searle maintained that rendering the “actual worship life” of the Church a credible source would serve to reunite the long-suffering divorce between liturgical practice and theology. “As pastoral liturgical studies develop, then,” writes Searle, “more and more data concerning the actual worship of the church should become available for reflection, as well as a whole range of theological problems relating to the anthropological, sociological and psychological structures and preconditions which constitute the ‘flesh’ in which the mystery of grace is incarnated in the worship life of contemporary communities.”<sup>155</sup>

While Searle articulated his vision and his method for “pastoral liturgical studies” at the 1983 meeting of the North American Academy of Liturgy, his work with the Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life, which he began that very year, would give him the opportunity to test his theory. As will be elucidated in the next chapter, many of Searle’s suspicions and concerns about the implementation of liturgical renewal at the level of the parish were confirmed and validated. Now he would have to begin the difficult task of demonstrating how his “new method” might indeed make a difference on the liturgical scene.

---

<sup>154</sup> See Searle, “New Tasks, New Methods,” 307. “Whereas liturgical history has largely been concerned up to now with a diachronic approach, reconstructing the evolution of liturgical forms, the questions raised by pastoral liturgy will require of historians that they, too, attend to the larger ecclesial and sociocultural context of the evolution of the rites.”

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

# Chapter V

## *Observing Parish Liturgy*

When the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council affirmed the need for a wide-sweeping reform of the Church's sacred liturgy, they simultaneously proclaimed that such a reform was a means to a greater end, namely, the renewal and invigoration of Catholic Christianity in general. The opening paragraph of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* makes this agenda abundantly clear:

The sacred council has set out to impart an ever-increasing vigor to the Christian lives of the faithful; to adapt more closely to the needs of our age those institutions which are subject to change; to encourage whatever can promote the union of all who believe in Christ; to strengthen whatever serves to call all of humanity into the church's fold. Accordingly it sees particularly cogent reasons for undertaking the reform and promotion of the liturgy.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 1 in Flannery, *The Basic Sixteen Documents*. Similarly, Paul VI, in his *Motu Proprio Sacram Liturgiam* (January 25, 1964), echoes the vision of the Council that liturgical renewal is to serve the goal of renewed dedication to the totality of living the Catholic faith. See DOL 276-277. Paul VI writes: "The hearts of the faithful who so worship God, the source and exemplar of all holiness, are therefore drawn, even compelled, to seek this holiness and in this way to become in this earthly pilgrimage 'seekers of holy Zion.' . . . Accordingly, our foremost concern is clearly that the faithful, and especially priests, dedicate themselves first of all to the study of the Constitution on the Liturgy and from this moment on prepare themselves to carry out its prescriptions wholeheartedly as soon as these take effect. Because by the very nature of the case the understanding and dissemination of liturgical laws must go into effect without delay, we earnestly exhort bishops of dioceses to an immediate, intense effort, aided by their sacred ministers, 'the stewards of God's mysteries,' so that their own faithful, in keeping with their age, particular state in life, and level of culture will grasp the innate power and value of the liturgy and at the same time participate devoutly, body and soul, in the rites of the Church." In response to this oft-quoted introductory statement to *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Mark Searle once observed: "At this point, (twenty years after the Council), it may well appear that such ambitions were merely symptomatic of the optimism and enthusiasm engendered by the whole heady conciliar experience, but it still remains worth discussing whether in fact the reforms launched for the purposes of achieving such ends have taken us any way towards their realization." See Mark Searle, "The Liturgical Life of Catholic Parishioners in the USA," 2 in MSP, Folder "Parish Study—Reports."

Thus, the Council clearly links “full, conscious, and active” participation in the liturgy with zeal for the Christian life.<sup>2</sup> The first steps for launching such an “invigoration” would be the drawing up of new rites for the Church, their translation into the vernacular, and their subsequent execution at the local level.<sup>3</sup> However, after the implementation of new rites, there would be the need for ongoing assessment of their success. This step of liturgical reform would necessarily inquire whether or not the renewal of the liturgy has served to revitalize the zeal for the Christian way of life.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> See Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy (1948-1975)*, 5. The secretary of the Consilium for the implementation of the Constitution on the Liturgy states clearly at the opening of his reflections: “The reform that the Second Vatican Council inaugurated is differentiated from all others in the history of the liturgy by its pastoral emphasis. The participation and active involvement of the people of God in the liturgical celebration is the ultimate goal of the reform, just as it was the goal of the liturgical movement. This involvement and participation is not limited to externals but reaches to the very root of things: to the mystery being celebrated, to Christ himself who is present. ‘Ceremonies,’ St. Vincent de Paul used to say, ‘are only a shadow, but they are the shadow of the most magnificent realities.’”

<sup>3</sup> See Frederick R. McManus, *Liturgical Participation: An Ongoing Assessment* (Washington, D.C.: The Pastoral Press, 1988), 37. McManus offers the following summary about the publication of the Latin *editio typica* of liturgical books, a task largely accomplished by the early 1980s: “The sheer quantity of revised Roman liturgical books (aside from the subsequent vernacular versions) is overwhelming. The principal parts of the traditional (16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century) books that were revised are: (a) missal (Order of Mass, 1969; lectionary, 1969; presidential prayers [sacramentary], 1970); (b) ritual (marriage, 1969; baptism of children, 1969; funerals, 1969; religious profession, 1970; adult initiation, 1971; anointing and care of the sick 1972; communion and eucharistic cult, 1973; penance, 1973; blessings, 1984); (c) pontifical: ordinations, 1968; consecration to a life of virginity, 1970; blessing of abbots and abbesses, 1970; blessing of oils 1970; confirmation, 1971; institution of readers and acolytes, 1972; dedication of a church, 1977; (d) liturgy of the hours, 1971. Added to these should be the Roman calendar (1969) and the ceremonial of bishops (1984).” A rough draft of this document (originally entitled “Vatican II’s Call for Liturgical Participation: An Anniversary Assessment”) appears in MSP, C14.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Aidan Kavanagh, “What Is Participation?—or, Participation Revisited,” *Doctrine and Life* 23 (1973): 343-353. Writing nearly ten years after the promulgation of the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, Kavanagh contends that liturgical reform has only “superficially” addressed the issue of participation and that worshipers continue to fail to understand the very nature of what it is that are asked to take part in. He writes: “We have had little difficulty defining participation: most superficially, to participate means ‘to take part’. . . In the liturgy this has been construed as little more than ‘get in there and sing, or say the responses, or pray vocally, or celebrate’. Yet as the exhilaration of the first experience of this wore off, many people began to wonder whether it was really worth it. . . This ominous disillusionment is the fault of us, the ecclesiastical leaders in the Church, who so often seem to put our trust in superficial reform without looking toward the qualitative renewal of life those reforms should both initiate and emerge from. . . We thus urge people to ‘take part’, but we remain unclear with them and with ourselves about *what* we are urging them to take part *in*” (344-345).



As early as 1967, less than three years after the promulgation of the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, the Consilium addressed a letter to the presidents of the world's conferences of bishops and to the presidents of national liturgy commissions encouraging that surveys be conducted "on the pastoral level" which would seek to explore how well parishes were doing in enacting liturgical reform.<sup>5</sup> This letter states:

When the reform began, the Secretariat of the Consilium asked, through the national liturgical commissions, for reports on how the first steps of the reform had been received in different parts of the world. The letters were later published in *Notitiae*. Now that we are in the third year of work on the reform, the request mentioned above offers an excellent opportunity to gather further and more precise documentation. *As far as possible, statistical data should be provided as to what has been done in the various countries, on the results that have followed from this, and on the reactions of people in different environments and of different social levels.*<sup>6</sup>

This statement suggests the experts responsible for studying the church's liturgy and sacramental celebrations were not simply interested in preparing texts but were also concerned with the way in which these rituals were culturally adapted and generally received on the part of local congregations. Such a call for the "statistical data" from around the world would be particularly important, especially when acknowledging that voices of dissatisfaction with the reformed liturgy resounded from the very beginning.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> See DOL 475-476. This letter requesting a "survey of the pastoral results of the reform of the liturgy" is dated June 15, 1967.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 475. The letter offers six very broad points of interest for the surveys: "1. On the pastoral level, has the liturgical reform brought advantages or disadvantages? Which especially? 2. Has the number of faithful taking part in the Mass on Sundays, feasts, and weekdays, increased or decreased with the reform? 3. Has the participation in other celebrations, in particular those of Holy Week, and above all with regard to the sacraments increased or decreased? 4. Has the use of the vernacular contributed to a participation which is more active and intelligent? 5. Have the singing and the responses made in common, as an element in the participation, had a positive or negative effect? 6. What are the reactions of the faithful regarding the use of the vernacular, the simplification of the rites, the changes in the church and sanctuary, and church furnishings in general?" (476).

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy, 1948-1975*, 277-301. Bugnini demonstrates that "counterreform" movements were organized throughout the world and particularly well established by the late-1960s. He writes: "The path of liturgical reform has been marked not only by experimentation and adaptation

To the end of gauging the relative successes and failures of Vatican II liturgical reform must be added the 1985 “extraordinary” synod of bishops, in which Pope John Paul II summoned Church leaders to Rome to evaluate the Council on the occasion of its twentieth anniversary.<sup>8</sup> At this critical stage in the life of the Church, “Vatican II was not only affirmed, but it was proclaimed ‘the greatest grace of this century’ and the ‘Magna Charta’ for the Catholic church of the present and future.”<sup>9</sup> However, such positive appraisal simply could not ignore forthright criticism (offered especially from German and Latin-speaking contingents)<sup>10</sup> that the Church must be on guard in “opposing rationalistic relativism, confusing claptrap and pastoral infantilism. These things degrade the liturgy to the level of a parish tea party and the intelligibility of a popular newspaper.”<sup>11</sup> Therefore, in addition to

---

but also by opposition. While some indulged in uncontrolled experimentation, to the detriment of the faith and the sacredness of worship of the Lord, others took a hard stand on the past and launched a systematic attack on the reform.” Clearly, Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre stands at the forefront of dissent from the teachings of Vatican II, and *Sacrosanctum concilium* particularly. For Paul VI’s response to the organized dissent waged by Lefebvre, see his “Epistle *Cum te* to Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, 11 October 1976” in DOL, 563-572. For a concise overview of some of the struggles in the process of the modern liturgical reform see Frederick R. McManus, “Roman Liturgical Reform 1948-1975,” *Worship* 60 (1986): 194-200. This is essentially an extended book review of Annibale Bugnini’s *La riforma liturgica (1948-1975)*.

<sup>8</sup> For an account of the 1985 synod see Hans Küng, “On the State of the Catholic Church: *or Why a Book Like This Is Necessary*,” in *The Church in Anguish: Has the Vatican Betrayed Vatican II?*, eds. Hans Küng and Leonard Swidler (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1987), 1-17. See also McManus, *Liturgical Participation: An Ongoing Assessment*, 6. He writes: “[W]e can be grateful to the 1985 Roman synod for celebrating and promoting the decisions and teachings of Vatican II, including the Constitution on the Liturgy—all the more because it did so despite what can be generously called the grumblings of Curial interventions and the reported conclusions of the German and Latin language groups at the synod.”

<sup>9</sup> Küng, “On the State of the Catholic Church: *or Why a Book Like This Is Necessary*,” 4.

<sup>10</sup> See McManus, *Liturgical Participation: An Ongoing Assessment*, 6.

<sup>11</sup> Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger with Vittorio Messori, *The Ratzinger Report: An Exclusive Interview on the State of the Church*, trans. Salvator Attanasio and Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1985), 121. These words are actually drawn from Ratzinger’s *Das Fest des Glaubens* and are reprinted in the context of the 1985 interview. The interviewer writes: “As I read these observations back to him (Cardinal Ratzinger), he listens with his accustomed attention and patience. Ten years have gone by, and the author of this admonitory call is no longer an ordinary scholar: he is a guardian precisely of the Church’s orthodoxy. Does the Ratzinger of today, the Prefect of the Congregation for the Faith, recognize himself in these words? ‘Absolutely,’ he replies without hesitation. ‘Moreover, since I wrote those lines, other aspects which should have been guarded have been neglected; many treasures that were still intact have been squandered away. Then, in 1975, many of

praising the work and the direction provided by the Council, the 1985 synod also allowed room for criticism to be heard and to be validated for continual improvement of liturgical reform around the world.<sup>12</sup> The synod was an opportunity to realize that not all was right with the direction of reform, that in many countries cultural adaptations were taken to unwieldy extremes, and that a certain amount of realism was necessary to reign in uncontrolled and overly-optimistic “liberal-radical theology” rooted in the attitude of individualism.<sup>13</sup>

Perhaps such a summons to caution could have been launched specifically against the U.S. Church, whose leadership produced extremely fulsome reports of the achievements of liturgical reform.<sup>14</sup> For instance, a statement made by the Bishops’ Committee on the

---

my theological colleagues were upset or at least surprised by what I said. Now many of those same people admit that I was right, at least in part’.”

<sup>12</sup> Küng, “On the State of the Catholic Church: *or Why a Book Like This Is Necessary*,” 3. Küng suggests that conservative factions were less critical of liturgical reform than the Roman curia: “The *Report on the Faith* from the German curial cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, head of the former Holy Office (now called the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith), was also helpful in an indirect way: now priests and bishops, laity and theologians, women and men could see how negatively many in the curia view the Council, how pessimistically they evaluate postconciliar developments, and how great is the danger of a rollback. . . . Despite all its concessions, the bishops’ synod revealed an appraisal of the Council, postconciliar situation, and future very different from that of the Vatican powers that be and their support troops, constantly invoking the ‘mystery’ of the church.”

<sup>13</sup> Ratzinger and Messori, *The Ratzinger Report*, 29-30. Cardinal Ratzinger states: “What the Popes and the Council Fathers were expecting was a new Catholic unity, and instead one has encountered a dissension which—to use the words of Paul VI—seems to have passed over from self-criticism to self-destruction. There had been the expectation of a new enthusiasm, and instead too often it has ended in boredom and discouragement. There had been the expectation of a step forward, and instead one found oneself facing a progressive process of decadence that to a large measure has been unfolding under the sign of a summons to a presumed ‘spirit of the Council’ and by so doing has actually and increasingly discredited it. . . . I am convinced that the damage that we have incurred in these twenty years is due, not to the ‘true’ Council, but to the unleashing *within* the Church of latent polemical and centrifugal forces; and *outside* the Church it is due to the confrontation with a cultural revolution in the West: the success of the upper middle class, the new ‘tertiary bourgeoisie’, with its liberal-radical ideology of individualistic, rationalistic and hedonistic stamp.” See also McManus, “Roman Liturgical Reform 1948-1975,” 199. He comments on the synod: “The synod of 1985 wisely rejected the diverse criticisms of the liturgical reform, stemming in some measure from within the Roman curia. It called for the same liturgical education that is the recurrent demand of the revised books and of all liturgical promoters.”

<sup>14</sup> While reports on the progress of liturgical reform in the United States were by-and-large extremely positive, the bishops were not unaware of tensions and struggles. See for example Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy,

Liturgy to mark the fifteenth anniversary of the *Constitution on the Liturgy* in 1978 praises the accomplishments of renewal on U.S soil in this way: “Considering the brief period of time, the amount of change, and the quality of present implementation, we can be proud of what has been accomplished. Our assessment of liturgical practice in our country is, for the most part, positive.”<sup>15</sup> Similarly, the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* witnessed a broader and even more glowing assessment of liturgical renewal in the American Church:

Catholics in the United States of America responded enthusiastically to the promulgation of the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*. They embraced the postconciliar reforms that renewed the use of Scripture in prayer, introduced the vernacular, called for vocal and interior participation, and initiated the development of ministries. Pastors supported by bishops, liturgical committees, and resources embarked on the new adventure. In 1963, the ground was already fertile for reform since many American Catholics were involved in the liturgical movement or were affected by its goals and hopes. The “spiritual treasury” uncovered by the postconciliar reforms as a result of the implementation of the decrees of the Council changed the life of the Church in this country. Though hard for some, met with hesitancy by others, and controverted at times, worship once again became the center of Christian faith and practice.<sup>16</sup>

---

*The Body of Christ* (Washington, D.C.: National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1977), 6. “U.S. Catholics have given these changes a mixed reception. After proper explanation, however, the developments became a relatively well accepted part of the community’s worship. Yet, for some, these changes seem to strike at the essence, the rock foundation of their faith and of the Church. Although these persons represent a minority, their pain and negative feelings about liturgical change are extremely intense. They judge that cherished traditions have been abandoned, sacred principles drilled into them from their youth undermined, and liturgical novelties, the order of the day. In their view it appears the Church has fallen into a philosophy of change for the sake of change.”

<sup>15</sup> Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy, “Fifteenth Anniversary of the *Constitution on the Liturgy*: A Commemorative Statement,” in *Thirty Years of Liturgical Renewal: Statements of the Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy*, ed. Frederick R. McManus (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1987), 189-190. The authors of the statement continue in the next paragraph by acknowledging that more work must be done: “This essentially affirmative evaluation, however, does not blind us to the legitimate questions and problems of the disaffected. It does not mean that there remains no work for the future. Nor does it imply that the reform has been completed.”

<sup>16</sup> Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy, “Twenty Years of Liturgical Renewal in the United States of America: Assessments and Prospects,” in *Thirty Years of Liturgical Renewal: Statements of the Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy*, ed. Frederick R. McManus (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1987), 240.

While the bishops make the assessment that the “spiritual treasury” of the Council has produced a change in the lives of American Catholics, the question remains as to whether or not and to what degree the reforms have led to a reclaiming of Catholic faith and culture, especially as it intersects with the choices of everyday life.<sup>17</sup> In other words, such flattering assessment on the part of the U.S. bishops—an appraisal which lauds the enthusiasm of the American Church—could be met with a certain amount of suspicion and undoubtedly called for substantiation by concrete data from the pews.

Requesting the investigation of such data was an important element of a previously-made 1980 statement by the U.S. Bishops’ Committee on the vision of Vatican II renewal in the life of the local church.<sup>18</sup> Acknowledging the great diversity of parish structures and styles—“so many hues would be needed to paint an accurate picture of the parish, so many shapes and dimensions to sculpt it”<sup>19</sup>—the bishops call for a thorough “evaluation” of parish life in this country:

---

<sup>17</sup> See William D. Dinges, “Ritual Conflict as Social Conflict: Liturgical Reform in the Roman Catholic Church,” *Sociological Analysis* 48 (1987): 138-157. Dinges writes: “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” (145-146). He continues later: “[U]p to the mid-1960s liturgy remained the public mark of Catholic distinctiveness, a ritual link with the Catholic past, and a symbol of Catholicism’s universality. The Tridentine Mass stood as both a ritual counterpoint to secularism and as a cultural symbol of Catholic resistance to the pressure of assimilation” (147). Dinges makes the point that Catholic identity has been under siege partly due to the fact that liturgy is no longer considered the “public mark of Catholic distinctiveness.” This article appears in MSP, F9, Folder “Liturgical Renewal: 1965-1990.”

<sup>18</sup> See National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *The Parish: A People, a Mission, a Structure* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1981).

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 3. The bishops’ appraisal of diversity continues in the next section of the statement: “With this diversity come challenges. Although we cannot deny that parishes share in the patterns of residential segregation in our society, nonetheless, parishes in the United States are especially confronted with the demands of diversity. Our country’s culture adds further difficulties to the pursuit of unity because of the ways it weakens community bonds. But the challenges must be faced, even welcomed; differences must be embraced, not denied. The struggle can become intense, this struggle to make the parish truly a community of faith, so that when it is accomplished, it is all that much more wondrous, all that much more satisfying” (4).

The opportunities for growth and service in spirituality, in leadership, in education, and in action are extensive and unending. But they must be reviewed regularly to make certain that they continue to satisfy the needs of the people and the goals of the parish. *An evaluation for renewal would be helpful here, because it would increase clarity about the mission and priorities of the parish, affect the ways in which the resources of the parish are used, and ensure the participation and support of the people in the parish activities.*<sup>20</sup>

Thus, while the U.S. bishops took the responsibility to articulate a vision for the overall spirit of renewal in Catholic parishes, empirical data was desperately needed in order to assess properly the true impact of the Second Vatican Council.<sup>21</sup> To this end, the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions, in conjunction with the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, conducted a study of the Mass from 1981-1982, which was evaluated and eventually published in 1985 under the title *The Order of Mass Study: A Report*.<sup>22</sup> Two particular findings from this study suggest that the ideals of renewal have yet to be realized in the *actio* of both liturgy and life: first, parishioners are less than satisfied with the quality of liturgical

---

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 17. Emphasis mine.

<sup>21</sup> See Joseph M. Connolly, "The Parish—The Church's Incarnation," in *Sunday Morning Crisis*, ed. Robert W. Hovda (Baltimore, MD: Helicon Press, Inc., 1963), 99. Writing at the time of the Council itself, Connolly argues that the vision of Vatican II must be met with sociological study of the parish: "If we are to make of parish worship what the fathers of the Council so ardently desire and what the needs of the Church demand, we must give extensive study to the nature of the parish and what it is today. We have to turn to sociologists to get the facts. Sociologically, what is the existent parish? Theologians must think seriously about the organic local Christian community. Beyond that, laymen, all of whom are members of a parish, must reflect on their experience of the parish and on their role as its members. Pastors and all priests who are in parish work need to make the same kind of appraisal."

<sup>22</sup> See *The Order of Mass Study: A Report* (Washington, D.C.: Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions, 1985). The introduction describes the study: "To provide background material for the participants' discussion and evaluation a workbook entitled *The Mystery of Faith: A Study of the Structural Elements of the Order of Mass* was prepared. This book, distributed by the Federation, presents a systematic treatment of all the structural parts of the celebration. For each ritual element an historical survey, liturgical directives, a pastoral reflection, and suggested questions for discussion are provided. Tear-out evaluation forms were prepared for use by the participants, and timelines were established for the submission of input. The study itself was conducted during the 1981-1982 school year. Several thousand people, representing 97 dioceses and archdioceses, participated in all or part of the process. Each of the participating dioceses invited parishes, through their parish liturgy committees, to take part in the study. It was left to each diocese to determine the number of participating parishes, and yet it was expected that those selected would have functioning liturgy committees with responsible leadership. Diocesan liturgical offices and commissions coordinated the parish evaluation and submitted the results to the FDLC National Office for final tabulation" (iv).

celebrations in their parishes, and second, the majority of respondents continue to feel deprived of catechesis on the liturgy.<sup>23</sup> Thus, the lingering question: has reform of the liturgy, with its emphasis on “full, conscious, and active” participation, truly permeated the whole of life for the American Catholic?

### ***Searle’s Dedication to Parish Liturgy***

As stated at the end of the last chapter, Mark Searle’s academic pursuits never strayed from his desire to foster quality liturgical practice in the parish. As scientific and heady as his writings often were, his goal was always the realization of a form of liturgical participation that would be the heartbeat of parish life.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, from the early days of his writing, he displayed an almost instinctual sense that participation must not be confused with a liturgy that is designed to produce emotion or religious fervor. As he writes in a 1979 editorial:

---

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 32. These two issues are described in the conclusions as numbers 4 and 6. 4 reads: “The study also indicates that many respondents, although comfortable with the Order of Mass as such, have reservations as to the manner in which the Mass is celebrated in their own parishes. Comments often refer to local practices which belie solid liturgical and ritual understandings. Continuous efforts are required to improve the quality of celebration in local communities. Providing for the sound formation of all ministers, including the priest-minister, is an essential part of this endeavor.” 6 states: “The study indicates that a number of elements in the Mass are not properly understood by many of the faithful, even by some engaged in the study. A recurrent comment was that there is a great need for more catechesis on the Mass. Although much instruction accompanied the introduction of the Order of Mass in this country, further efforts are needed. Such catechesis will prove especially fruitful now that the faithful have had an opportunity to experience the revised Order of Mass and see themselves as active participants within it. . .”

<sup>24</sup> See, for example, Searle’s “Christian Liturgies and Communication Theory,” that he published in a 1984 edition of *Media Development*. In the context of a dense, scholarly exploration of how liturgy serves as a communication event, Searle never loses sight of his goal to positively impact parish worship. As he concludes: “In one direction, the church and its liturgy must be somewhat open to new information coming in from the larger world in which its participants live. This will enable the liturgy always to be new, not because it is always invented anew, which would contradict its ritual character, but because the circumstances under which it is celebrated always contribute the meaning of the ritual event itself. . . . In the other direction, the church and its liturgy must also remain open to the dimension of the transcendent. This has not only to operate within the liturgy to energise that sense of discrepancy which is the source of conversion, but it also has to operate on the liturgy itself if the rites and symbols are not to be turned into idols by being regarded as themselves invested with ultimacy” (6).

The enemy of “active participation” is not interiority or the dislike of noisy celebrations. The real enemy is individualism, i.e., egotism in all its forms. Too often, what passes for community celebration is little more than the indulgent “self-expression” of a group of people who “like that kind of thing”—until they tire of it. Similarly, the refusal of the “new liturgy” may be, for all its apparent piety, a refusal to give up attachment to familiar forms. In either case, there is an inability to move beyond one’s own ideas of God, Church and the economy of salvation. In either case, the result is the arrested spiritual development of the individual and the disintegration of the ecclesial community.<sup>25</sup>

The point to be made here is that Searle was convinced that how a parish worships on Sunday is a good indication as to whether it is an ecclesial community that is caught up in Christ, or whether it is caught up in itself. “What the condition calls for,” writes Searle in an earlier editorial, “is not a brightening up of our Sunday liturgies, but a somber recognition that the quality of our Sunday assemblies is a fair reflection of our communal Christian life: too often shoddy and superficial . . . lacking any roots in our weekday human experience, any realistic sense of mutual belonging, any challenging call to sacrifice or mission.”<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> Searle, “Active Participation,” 72.

<sup>26</sup> Mark Searle, “Sunday: Noblesse Oblige” (Editorial), *Assembly* 5:2 (1978): 25. He continues: “The Sunday Mass is the only hour in the week when the local church becomes visible. If its chief characteristic is boredom, the solution is not to provide entertainment, but to recognize that the root of boredom is frustration. Frustration occurs when energies find no outlet, when the restless heart finds no focus for desire, when the questing mind meets no challenge, when the despondent spirit hears no word of hope. . . . The parish Eucharist must be the place where the wider life and mission of the local church finds its focus and direction; where Christian identity, discovered and shared in the give and take of common enterprise, can be celebrated and savored; where the individual experience of anguish or joy can find ultimate meaning in the weekly proclamation of the suffering and victory of our common Lord.” See also Searle, “The Shape of the Future: A Liturgist’s Vision,” 151. Here Searle offers a similar perspective on the Sunday assembly: “What is at stake, then, is not so much the character of the so-called Christian Sunday, but the secret of Christian living itself. This, in turn, depends upon the quality of our common life in the Body of Christ, upon the degree to which the two-edged sword of God’s word is allowed to encompass our death, and upon the kind of power the Eucharist is permitted to have among us as a celebration of the life-to-come. *In short, the quality of our Christian lives, of which Sunday was once a symbol, depends upon the quality of our Sunday assemblies.*” Emphasis mine.



Thus, the “quality of the Sunday assembly”<sup>27</sup> as an icon of Christian life in general is not only a theme that Searle proposes as theory but is one that he strives to substantiate through actual parish observation. From the very beginning of his “Pastoral Liturgy” course at the University of Notre Dame, Searle invited his students to learn the skill of observing liturgy in the parish. For his own part, Searle demonstrated the interest of fine-tuning the observation instruments used in interpreting the liturgical event.<sup>28</sup> This is particularly significant since, in the early-1980s, the general idea of interpreting the meaning of liturgy through observation, rather than through the study of texts and rubrics, was quite novel and had yet to be embraced wholeheartedly by academic liturgists.<sup>29</sup> For example, suggesting

---

<sup>27</sup> Searle, “The Shape of the Future: A Liturgist’s Vision,” 151. See the full text in the immediately preceding footnote.

<sup>28</sup> See Appendix 3, “Instruments for Interpreting Liturgical Data.” See also Julia Crane and Michael V. Angrosino, “Participant Observation,” in *Field Projects in Anthropology: A Student Handbook* (Morristown, NJ: General Learning Press, 1974), 63-73. The authors define “participant observation” as the following: “Participant observation is field research in which the ethnographer is not merely a detached observer of the lives and activities of the people under study, but is also a participant in that round of activities. By becoming an active member of the community, the anthropologist need no longer be a somewhat formidable ‘scientific’ stranger, but can become a trusted friend. By doing, insofar as is feasible, whatever it is that the people he studies are doing, he can have a first-hand experience of what such activity means to the people themselves” (63). See as well Severyn Bruyn, “The Methodology of Participant Observation,” *Human Organization* 22 (1963): 224-235. Bruyn attempts to combat the criticism that participant observation cannot be considered scientific because it lacks objectivity: “Objectivity is an ideal, a state which is always in process of becoming. It is never fully achieved by any investigator in any final sense. It is a condition of reporting without prejudice, but it need not be a report without feeling or sentiment. There are two ways in which the participant observer assumes that feeling and objectivity may coexist. First, it is possible for the investigator to have a feeling of respect for his subjects and remain open and unprejudiced in apprehending and reporting about their way of life. Second, it is possible for the sentiments of people being studied to be conveyed in the report without prejudicing the accuracy or correctness of the report itself” (231-232). Both pieces appear in MSP, C17, Folder “Ritual Studies—Instruments.” See also Gerald V. Lardner, “Evaluative Criteria and the Liturgy,” *Worship* 53 (1979): 357-370. Lardner offers a methodology for evaluating liturgical celebrations based upon metaphor. Lardner writes: “All knowledge is metaphorical, hypothetical, paradigmatic. Hence, explanation involves creation as well as discovery, and therefore, the research task is not the ‘discovery’ of ‘objective law’ or ‘eternal verities,’ but rather *creating the paradigm or applying the metaphor which leaves the fewest anomalies*” (360).

<sup>29</sup> See, for example, Martin D. Stringer, “Liturgy and Anthropology: The History of a Relationship,” *Worship* 63 (1989): 503-520. Stringer proposes that the social sciences have had a long relationship with liturgy, but he believes that anthropological studies have been misdirected, and therefore, less than helpful. He writes: “There are a large number of sociological studies of churches and ‘parishes’ both in Europe and in the United States. Many of these are very good at determining the social backgrounds of the people who attend the churches and perhaps, in part, eliciting why they might go. However all those that I have read are totally silent on what actually happens when they get inside the church building and begin to worship. It is almost as if the

that the observation of liturgical performance is in the “incipient stages” of incorporation in liturgical studies, Margaret Mary Kelleher writes: “The study of liturgical performance, of course, necessitates the creation of new methods that incorporate some kind of fieldwork, offer questions that can facilitate the gathering of data, and include hermeneutical principles which can be used to interpret the data.”<sup>30</sup>

To return to Searle’s contribution of articulating a new field of “pastoral liturgical studies,” the work of the participant observer is to engage in the empirical task of recording a “text” of the liturgical event. As Searle writes: “Hence the whole apparatus of field studies,

---

sociologist remains at the church door and waits for the congregation to come out again” (504). Also, see Theodore W. Jennings, Jr., “Ritual Studies and Liturgical Theology: An Invitation to Dialogue,” *Journal of Ritual Studies* 1 (1987): 35-56. Jennings offers a more positive position on the way in which liturgists employ anthropology, and he credits the rise of ritual studies as being responsible for the desire to study liturgy from the perspective of human enactment: “[F]rom dialogue with ritual studies, liturgical theology may acquire significant new tools for the critical analysis of its object. For example, the development of the genre of the ethnographic report may be of use to liturgical theologians in providing clues to a more detailed and accurate description of actual liturgical practices. The development of methods for obtaining an accurate description of a complex action is indeed one of the most difficult problems facing ritual studies as well as liturgical theology. Without means for such a description, ritual action is easily effaced in favor of a narrative or quasi-theoretical ‘explanation’” (43). See also Garry Hesser and Andrew J. Weigert, “Comparative Dimensions of Liturgy: A Conceptual Framework and Feasibility Application,” *Sociological Analysis* 41 (1980): 215-229. The authors state at the outset: “This paper is intended as a first step toward a useable set of research categories and instruments for studying liturgy in the field. . . There are many anthropological field reports and first-hand journalistic descriptions of particular liturgies. As far as we have been able to discover, however, there are no standard frameworks or data-gathering tools for the systematic, cursive, and comparative study of liturgy” (215). This article appears in MSP, C18, Folder “Empirical Studies: US.”

<sup>30</sup> Margaret Mary Kelleher, “The Communion Rite: A Study of Roman Catholic Liturgical Performance,” *Journal of Ritual Studies* 5 (1991): 99. She also states: “During the last twenty years the practice and study of Christian liturgy have undergone a number of changes. Many of the Christian churches have produced new liturgical books that are in the process of being implemented in a great variety of local communities. Many liturgical scholars have come to view liturgical studies as an interdisciplinary enterprise and are exploring ways of incorporating insights and methods from other disciplines into the study of liturgy.” Here she cites the efforts of the North American Academy of Liturgy’s Social Sciences Study Group, of which both Kelleher and Searle were participating scholars. A working draft of Kelleher’s article appears in MSP, C18, Folder “Empirical Studies: US.” See also Fred W. Clothey, “Toward a Comprehensive Interpretation of Ritual,” *Journal of Ritual Studies* 2 (1988): 158. There he draws attention to the great difficulty of striking a balance between subjectivity and objectivity when one is engaged in field work: “The ascribing of meaning is a profoundly human enterprise; the interpreter’s first priority is to respect the personhood of those human beings who ascribe meaning to phenomena. Indeed, listening to and studying a fellow human being’s religious orientation remains one of the best and most profound ways to demonstrate that one cares. *Yet understanding another does not mean that one becomes the other; in fact, precisely because the interpreter remains an ‘other,’ the understanding is never total.* The more carefully one does one’s work the more aware one becomes of the limitations of the interpretation. The interpreter is always a learner and never an expert.” Emphasis mine.

participant observation, documentation and interviews: their function is to retrieve the event from its temporal dimension and to make it available for analysis.”<sup>31</sup> All of this is to say that coinciding with the Church’s call to assess the implementation of Vatican II liturgical reform was Searle’s contention that an important component of liturgical studies is the actual observation of rites in their human performance. Such observation requires the ability to describe the liturgical event in words as much as it does the effort to derive meaning from it.<sup>32</sup> Clearly, through the field work he and his students conducted as part of the “Pastoral Liturgy” course, Searle cultivated a respect for the art of participant observation; however, it was his association with a major study at Notre Dame that would leave him utterly convinced that observing liturgy in the parish reveals a great challenge for the future of liturgical reform in this country.

### ***“Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life”***

To underscore what has been previously stated, while Searle invested much time, energy, and ink toward furthering “pastoral liturgical studies” as a credible academic discipline, he remained rooted in the human dynamics and ritual concerns of the local parish.<sup>33</sup> In fact, for him, the development of skills in the area of participant observation,

---

<sup>31</sup> Searle, “New Tasks, New Methods,” 297. He continues: “Thus the pastoral liturgist’s preoccupation with the data is not dissimilar from the historian’s concern to reconstruct and interpret the past on the basis of the different kinds of record left behind by the liturgical celebrations of the past, although it must be said that the task of pastoral liturgy has the inestimable advantage of being able to determine ahead of time which aspects of the event it wishes to record for subsequent study” (297-298).

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 299. Searle states: “Thus the study of the liturgical event will imply the careful description of what is actually done before conclusions are drawn as to what it all means.”

<sup>33</sup> An example of Searle’s professional commitment to the life of the local parish can be found in his association with the National Pastoral Life Center. In a letter dated October 25, 1983, Philip J. Murnion, director of the center, welcomed Searle as one of more than twenty associates who would be available in the process of “designing clergy institutes, diocesan assemblies and synods, or diocesan reorganization consultations” (See Philip J. Murnion, “Letter to Mark Searle dated October 25, 1983,” in MSP, D56, Folder “National Pastoral Life Center”).

which largely depends upon interpretation of liturgy in its actual performance, could be considered foundational for the empirical task of “pastoral liturgical studies.” Searle’s desire was to tackle head-on many of the unseen problems that were already arising in the process of liturgical reform by—as he states in the conclusion of “New Tasks, New Methods”—“attending to the experiences, frustrations and hopes of the Christian people as a whole.”<sup>34</sup> To be successful, “pastoral liturgical studies” would necessarily focus upon the assembly and its participation in parish liturgy; stated another way, it was a theory seeking substantiation.

How fortuitous, then, that at the very time Searle was articulating his method for “pastoral liturgical studies” an interdisciplinary study should be launched by two academic organizations at Notre Dame: the Institute for Pastoral and Social Ministry and the Center for the Study of Contemporary Society.<sup>35</sup> The Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life, “an unparalleled and unprecedented multidisciplinary study of Catholic parishes in the United States,” began in 1982 as a means of exploring how twenty years of Vatican II reform

---

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 308. Searle’s thought in entirety reads: “In the last analysis, my major concern is that, as members of the North American Academy of Liturgy, we accept the responsibility of putting our expertise at the service of the churches, particularly in regard to those new problems that are surfacing in the wake of the liturgical reforms. And by service the church, I mean serving not only the interests of the official leadership, but attending to the experiences, frustrations and hopes of the Christian people as a whole, committed as we are to the proposition that the sacred liturgy is the worship of the whole church and that its benefits are intended even for the least of God’s people.”

<sup>35</sup> For an excellent overview of the “Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life” see Jim Castelli and Joseph Gremillion, *The Emerging Parish: The Notre Dame Study of Catholic Life Since Vatican II* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987). In the foreword to the book, Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C., then president of the university, offers his praise to those responsible for the study: “The director of the latter (the Center for the Study of Contemporary Society) for ten years, Dr. David C. Leege, has headed the scientific team and has written most of the published reports which provide the basis for this book. Three diocesan priests—Msgr. John Egan, Father Philip Murnion, and Msgr. Joseph Gremillion—have brought to the project their accumulated pastoral experience totaling over a hundred years. Egan was founding director of Notre Dame’s Institute for Pastoral and Social Ministry, and Gremillion was his successor. Murnion was former executive for the parish project of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, and now heads the National Pastoral Life Center. To them and their two-score collaborators in this cooperative endeavor of scholarly research and pastoral insight, I voice warm gratitude” (x).

have impacted the local parish.<sup>36</sup> Its overall project director, Dr. David Leege, a professor of government and sociology, offers this assessment:

[I]f a major purpose of Vatican II was to reinstate the sense that all Christians—lay, priests and religious—are responsible for corporate life in the local parish, then Vatican II is succeeding in the United States. The American Church is participatory not only in religious ritual but especially in shared responsibility for ministry. Even in ritual, people have noticed how much more active and expressive they are expected to be. Parish policy-making and governing patterns are not yet clearly demarcated, but the effort to find parish governance mechanisms as effective or more effective than parish councils continues. The picture of a parish where Father O'Brien took care of God, Sister Cerita ran the school and the people met their Mass obligations and said "Hail Marys" would be a woefully inadequate stereotype of U.S. Catholic parishes in the 1980s, if ever."<sup>37</sup>

The uniqueness of the Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life resides in the fact that, rather than studying Catholic opinion through national polls or even wide-based surveys, it

---

<sup>36</sup> See Larry Curran, *Overview of Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 2006); available from [http://www.nd.edu/~icl/nd\\_study.shtml](http://www.nd.edu/~icl/nd_study.shtml); Internet; accessed November 5, 2008. Identifying the unique contribution of the Notre Dame study, Curran writes: "Our study is different from general population surveys that examine Catholic subsamples. We began with a sample of Catholic parishes. Only after identifying the major differences among U.S. parishes did we move to probability samples of parishioners and their identified leaders to understand in microscopic manner their interactions within the local parish. Thus it is important to identify this as a study of parishes and parish-connected Catholics." See also William McCready, "The Local Parish Community and Religious Socialization," *Chicago Studies* 20 (1981): 253-266. McCready provides reason for the importance of empirical study within the context of the local parish: "It may well be that the commune craze of the '60's has died out but that it has left its mark on the American imagination and people, instead of looking for communes, are now going to be looking for a return to a neighborhood way of life. The neighborhood offers the support and the personal interactions that many derive from communes but at the same time it offers a measure of privacy and independence which the communes seem to have been unable to deliver. A large segment, perhaps two-thirds or more, of the Catholic population has been socialized to live in neighborhoods and this socialization will not disappear easily. *We are a very parochial people in the geographic sense of the word and the importance of that parochialism for religious socialization has never been fully explored*" (266). Emphasis mine. This article appears in MSP, C45, Folder "Sociology."

<sup>37</sup> Castelli and Gremillion, *The Emerging Parish*, 3. See also David C. Leege and Michael R. Welch, "Catholics in Context: Theoretical and Methodological Issues in Studying American Catholic Parishioners," *Review of Religious Research* 31:2, Special Issue: Methodological Issues in Congregational Studies (Dec., 1989): 132-148. This article provides an in-depth description of the rationale for a method of studying participation. Leege and Welch write: "Phase I of the CPL focused primarily on parish organizational characteristics; Phase II provided a more balanced perspective on parishes as communities of actors involved in religious and social activities. By contrast, much previous research has treated the attitudes, beliefs and behavior patterns of parishioners and/or pastors as separate and relatively isolated phenomena" (132).

studied behavior and attitudes in the context of the parish itself, with its unique history.<sup>38</sup>

Thus, the study attempted to identify what the life and rhythm of the parish communicated about underlying beliefs and values as well as commitment to enacting those beliefs and values in the broader community. heralding the importance of this study, Frederick McManus once observed: “No one with a concern for parish life in the United States can afford to neglect the rich mine of information, insight, and interpretation that have already been provided by this study—which treated many facets of parish life besides the liturgical.”<sup>39</sup>

Research for the study was conducted along the lines of two distinct phases.<sup>40</sup> In Phase I, which was prepared in 1982, extensive questionnaires were distributed to the pastoral leadership (pastors or administrators) of 1,850 parishes across the United States. Of those 1,850 questionnaires, 1,099 were returned (a return rate of 59%). Phase II was launched the following year with a considerably consolidated field of study. 36 parishes were chosen from the 1,099 parishes responding to the first questionnaire, representing six geographical regions of the country. As in Phase I, questionnaires<sup>41</sup> were prepared and sent

---

<sup>38</sup> See Castelli and Gremillion, *The Emerging Parish*, 6. “Most previous research surveyed beliefs, attitudes, and practices of individual members; in a few studies, the structure of a single parish or a handful of parishes was examined. But no study had ever systematically examined both individuals and parish structures in the context of liturgical practices and historical development across a broad variety of parishes.”

<sup>39</sup> McManus, *Liturgical Participation: An Ongoing Assessment*, 22. After highlighting several key points of the study, McManus writes: “If some findings seem gloomy, they are balanced by positive indications: better motivation for Sunday Mass participation, more Christocentric piety among the young, widespread satisfaction with liturgical reform and participation—all but three percent, for example, favored congregational singing—and of course the actual transformation of practice in comparison with the preconciliar period” (25-26).

<sup>40</sup> What follows here is a summarized version of the facts of the study described in *The Emerging Parish*, 6-8.

<sup>41</sup> See Institute for Pastoral and Social Ministry and the Center for the Study of Contemporary Society of the University of Notre Dame, “University of Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life Survey of Parishioners” (1983). This is an unpublished document that was distributed in a course taught by David Leege in 1991. The intended goal of the questionnaire is stated at the outset: “The basic goal of this study is to help the Church better understand what parishes are now like twenty years after Vatican II. We hope the information gained in

to 4,555 “Core Catholics,” (defined as registered members of the parish) from which 2,667 responses were obtained (once again a return rate of 59%).<sup>42</sup> Questionnaires were also submitted to the leadership teams of each of these parishes (117 paid employees and 262 volunteers). The description provided by Jim Castelli and Joseph Gremillion captures the next step:

Two-person teams, composed of a liturgist and a social scientist, were sent to each parish for on-site visits, including a weekend. These sixteen researchers were brought to Notre Dame for training sessions. They received three research “instruments” to use in their visits: one to describe changes in the floor plan and physical layout of the church since 1964 when Vatican II issued its new constitution on the liturgy; another to record observations of two regular Saturday evening and Sunday Masses; and a third to interview decision-makers regarding liturgical planning, sacramental preparation, and degree of guidance from diocesan or other local sources.<sup>43</sup>

In addition, the researchers also studied the history of the parishes through written accounts of parish histories and through interviews with the pastors and other knowledgeable figures in each parish. Once again, the objective in all of this was to produce a picture of what

---

this study will tell both church leaders and local pastors more about parishioners’ needs and how they view the role of the parish in the modern world.” The survey consists of six unequal parts. Part I seeks information regarding “parishioners’ participation in activities, their needs, and their feelings.” Part II requests information regarding parishioners’ self-description (example: age, sex, marital status, etc.). Part III strives to formulate a picture of parishioners’ understanding of religious experience, as suggested by the stated goal: “In order to understand better the spiritual needs of parishioners, parishes need to learn more about their members’ religious images and values, their religious feelings, and their patterns of religious activities.” Part IV asks for opinions on various issues faced by the Church since the Second Vatican Council. Part V concentrates on “ethical issues and the moral conduct” of parishioners. Finally, Part VI is a very brief section in which those answering the questionnaire are asked to rank in the order of importance various expectations of the parish priest.

<sup>42</sup> For a detailed, sociologically-tailored description of how these 36 parishes were selected as well as the criteria for determining what constitutes a “Core Catholic” see Leege and Welch, “Catholics in Context: Theoretical and Methodological Issues in Studying American Catholic Parishioners,” 134-142. They write: “Not only is there no enumerated national sample of all Catholics, but there is no consensus about who should be considered a ‘Catholic’ . . . We have opted for parish-connected Catholics, knowing fully that we have excluded self-identified Catholics who may or may not interact with other Catholics in religious settings” (140-141).

<sup>43</sup> Castelli and Gremillion, *The Emerging Parish*, 7.

constitutes the attitudes and beliefs of the post-Vatican II parish; how did the Council serve to fundamentally change the behavior and worldview of the parish entity?<sup>44</sup>

Phase III, the final phase of the study—begun in 1984 and concluded in 1989—consisted of the publication of fifteen reports designed to “interpret” and “apply” the findings of the study to the pastoral life of the Church.<sup>45</sup> Of these fifteen reports, Searle was the principal author (along with David Leege) of two: Report no. 5: *The Celebration of Liturgy in the Parishes* (August 1985) and Report no. 6: *Of Piety and Planning: Liturgy, the Parishioners, and the Professionals* (December 1985). Rather than exploring all fifteen documents, what follows is an attempt to highlight several major points of the reports in which Searle played a leading role.

Therefore, beginning with Report no. 5, after a description of how the study of parish liturgy was conducted as well as statistical data regarding how congregations have responded to a postconciliar way of assembling at the outset of Mass, Searle and Leege reveal that

---

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 45-47. Here Castelli and Gremillion describe the difficulty in attempting to accurately portray “parish consensus.” They write: “We now have a pretty good idea of what our national sample of Core Catholics looks like and believes. But it is not quite that simple. The national figures mask the degree of diversity which is found among parishes and within parishes. It is this mix of viewpoints which gives each parish its unique flavor. Social scientists have gotten so used to studying people in different groups—by race, age, sex, region, and so on—that they often lose sight of the fact that people live in communities and cooperate in various social institutions and that those institutions shape those views. Membership in a parish can have that kind of impact. It may be more important that I am a member of Saint Francis parish than that I am a sixty-four year old woman. And I may think more like a forty year old man from Saint Francis than a sixty-four year old woman from Sacred Heart. Put another way, a parishioner whose views are in a distinct minority at Sacred Heart parish might be in the mainstream at Saint Francis” (45-46).

<sup>45</sup> See Joseph Gremillion and David C. Leege, *Post-Vatican II Parish Life in the US: Review and Preview*, Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life, no. 15 (Notre Dame, IN: The University of Notre Dame, 1989). The authors write: “During its final phase, 1984-89, the Study’s findings were analyzed and communicated to church bodies and leadership, scholarly circles and the media. This third phase has also fostered interpretation and application of Study findings in pastoral planning and ministry formation, liturgical creativity and theological reflection. The series of fifteen reports, from December 1984 to this final issue, has served as a principal channel of communication, and the medium for analysis and interpretation by a dozen authors and another twenty consultants” (For the full text, see: [http://www.nd.edu/~icl/study\\_reports/report15.pdf](http://www.nd.edu/~icl/study_reports/report15.pdf)). All 15 reports can be accessed online at [http://www.nd.edu/~icl/nd\\_study.shtml](http://www.nd.edu/~icl/nd_study.shtml).



parishioners in the United States display a fundamental “uneasiness” about ritual prayer.<sup>46</sup> In fact, this is an evaluation that runs throughout many of their observations about parish liturgy. They write:

Christian liturgy is and has always been—in principle at least—the prayer of the community. It is also ritual prayer, characterized by repetition of the same acts, rehearsing of the same words, celebration of the same symbols and singing of the same chants. . . . *In the postconciliar period this taken-for-grantedness of traditional ritual forms and of the fixed repertory of assigned texts and chants appears to be declining.* In part, this may be the result of the very project of liturgical reform itself: if something could be changed, then anything could be questioned. Or it may be symptomatic of the American way, where consumerism puts a premium on the innovative and identifies re-runs with the off-season. *Whatever the causes (and our data do not give us any answers to that question directly), it does not appear from our observers’ reports as though those responsible for liturgy in U.S. Catholic parishes think of their Sunday liturgy as the rehearsal of old, familiar rites.*<sup>47</sup>

At the risk of oversimplification, it may be asserted that given the fact that Catholics in the postconciliar period had to make a quick shift from a presider-dominated liturgy to one that requires their active participation, it is not surprising that the nature of ritual has yet to be grasped by the assembly. In fact, Searle and Leege suggest that this dilemma may be complicated by the lingering tendency of presiders to “dominate the liturgy.”<sup>48</sup> This situation

---

<sup>46</sup> See Mark Searle and David C. Leege, *The Celebration of Liturgy in the Parishes*, Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life, no. 5 (Notre Dame, IN: The University of Notre Dame, 1985): 4. They write: “The foregoing description of how Catholics assemble for the weekly Mass illustrates the difficulty of studying patterns of behavior when that behavior varies so much from parish to parish and Mass to Mass. It might be thought that, once we got on to the unfolding of the liturgy proper the data would be more manageable because the range of variations would be narrower. To some extent that is true, but even so our observers found that the manner of celebration in any given parish was never entirely predictable. This is obviously due in part to the discretion allowed to local communities by the rite itself in the use of options, *but it may also be the result of uneasiness about ritual itself.*” Emphasis mine.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. Emphasis mine.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 6. “As for the role of the celebrant in all this, we find that a celebrant does not prevent the congregation from being bored by ad-libbing during the liturgy nor, at the other extreme, by being extremely reverent. Curiously it seems better for the celebrant either to be acting clearly with the people, or to be acting clearly on behalf of the people, that for him to be trying to occupy some middle ground between the two styles. . . . The

is compounded by the enduring suspicion of congregational singing as well as a divided sense regarding the social dimension of the liturgy, both serving to mark the assembly more as a group of individual worshipers than as the gathered Body of Christ.<sup>49</sup>

This “uneasiness” with ritual prayer is also manifested in opinions regarding the liturgical changes made by the Second Vatican Council. Searle and Leege suggest that while the majority of American Catholics are pleased that the liturgy has undergone reform, there remains what they call “soft areas” in which the spirit of renewal has not penetrated:

“Among them must be numbered the Opening Rites (in part a problem with the *Ordo Missae*,

---

celebrant tended to dominate the liturgy to a noticeable degree in over half the Masses observed. This was particularly the case in small-town parishes, 74% of the time; celebrants there were also more likely than others to adopt an informal style. Celebrants in rural parishes were more formal, while suburban priests were again more informal in presidential style. Along with their formality, celebrants in rural parishes were generally more reverent than others, though the few cases of conspicuous lack of reverence were, in fact, in rural parishes. In one, a celebrant was proceeding with the Eucharistic prayer, looked at the wine, told the worshipers ‘This stuff is contaminated,’ walked off the altar into the sacristy and emerged with a different jug of wine, and proceeded with the celebration!”

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 8. The authors sum up their findings: “If one can risk generalization without suggesting that there is any marked polarization, urban and suburban liturgies are more characterized by their sense of the horizontal; rural and small town liturgies, by their sense of the vertical. With greater awareness of the horizontal dimensions of the liturgy (and of the Christian mysteries it celebrates) there is found greater implementation of Vatican II, relatively informal styles of presiding, greater religious fervor and better rapport between celebrant and people. All this occurs, however, without necessarily excluding awareness of the sacred. Good rapport between priest and people in the liturgy goes along with parishioners who consider their parish to have a strong community feeling and this is reflected in the awareness of the assembly in the rite itself. Where there is good rapport, there is also likely to be more prayerfulness among the congregation; a reasonably strong sense of the sacred is also found there.” See also Castelli and Gremillion, *The Emerging Parish*, 129-131. With regard to the issue of participating in congregational singing, the authors conclude: “The music found in Catholic parishes today consists of hymns and folk songs, with a sprinkling of chants, polyphony, Gospel music, and ethnic hymns. But the folk music which became a symbol of the post-Vatican II Mass leads to very mixed results: it is often associated with very enthusiastic participation, but the participation is usually by a limited part of the congregation. Just as often, a congregation is quite unresponsive to folk music” (130). Likewise, with regard to the social dimension of the liturgy, the authors suggest that rather than refashioning the liturgy as a celebration of community (rather than life in Christ) social gatherings held before and after the Mass are empirically proven to produce greater “enthusiasm in the worship community at Mass.” However, in suburban parishes, this sense of community tends not to extend itself beyond the worship experience itself. As the authors state: “On one hand, as we saw earlier, there is less community in suburban parishes in terms of friendships, conversations, and social life. On the other hand, there is more community in suburban parishes in terms of the celebration of the Mass. These findings are not necessarily contradictory. Each of us is a part of many communities—in our jobs, our neighborhoods, our congregations, our voluntary associations, our friendships. Suburban Catholics seem to have more of these types of communities than those living in other areas. That may be why they are less involved in their parish social communities. But this does not stop them from taking part with enthusiasm in the worship community at Mass.”

the official ritual, itself), the engagement of the congregation in praying the Eucharist, the failure to make full use of lay ministers of communion (especially women) at all Masses, the continuing practice of using pre-consecrated hosts for communion, the widespread neglect of the cup, and the general issue of music and singing in the liturgy.”<sup>50</sup> The following table shows that, while satisfaction with key liturgical changes clearly outweighs dissatisfaction, there remain the dual problems of ambivalence and the lack of implementation of changes:

**Table 1. Core Catholic Opinion on Liturgical Changes<sup>51</sup>**

Change	Wish It Were Omitted (%)	Don't Mind (%)	Happy It's Added (%)	Our Parish Doesn't Do (%)
Hymn singing by congregation	4	27	67	2
Exchanging a sign of peace	12	24	61	3
Communion from the cup	15	32	35	17
Communion in the hand	10	30	59	1
Lay readers	6	34	60	1
Silence after reading and homily	6	37	41	16
Lay men Communion ministers	15	37	44	4
Women Communion ministers	18	31	38	13

Again, the primary dilemma here is what to do with the rather high percentage in the “Don’t Mind” and in the “Our Parish Doesn’t Do” columns.<sup>52</sup> Do these responses measure indifference or do they suggest that catechesis is somewhat lacking? Searle and Leege remain silent on this question, but certainly the data calls for further exploration on such topics as: the full expression of communion (i.e. communion under both species) in

<sup>50</sup> Searle and Leege, *The Celebration of Liturgy in the Parishes*, 6.

<sup>51</sup> This table is taken directly from Castelli and Gremillion, *The Emerging Parish*, 135.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. Castelli and Gremillion state: “Interpretation of these findings depends partly upon whether you view the ‘I don’t mind’ response as a glass that’s half full or a glass that’s half empty. If you view it as indifference, the responses seem less enthusiastic than if you view it as passive acceptance.”

relationship to liturgical participation, the role of lay ministers of communion, and the place of silence in liturgical celebration. These represent some of the “soft areas” in which “the spirit of the liturgical renewal has yet to take hold.”<sup>53</sup>

Turning now to Report no. 6, Searle and Leege seek to probe the related issues of parishioners’ expectations of liturgy and liturgy planning as well as how well they understand what it is they are celebrating.<sup>54</sup> One of the primary observations on parishioners’ expectations of the liturgy that surfaces from their interpretation of the data in the Notre Dame study is that, while liturgical planning leads to satisfaction, the value of such an activity remains relatively low. As Searle and Leege write:

We suspected that many parishes have a liturgical planning committee, but it either does not function at all, is regularly over-ruled by a pastor or musician, or is of little significance in the life of the parish. Our survey of 1100 parishes in Phase I of the Study found that 72% of the American parishes claimed to do liturgical planning. Yet for all the presumed significance of the weekly Mass in the lives of parishioners, liturgical planning was seldom seen by pastors or parish administrators as one of the three most important sources of *vitality* in the parish. It appeared as such in only 7% of the 1100 parishes, a figure far below weekly Mass itself, the parish school or religious education, or even, embarrassingly, bingo.<sup>55</sup>

---

<sup>53</sup> Searle and Leege, *The Celebration of Liturgy in the Parishes*, 6.

<sup>54</sup> See Mark Searle and David C. Leege, *Of Piety and Planning: Liturgy, the Parishioners, and the Professionals*, Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life, no. 6 (Notre Dame, IN: The University of Notre Dame, 1985): 3. They write: “Observers sent to the 36 parishes used a semi-structured interview schedule to find out as much as possible about the process of liturgical preparation. They asked questions such as: Is there a liturgy committee in the parish? Is it functioning? Is there a planning group, or who actually decides what will be done and what will be sung? How are liturgical changes introduced? Is there any opportunity for feedback from the congregation? Is there a professional liturgist on the parish staff? What help is available from the diocese and does the parish make use of it?”

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. Even though the planning of liturgy does not seem to be considered an essential activity of the parish, it does make a difference in terms of parishioner satisfaction. Searle and Leege continue: “Does careful planning make for satisfied parishioners? The answer is guardedly affirmative. We divided the 36 parishes into four groups. Comparing the nine parishes with the highest satisfaction rates and the nine parishes with the lowest satisfaction, we find that of the nine top parishes, four have strong liturgy planning, two are moderately strong, and three are weak. Of the most dissatisfied parishes six have weak planning processes and three strong” (4).

The findings from the Notre Dame study suggest that, while parishioners have high expectations for “good liturgy,” the commitment of time and energy toward planning and preparing for liturgical celebrations betrays the high expectation. In fact, “good liturgy” is tied more to the overall health and morale of the parish community than it is to any theological conviction regarding the preeminence of communal prayer.<sup>56</sup>

Another important finding discussed at length in Report no. 6 (a finding which will be foundational in some of Searle’s future writings) is the issue of motivation for attending the Sunday liturgy since the Second Vatican Council.<sup>57</sup> First of all, the study suggests that attendance due to a sense of obligation (only 6% of the respondents report attending Mass because of Church law) has been surpassed by attendance for the purpose of personal satisfaction. The following table presents the findings:

---

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 4. The authors state: “The kind of hints that appear in our data suggest that if ‘good liturgy’ is to be measured in terms of parishioner satisfaction, it is more a barometer of parochial health than the primary cause of high or low morale in the parish. Thus it would seem incorrect and unfair to seek to lay the blame for low parish morale on the ‘new liturgy.’ At the same time, while the liturgy provides an important focus for a parish community’s sense of identity, that identity cannot be provided by the liturgy alone. . . In a sense, the Study confirms what liturgists have held as fundamental: liturgy often mirrors what is happening in the parish community.”

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 5. The question of motivation is part of the overall quest to understand better the role of liturgy in the “inner life” of Catholics. Searle and Legee write: “The Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life sought to examine not only the forms of parochial liturgy and the evaluations of the parishioners, but also something of the inner life of those parishioners. How do they understand God, or the place of Christ and the Church in their lives? To whom do they pray when free of the rubrics of the Church’s public worship? How does their religious imagination envisage the purpose and goal of the Christ life? Insofar as parishioners tell us their answers to these questions, can we determine whether the profound transformation of their liturgical experience over these past twenty years has left any recognizable traces upon the patterns of their devotion and upon their Catholic vision?”

**Table 2. Core Catholic Attendance at Mass<sup>58</sup>**

<u>Reason for Attending Mass</u>	<u>Respondents Giving This Reason (%)</u>
I enjoy the feeling of meditating and communicating with God	37
I enjoy taking part in the service itself and experiencing the liturgy	28
I feel a need to receive the Sacrament of Holy Communion	20
I feel a need to hear God's Word	19
I want to set an example for my children	10
The church requires that I attend	6
I enjoy being with other persons in our church	5
Mainly it's habit	3
<u>I want to please or satisfy someone close to me (spouse or parent)</u>	<u>2</u>

While it may be encouraging to see that Catholics are not drawn to liturgy out of fear of God's punishment, it may be considered problematic that a sense of duty seems to be non-influential. Searle and Leege interpret the data as pointing toward the infiltration of an individualistic approach to liturgical participation that certainly does not "reflect the *ecclesial* consciousness which it was the intention of the Liturgy Constitution to foster."<sup>59</sup>

In addition to providing feedback on the primary reasons for attending liturgy, the Notre Dame study also suggests that the liturgy offers American Catholics a sound experience of encounter with God. "It seems that the liturgy," remark Searle and Leege, "does a reasonably good job of providing most Catholics with a recognizable place of encounter with God, even if it is not always clear that it is an encounter with God shared corporately, i.e., in the body of the Church."<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, they contend that profoundly moving "religious experiences" are not necessarily the norm for most Catholics and that

---

<sup>58</sup> This table is taken directly from Castelli and Gremillion, *The Emerging Parish*, 132.

<sup>59</sup> Searle and Leege, *Of Piety and Planning: Liturgy, the Parishioners, and the Professionals*, 5.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

these “should not be used as a measure of the liturgy’s effectiveness.”<sup>61</sup> Thus, they are quick to caution against efforts to manipulate the liturgy towards the achievement of an emotional experience; instead, the liturgy is to be considered a “regular exercise” that provides sustenance:

Attempts to turn the liturgy into “meaningful worship experiences” should, therefore, be very carefully considered lest they foster unrealistic expectations. The liturgy for these parishioners is more a “source” than a “summit” of religious life. Sunday liturgy appears to be a regular exercise which keeps people’s faith alive and sustains their religious identity.<sup>62</sup>

It should be noted that describing liturgy as “more a ‘source’ than a ‘summit’” will play a vital role in Searle’s ongoing identification of liturgy as a “rehearsal of Christian attitudes.”<sup>63</sup> “Sunday liturgy,” as Searle writes in a subsequent reflection upon the Notre Dame study,

---

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 6. They write: “Our questions about ‘religious experiences’ (which we left to the respondents themselves to identify) showed that, while the liturgy may sometimes serve as the occasion for such powerful and meaningful experiences, this is not normal and should not be used as a measure of the liturgy’s effectiveness. Forty-six percent of all our respondents claimed they had had what they defined as a religious experience at some time in their lives: 6% near death, 5% in private prayer outside church, 3.5% during the liturgy, 0.7% during baptism, 2.5% at childbirth, 4.3% in association with major transitions in life, and so on. *Thus, while the liturgy is not excluded as an occasion for deeply moving religious experiences, neither is it the setting where such experiences happen very often.*” Emphasis mine. These findings come from assorted answers to questions number 57 and 57A of the questionnaire which ask: “How often in your life have you had an experience where you felt as though you were very close to a powerful, spiritual force that seemed to lift you out of yourself?” The respondent is asked to circle one of the following answers: “(1) never in my life, (2) once or twice, (3) several times, and (4) often.” The next question asks: “When you have or had these religious experiences, what happened? (e.g.,: When did it happen? How did it happen? How did you feel? Why did you think it was a spiritual force? PLEASE DESCRIBE.)

<sup>62</sup> Searle and Leege, *Of Piety and Planning: Liturgy, the Parishioners, and the Professionals*, 6. See also Searle and Leege, *The Celebration of Liturgy in the Parishes*, 4. Here they describe what happens when parishioners lose sight of liturgy as “source”: “[T]oo often it (liturgy) lapses into rote performance or into gusts of enthusiasm, neither informed by a reverent respect for the tradition or by a grasp of the nature of the liturgical act. At its best, liturgy is the prayer of a living community united in one body before God, drawn into the mind and heart of Christ their Head, so that their daily lives come to reflect that new identity. When that happens, too, the faithful know themselves to stand in communion with the whole Church throughout the world and with the generations who have gone before them: they become part of something much larger than themselves.”

<sup>63</sup> See for example Mark Searle, “The Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life,” *Worship* 60 (1986): 331. Based on the data listed in footnote 61 above, Searle offers the following assessment: “*From this I am inclined to believe that the weekly celebration of the eucharist is more a ‘source’ than a ‘summit’ for most people, more a matter of sustenance than a thing of ecstasy.* If that is so, then attempts to turn the liturgy into a ‘meaningful worship experience’ should be very carefully considered, lest they foster unrealistic expectations.” Emphasis mine.

“should be characterized by the regular and reliable supply of solid nourishment for people’s faith and religious identity, rather than by attempt to ‘turn the congregation on’.”<sup>64</sup>

Finally, a related point to the issue of how parishioners see and understand the liturgy is the question regarding (Christian?) activities in which Catholics experience the closeness of God. Given the fact that parishioners do not rank the liturgy among the chief activities that deserve greater financial support,<sup>65</sup> perhaps it should not be surprising that many of the communal activities of the liturgy rate lower than private, personal moments of encounter with God. For example, the following table suggests that the activity of assembling as a congregation does not promote as high a degree of closeness to God as private prayer:

---

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Searle and Leege, *Of Piety and Planning: Liturgy, the Parishioners, and the Professionals*, 6. The authors write: “Asked about parish priorities, parishioners, overwhelmingly supported putting more effort into religious education, especially for teenagers. Only 17% thought their parish out to make the celebration of the liturgy more of a priority, a percentage that just about tied improving parish social life and helping the poor outside the boundaries of the parish. Liturgy lagged far behind not only education but evangelization (34%), improving unjust economic conditions (20%) and fostering ecumenical relations (18.5%).” They continue by concluding that this evidence may suggest that the liturgy is imply “taken for granted”: “This may be evidence of a tendency to take the parish’s liturgical expression for granted, at least when it is in competition with more immediately felt needs such as ensuring the religious upbringing of children or bringing back the lapsed and the unchurched. *Certainly these data from parishioners run parallel to the data from pastors that judge liturgical planning to be of modest importance to the vitality of the parish.*” Emphasis mine.



**Table 3. Core Catholic Experience of the Closeness of God by Activity<sup>66</sup>**

<u>Activity</u>	Respondents Feeling Close to God During This Activity (%)
Receiving Holy Communion	91
Praying privately	89
Being absolved or anointed, etc.	77
Helping individuals in need	71
Being with a person I love	68
Gathering with the congregation during Mass	65
Chanting and praying the liturgy	61
Working for justice and peace	52
Reading the gospels	48
Obedying church rules	42
Praying in a charismatic group	33

Therefore, in addition to the data which indicates that parishioners tend to take the celebration (and certainly the planning) of liturgy for granted, the above information suggests that the communal dimension (i.e. “gathering with the congregation during Mass” and “chanting and praying the liturgy”) do not seem to produce as great a sense of God’s closeness as do the more individual practices of “receiving Holy Communion,” “praying privately,” or even “being absolved or anointed.”<sup>67</sup> “Paradoxically, then,” maintain Searle and Leege, “parishioners usually identify their parish’s purpose with something liturgical and

<sup>66</sup> This table is taken directly from Castelli and Gremillion, *The Emerging Parish*, 158. In number 56 of the questionnaire, respondents were asked the questions: “How close to God do you feel while?:” They were given 11 responses and asked to rate each of them from 1 to 5, with 1 being “Not close at all” and 5 being “Extremely close.”

<sup>67</sup> This point about individualistic practices continuing to trump communal ones is further validated when the individual parts of the Mass are examined with regard to parishioners feeling of closeness to God. Individual moments clearly rank higher than moments in which worshipers are expected to be communally conscious. See Searle and Leege, *Of Piety and Planning: Liturgy, the Parishioners, and the Professionals*, 6. They write: “Surely not all parts of the Mass are equally engaging. People report feeling closer to God at some points in the liturgy than at other points: e.g., people feel closest to God in person or intimate moments of the liturgy such as receiving communion (86%) or being absolved or anointed (70%). The former, incidentally, approximates the figure for private prayer (85%). In other parts of the liturgy that seem to involve greater awareness of those around them (e.g. gathering with the congregation, joining in singing and prayer) the feeling of being extremely close to God is reported by only 50-60% of the respondents.”

pastors are the primary liturgical planners and executors, but neither seem to rate liturgical celebration as highly important in comparison with other undertakings.”<sup>68</sup>

While there are many more details the Notre Dame study that could rightfully be used to describe the state of the post-Vatican II parish, the preceding overview of Report no. 5 and Report no. 6 provides the central features of Searle’s (and Legee’s) interpretation of the data on liturgical matters. What necessarily comes to the fore, in terms of this present project, is that Searle’s participation as a liturgist in this sociological project served to confirm many of his suspicions regarding the lack of integration of ritual practice and communal surrender to its demands by American Catholics. It also served to validate his belief that more projects along the lines of the Notre Dame study were needed in order to address questions as they surfaced for local communities. As Searle confesses in a report delivered to the 1986 North American Academy of Liturgy gathering:

The nineteenth-century historian of the liturgy, Louis Duchesne, once remarked: “Because I am not a theologian, I can praise God with joy.” I feel something of the same ambivalence about sociological research. Three years of association with the Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life has not made a sociologist of me, though I have come to appreciate both the possibilities and the limitations of this kind of large-scale survey and of the larger discipline within which such research is undertaken. My own role in this project has been strictly that of a pastoral liturgist: identifying the questions that seemed worth asking, helping with the design of the research instruments, and assisting in the evaluation of the data.<sup>69</sup>

The Notre Dame study would prove to correspond well with Searle’s method for “pastoral liturgical studies,” as the conducting of empirical research—neither “creative” nor “inventive”—“seeks rather to identify, describe and analyze significant aspects of life in the

---

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Searle, “The Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life,” 312.

human community.”<sup>70</sup> In other words, the work of this project, with its interdisciplinary format, was precisely what Searle had in mind when he postulated that “pastoral liturgical studies” begins with the tricky task of “describing what is going on in worship.”<sup>71</sup> With the collection of the data and the preparation of initial reports, Searle would now turn his attention to the dissemination of the interpreted data to the wider public audience in the hopes of sparking ongoing reflection and investigation.

### ***Utilizing the Notre Dame Study in “Pastoral Liturgical Studies”***

In the early part of 1984, as the data from the Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life was being compiled and reports began to appear, Searle immediately began focusing his energies to utilize this research in “pastoral liturgical studies.” Toward this end, he envisioned Notre Dame’s Center for Pastoral Liturgy as playing a key role in linking empirical research to liturgical scholarship. In a Memo to the out-going director of the Center, Monsignor Joseph Gremillion, dated March 15, 1984, Searle outlined his hopes for the future direction of the Center.<sup>72</sup> Calling for a shift away from emphasis on educational programs in order to a return to the founding vision as a “center for liturgical research,” Searle writes:

---

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. The full citation reads as follows: “Sociology is not, and probably should not be, a creative or inventive discipline. It seeks rather to identify, describe and analyze significant aspects of life in the human community, matters about which most alert participants in social life have more or less accurate impressions already.”

<sup>71</sup> See Searle, “New Tasks, New Methods: The Emergence of Pastoral Liturgical Studies,” 297. Again, applying sociological methods to liturgical studies to meet the demands of adequate description, Searle continues: “Of course, the question of what is going on in worship can be answered at any number of different levels, each of which has to be identified and described in appropriate ways. The use of self-conscious methods of enquiry developed in the social sciences, or the use of paradigms drawn from the study of language, does not itself replace the role of hunches and guesses we are all accustomed to make, but instead goes on to examine and test those hunches empirically, by paying close attention to the collection of data.”

<sup>72</sup> See Mark Searle, “Memorandum—March 15, 1984” in MSP, D42, Folder “Center for Pastoral Liturgy.” This memo has been reproduced in its entirety in Appendix 4.

[T]here is a dire lack of empirical information about the state of the liturgy in this country, or of empirically based studies which could help future pastoral strategy. The ND Study of Catholic Parish Life could serve as a launching pad for more of this kind of study in areas relating to liturgy, ministry, prayer, etc. This kind of research would be invaluable to national organizations such as the BCL, FDLC, NCEA, etc. as well as to dioceses and parishes.<sup>73</sup>

Thus, Searle suggests that the leadership of the Center for Pastoral Liturgy, of which he had been its Associate Director from 1978 to 1983, should, in effect, model itself after the Notre Dame study, with a sociologist at the helm and a liturgist as associate.<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, because the Notre Dame study had been an exercise in the first task of “pastoral liturgical studies”—the empirical task—he envisioned the Notre Dame Center for Pastoral Liturgy as

---

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. This is not the place to discuss the history of the Center for Pastoral Liturgy, but it is clear that Searle had become frustrated with the direction it had taken since the appointment of John Gallen in 1975. In this memo, Searle contends that the liturgy faculty at Notre Dame feels “out of touch” with the activities of the Center and that its focus on an annual June conference was no longer necessary. He writes that “when the Center moved into popular education in the mid-1970s, there was an obvious need for conferences, workshops and publications aimed at the parish level; since that time the scene has changed and the role of the NDCPL is no longer clear. For example: we have drawn less than 400 participants for the June Conference the last couple of years or more. The South-Western Michigan Liturgical Conference last August drew 800. This, like the corresponding conferences of Detroit and Chicago, appeals to and serves the needs of a specific local church. It is not clear that there is still room for ND doing the same thing at a national level.” See also “Rev. Melloh Named Director of N.D. Center,” *The South Bend Tribune*, May 28, 1979. The newspaper article states: “During its first four years, under the direction of Rev. James D. Shaughnessy, the center emphasized liturgical research and became a point of contact and exchange among diocesan directors of liturgy, professional liturgists and liturgical scholars. Under the leadership of Fr. Gallen since 1975, the center focused its concern on serving pastoral needs—helping ministers understand how to put into practice the reforms of Vatican II—by raising pastoral questions in an academic context.”

<sup>74</sup> Ibid. Searle suggests the following scenario with the implementation of a shift to research: “In this case the new director need not be a liturgist, but could be a social scientist wishing to specialize in sociology of religion and particularly sociology of liturgy. . . . The associate would have to be a liturgist with an interest in empirically based research and a good sense of what the issues needing research might be, as well as of how to interpret the data. (These roles could be reversible—liturgist as director, social scientist as associate—as long as they can work together and define appropriate job descriptions. Both should be able to write and speak!) See also Mark Searle, “*Notre Dame Center for Pastoral Liturgy*, Associate Director for Research: A Proposal—March 11, 1988” in MSP, D42. This proposal has been reproduced in its entirety in Appendix 4. Interestingly enough, this proposal written four years after the previous memo continues to articulate the same, as-yet unrealized, vision for the Center for Pastoral Liturgy. Searle envisions for Center as a perfect research institution for the following reasons: “[T]he CPL remains unique in that it is (a) national in scope; (b) independent; (c) university-related. These three characteristics need to be taken into account in any consideration of the specific role of the CPL in the North American liturgical apostolate. In reflecting on its future, the CPL has, over the years, come to the conviction that, while retaining its educational role, it is in a unique position to respond to a need for which none of these other institutions and organizations are really equipped: *the need to undertake empirical research into the pastoral-liturgical life of the churches of North America.*” Emphasis mine.

the perfect institution to grapple with the data and to foster similar field work for the local Church.<sup>75</sup> “The advantage of being at Notre Dame,” writes Searle, “is that a wide range of expertise (if not a great deal of money!) is easily accessible.”<sup>76</sup>

As his concern about the future of the Notre Dame Center for Pastoral Liturgy demonstrates, the discoveries of the Notre Dame study made it difficult for Searle to occupy himself with the traditional roles of a college professor, things such as sitting at his office desk or standing behind his classroom podium; indeed, he undoubtedly felt a certain urgency about spreading the information far and wide so that scholars and pastoral leaders could take the work of liturgical reform a step further. Thus, one of the first major venues for articulating the results of the Notre Dame study in an academic forum was a conference entitled “The American Catholic Parish in Transition,” held in Chicago May 29-30, 1985.<sup>77</sup> In his opening address, which incorporated a panel discussion on the liturgical component of parish life, Searle contends that the rationale for Vatican II liturgical reform—namely to produce ecclesial renewal—has been less than gratifying:

It was clearly the hopes of the leaders of the liturgical movement, a hope shared by the bishops of Vatican II, that a renewed liturgy would

---

<sup>75</sup> Searle, “*Notre Dame Center for Pastoral Liturgy*, Associate Director for Research: A Proposal—March 11, 1988.” Searle writes: “Given its commitment to empirical research, what can the CPL hope to be able to do? Three possibilities: a. serve as a stimulant and clearing-house for pastoral-liturgical research around the country and overseas; b. undertake actual research projects; c. both the above.”

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. Searle lists the following advantages of the Center for Pastoral Liturgy: 1. Department of Theology, 2. Department of Government, 3. Department of Anthropology, 4. Department of Sociology, 5. Department of Psychology, 6. Social Sciences Training and Research Laboratory, 7. the Notre Dame library.

<sup>77</sup> See David Byers, ed., *The Parish in Transition: Proceedings of a Conference on the American Catholic Parish* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, Inc., 1986). Regarding the sponsorship and the nature as well as the participation in the conference, Byers states the following: “Foundations and Donors Interested in Catholic Activities, Inc. (FADICA) sponsored the symposium in association with the Committee on Priestly Life and Ministry of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, the University of Notre Dame, the National Pastoral Life Center, and the Lilly Endowment, Inc. The conference, attended by more than 100 people, brought together foundation representatives and scholars with pastors, parish staff personnel, parish council members, and lay volunteers from around the country. Entitled ‘The American Catholic Parish in Transition,’ it provided a forum for presenting data drawn from the Notre Dame study on the history of the parish, the broad characteristics of parish life in the 1980s, parish leadership, and parish spirituality” (4).

result in a renewed sense of Church. In Pius X's much-touted phrase, "the liturgy of the Church is the source of the authentic Christian spirit." Thus, a liturgy which was "returned to the people" might be expected to bring about a shift among Catholics everywhere from an individualistic conception of their Christian identity to an understanding of the Church as a single Body of which we are all members. It is becoming clear that if the liturgy is indeed capable of such influence, the shift in attitude will be slow and uneven.<sup>78</sup>

This assessment provoked the following comment from one of the panel participants: "As far as the liturgical data are concerned, I believe that liturgists have had vastly inflated expectation of what liturgical change would do for the people. I am inclined to suspect, after hearing the data from this study, that liturgical reform has been appropriated not so much as revitalization but as fashion."<sup>79</sup> For Searle, the data demonstrates that the U.S. Church has simply not experienced an attitudinal shift in regard to the renewal of the liturgy, a reality that requires ongoing theological and pastoral reflection.<sup>80</sup> Thus, Searle offers the following indictment as he concludes his reflections: "One must be concerned from a pastoral and

---

<sup>78</sup> Mark Searle, "The Parish at Worship," in *The Parish in Transition*, 84. Searle restates this observation later in his talk: "We began this last section by asking whether Catholics share a strong sense of being organic members of the Body of Christ, as the liturgy seems to suppose. By and large, one would have to say 'no.' Only a minority explicitly identify with the Body of Christ image or see the sacramental celebrations of the Church as integral to the path to salvation." (87). When delivered at the conference, Searle's original title for this talk was "The Liturgical Life of Catholic Parishioners in the United States." This draft can be found in MSP, Folder "Parish Study – Reports." See also Searle, "Issues in Christian Initiation: Uses and Abuses of the RCIA," 201-202. This source, previously discussed in Chapter Two, argues that liturgy practices "community consciousness" that stands in direct opposition to American individualism. Searle writes: "At least the old institutional Catholicism, for all its cultivation of private religion, was supported and sustained by an ethnic, cultural identity which, in this country at least, makes and to some extent moderated the effects of cultural individualism. In the ghetto, Catholicism might have been a matter of the individual soul; but it was also a powerful element of our social identity. Once American Catholics moved out of the ghettos, however, they also moved out of their religious communities. In the urbane and pluralistic world of suburbia, religion is more likely to divide neighbors than to bond them; it becomes a private matter, a matter of personal choice" (202).

<sup>79</sup> "Panel Discussion," in *The Parish in Transition*, 92. This statement comes from Ralph Keifer, professor of liturgy at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. The panel discussion begins on page 88 and concludes on page 96.

<sup>80</sup> Searle, "The Parish at Worship," 87. He writes: "Still, there is enough evidence to say that, while liturgical norms have been put in place, the kinds of understanding they were intended to promote are by no means universal."

liturgical perspective, that the radical individualism of our culture is more effective than liturgy and tradition in shaping the imaginations of Catholic people and influencing their behavior.”<sup>81</sup>

This May conference would be the first of a host of speaking engagements designed for Searle and other members of the leadership team of the Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life to broadcast the findings of the study.<sup>82</sup> In addition, Searle diligently worked in the subsequent months to prepare several important articles that incorporated the findings of the Notre Dame study. First, in an article entitled simply “Observations on Parish Liturgy,” which appeared in a late-1985 volume of *New Catholic World*, Searle ruminates on the issue of general motivation and participation in the liturgy. Having stated the empirical evidence, he asks:

Does it reflect a renewed sense of ecclesial identity? Some might argue it does, but one must still wonder whether U.S. Catholics are not buying into the individualism of American culture at the expense of that organic sense of mutual belonging which characterizes the

---

<sup>81</sup> Ibid. 87. He writes on the following page: “These considerations strongly suggest the need to evaluate the findings of the Notre Dame study from a theological and pastoral point of view. *Our findings, liturgical and otherwise, should prompt reflection rather than immediate action.* The Christian Gospel and the Catholic tradition are too precious to allow our culture to absorb them. The only safeguard against such a trend is hard-nosed theological and pastoral reflection, to which I now invite my colleagues” (88). Emphasis mine. Note that there is a definite element of caution here. Searle is suggesting that rather than reacting to the Notre Dame study by implementing hastily liturgical changes (such as reincorporating elements from the pre-Vatican II liturgy), careful reflection must take place.

<sup>82</sup> For example, early in 1986, Searle gave a talk at a liturgical conference at Valparaiso University that he entitled “A View in a Mirror: The Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Liturgy.” This paper appears in MSP, “Parish Study Reports.” He tailors his talk to this Lutheran institution by framing it in these words: “One thing with which Dr. Martin Luther did not have to contend when he issued his German Mass in 1526 was teams of sociologists snooping around asking the peasants whether they enjoyed the new liturgy. Conversely, one of the prices paid by the Roman Church for deferring a general reform of the rites for four hundred years was that, by that time, not only had our historical understanding of liturgical tradition grown enormously, but the social sciences had appeared on the scene as well. Interestingly enough, the liturgical movement of modern times was fuelled almost exclusively by historical and theological research put at the disposal of pastoral renewal. It owed little or nothing to research in anthropology, psychology, sociology or other humanistic sciences. Only after the Council, when liturgical renewal did not follow automatically upon liturgical reform was the help of these disciplines enlisted to try to discover what had gone wrong. *There is probably a moral here for parish renewal: whatever theological conviction, whatever ecclesiological ideal, whatever pastoral vision may inform such renewal, we ignore the social and cultural context of church life at our peril*” (1). Emphasis mine.

Catholic sacramental concept of Church as Body. *Can liturgy survive if it becomes a self-conscious exercise in meeting people's needs rather than an objective act of worship in which we are all invited to participate?* Can the Church survive voluntarism? Can we be totally Catholic and uncritically American at one and the same time?<sup>83</sup>

Although Searle acknowledges earlier in the article that it is the area of music and congregational singing that is most controversial among Catholics, the issue that is most alarming to him is the way in which a spirit of individualism has infiltrated the liturgy. Whereas Catholics used to attend liturgy out of a sense of obligation, now the primary reason offered is the feeling they receive in “being with God.”<sup>84</sup> “So, twenty years after the Council,” Searle writes, “the reformed liturgy is pretty much in place. It is no longer the subject of acrimonious debates, but it has not worked like a magic wand to transform the demeanor of the average congregation, either.”<sup>85</sup>

Thus, what is at stake here is the primary issue of Catholic identity. Have liturgical reforms succeeded in affirming baptized Catholics in who they are? Searle confesses that

---

<sup>83</sup> Mark Searle, “Observations on Parish Liturgy,” *New Catholic World* (November/December 1985) 263. Emphasis mine. Searle continues by stating the usefulness of such questions: “These are questions raised by the Study: they are not in the Study’s province to answer. Which simply goes to prove that sociological studies are important, not because they give us indisputable answers but because they further the community’s ongoing task of pastoral reflection.” See also Nathan D. Mitchell, *Liturgy and the Social Sciences* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1999), 28-29. Mitchell is quite critical of Searle’s assessment of the relationship between liturgy and culture: “Like many liturgical scholars in the ‘high church’ camp, Searle borrowed a socio-anthropological category (cultural assimilation) in order to make an ecclesiological point (American Catholics are becoming a mere voluntary association rather than a traditional church). In short, the critique of postconciliar liturgy (dull, mechanical and listless, hackwork improvisation) quickly becomes a critique of contemporary culture.” Mitchell supports his own outlook with this footnote: “One might point out here that, at its origins, the church was precisely such a ‘voluntary association’ comprised of those who came to believe the message of Jesus, the Risen One, and who celebrated that belief in word and sacrament.”

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 262.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 261. Because the renewed liturgy has failed to “transform the demeanor” of worshiping Catholics, Searle proposes that more study of the parish liturgy must take place to assess people’s attitudes: “More research needs to be done into what it is precisely that makes so many people unhappy with their present forms of liturgical music, for what the figures may not seem all that bad they become somewhat more ominous when one considers that the Notre Dame Study is of registered and largely practicing parishioners and that, in this as in other matters, it probably reflects the attitudes of the most loyal, rather than the most critical, of the people who are at Mass on Sunday.”



answering this question is comparable to grasping “straws in the wind” and is the most difficult to answer.<sup>86</sup> Searle proposes an answer in almost philosophical fashion: (1) U.S. Catholics profess to be able to pray the liturgy, (2) they consider it more a form of “enduring” closeness to God rather than a “mystical” experience, and (3) their motivation for participation tends to be more for personal reasons than for realizing corporate, Catholic identity.<sup>87</sup> Searle then asks: “Do these figures on prayer and motives for Mass attendance give any indication of a renewed sense of identity because of the liturgy? It is doubtful.”<sup>88</sup> Nevertheless, Searle once again articulates his position that this information says something about individualism infiltrating Catholic identity, and thus, he proposes talking about the dilemma in terms of the sociologically appropriate categories of “agentic” religiosity and “communal” religiosity.<sup>89</sup> “This distinction,” writes Searle, “cuts through all our data.”<sup>90</sup>

---

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 261-262. “This last question, whether the conciliar reform of the liturgy has had its desired effect in renewing Catholic life, is the most difficult to answer, partly because we have no comparable study from twenty years ago with which to compare our present findings and partly because how one interprets those findings depends in large part on one’s presuppositions. Short of being able to say whether or not there has been any real renewal as a result of the ‘new liturgy,’ (and even if we could agree that there had been a renewal, proving it was due to the liturgy would still be hard to do), we can not the following as so many *straws in the wind*.” Emphasis mine.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 262. “It is encouraging to see, first, that very few people in our study (0.2%) said that they do not pray at the liturgy and a relatively small group claimed to say only their own prayers (4%). Fifty percent of the laity both pray the liturgy and pray their own prayers, while 46% simply pray the liturgy. . . . Thus people do claim to be able to pray the liturgy. This is not the same as saying that the liturgy is a major source of the ‘religious experiences’ which 56% of our lay sampled claimed to have at one time or another. While liturgy rarely occasions mystical experiences, it is nonetheless associated with a more enduring, if less dramatic, sense of the closeness of God. However, fewer people (28%) said they felt *very* close to God in singing and praying the liturgy than said they felt this in private prayer (62%) or in receiving Communion (62%). . . . When asked about their motivation for attending Mass, only a relatively small group of parishioners (6%) put duty in first place, and this group diminishes even further among young people (2% of under-thirties). Other reasons given were: enjoy being with others (5%), enjoy taking part in the liturgy (28%) and enjoy the feeling of meditating and being with God (37%).”

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 263. Searle writes: “. . . puzzling over these data and others one cannot avoid the nagging question of whether the categories pre- and post-conciliar are adequate. The more one thinks about it, the more hesitant one becomes in attributing any single statistic to any single cause, wishing instead to try to see the figures in a much broader historical and cultural context. In such a context, the more relevant distinction, in light of the work done by Robert Bellah and others, is between ‘agentic’ (self-referring) religiosity and communal religiosity (the

Thus, framed in the context of “agentic” religiosity vs. “communal” religiosity, Searle asks the following fundamental question: “Is it better, for example, that more Catholics go to Mass because they enjoy the feeling of being with God than go out of a sense of duty?”<sup>91</sup> At first, it might seem that the fitting response would be affirmative, but Searle’s concern is that liturgy is being approached more as an activity to satisfy one’s personal feelings and emotions than to express a communal, Christian attitude or worldview. Such is Searle’s conviction in a published address he gave to the fourteenth annual conference of the Notre Dame Center for Pastoral Liturgy in the summer of 1985, where he calls for a clarification of terms:

One of the games we frequently play is that of pitting pre-conciliar versus post-conciliar attitudes, with the assumption that post-conciliar is what we ought to be. *The Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life, however, suggests that the real rift in American Catholicism is*

---

sense of being part of something much larger than oneself. This distinction cuts through all our data.” Although Searle attributes Robert Bellah as having distinguished these terms it was actually a 1982 book by Peter L. Benson and Dorothy L. Williams entitled *Religion on Capital Hill: Myths and Realities*. For more on the “agentic/communal” relationship see Michael R. Welch and David C. Leege, “Religious Predictors of Catholic Parishioners’ Sociopolitical Attitudes: Devotional Style, Closeness to God, Imagery, and Agentic/Communal Religious Identity,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 27:4 (1988): 542. In summary fashion, they state: “We have attempted to develop a general measure that summarizes the underlying (hence, “foundational”) worldview reflected in an individual’s religious thinking. Our measure appears to capture quite well two antipodal types of religiosity identified and measured earlier by Benson and Williams (1982): agentic religiosity and communal religiosity. Agentic religiosity focuses exclusively on an individual’s problems, needs, and the religious solutions to them. Communal religiosity, however, focuses on those needs and problems that are commonly shared by all people and involve their relationships with each other.” See also David C. Leege, “Catholics and the Civic Order: Parish Participation, Politics, and Civic Participation,” *The Review of Politics* 50 (1988): 725. Here Leege employs the terms “religious individualists” and “religious communitarians” in place of “agentic” and “communal”: “To capture the degree of religious individualism or communitarianism, we asked respondents to select from a list or write in their own words: (1) what the fundamental problem of human existence is, (2) how religion responds to that problem, and (3) what the outcome of that solution is. They then drew lines connecting the responses from each of these questions so that a problem-process-outcome sequence was mapped. Those for whom the sequence clearly used *me, my* problems, *my* salvation as the frame of reference were classified as *religious individualists*. Those for whom *relationships, inter-group* conflict, and *community* concerns were clearly the frame of reference were classified as *religious communitarians*. Those who missed elements of both in their sequences were classified as *integrated*.”

<sup>90</sup> Searle, “Observations on Parish Liturgy,” 263.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

*not between pre and post-conciliar attitudes, but between individualistic religion and communal religion.* In many respects, pre-conciliar Catholicism was more communal than post-conciliar Catholicism: Catholics had a rather stronger sense of their shared social identity as Catholics. The loss of that communal sense has less to do with the Council than with social change: Catholics have moved out of their ethnic enclaves into the wider social stream, where people do not identify themselves by their ethnic origins or religious affiliation any more: these are private matters.<sup>92</sup>

Thus, Searle believes that what needs to be fostered is a greater sense of responsibility for the Church and accountability to the Body of Christ, which begins with a more profound respect for tradition itself.<sup>93</sup> As he succinctly states: “The point of liturgical reforms is not that we should do new things but that we should do the old things better.”<sup>94</sup> Clearly he believes that emphasis given to “restoration” rather than “innovation” is better suited to bolstering communal religiosity.<sup>95</sup>

As mentioned at the conclusion of the previous section, the January 1986 meeting of the North American Academy of Liturgy afforded Searle the opportunity to present the findings of the Notre Dame study, to offer a summary of his interpretations of the data to a

---

<sup>92</sup> Mark Searle, “A Place in the Tradition,” *Assembly* 12:1 (1985): 302. Emphasis mine. Searle continues: “Conversely, for all the emphasis on community in the post-conciliar Church, we American Catholics tend to share the convictions of our non-Catholic contemporaries that matters of faith and morals are your own affair. . . [W]e like the liturgy we like, we believe the things we believe. But it is the death-knell of community. If we really believe that we must all make up our own minds, and leave it at that, what then has happened to the Body of Christ, to our vocation to be members of a Church set up as a sign among the nations?”

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 302-303. Searle writes: “But to assume responsibility for being Church means knowing oneself to be part of something larger than ourselves: something that not only lets us express our faith, but which actually shapes our faith; something likewise that shapes our attitudes, moral values and behavior.”

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 303. He supports this conviction with a comment that seems to carry the tone of exasperation: “Perhaps the time is coming when, instead of looking for new prayers or new rites or new music, we should concentrate on trying to use what we already have as well as we can. Are we to continue endlessly producing new volumes of Worship or Glory and Praise? We produce more new hymns in twelve months than the universal church had produced in 20 centuries. Why?”

<sup>95</sup> Ibid. Commenting on the work of the liturgical reformer Michael Mathis, C.S.C., Searle states: “I doubt that Mathis had as much interest in innovations as he had in restorations.” He continues: “In liturgy, especially, we will need to pay more attention to what is unchangeable if we are to pass on the tradition to the next generation alive and intact.”

broad-based gathering of professional liturgists, and subsequently to publish this talk in the summer issue of *Worship*.<sup>96</sup> After providing a description of the empirical nature of the study as well as giving an overview of the attitudes of participants in parish liturgies, Searle proposes four themes for ongoing reflection. First, he claims to be “struck” by the low priority given to the liturgy in comparison to the other components of parish life<sup>97</sup> Such a reality provokes this assessment by Searle:

From this I am inclined to believe that the weekly celebration of the eucharist is more a “source” than a “summit” for most people, more a matter of sustenance than a thing of ecstasy. If that is so, then attempts to turn the liturgy into a “meaningful worship experience” should be very carefully considered, lest they foster unrealistic expectations. *Sunday liturgy should be characterized by the regular and reliable supply of solid nourishment for people’s faith and religious identity, rather than by attempts to “turn the congregation on.”*<sup>98</sup>

---

<sup>96</sup> See S. Anita Stauffer, “Introduction,” *Worship* 60 (1986): 290. As chairperson of the North American Academy of Liturgy’s editorial committee in 1986, Stauffer provides the context for Searle’s talks: “From considering the liturgy in global perspective to reflecting on the meaning and implications of a major study of parish liturgical life: these were among the variety of topics for the 1986 annual meeting of the North American Academy of Liturgy, meeting in Durham, North Carolina, in January. The papers in this issue of *Worship* were presented at that meeting. Three of the addresses—by incoming Academy president John Barry Ryan, Berakah Award recipient Gerard Sloyan, and Mark Searle—were in plenary sessions.”

<sup>97</sup> Searle, “The Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life,” 330. See Searle’s presentation of the supporting data on page 325, where he writes: “In response to an open-ended question concerning the purpose for which a parish exists, only 28% identified the worship of God or the celebration of Mass and sacraments as its primary function, compared with 42% who saw the parish’s function primarily in terms of community-building and 32% who saw it in terms of spiritual enrichment. Asked about how the parish should order its priorities, given inevitably limited resources, there was overwhelming support for religious education programs even though religious education was what most frequently mentioned when they were asked what they thought their parish presently did best. *Only 17% thought the celebration of the liturgy should be given higher priority, a figure lagging well behind evangelization (34%), helping the poor of the parish (32%), improving unjust economic conditions (20%) and fostering ecumenical relations (18.5%).* From this one can conclude that the liturgy is actually not very central to the life of a parish or, more likely, that it is so central, so indispensable, that it is simply taken for granted and not usually made the focus of much conscious attention.” Emphasis mine.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 331, Emphasis mine. See also Searle, “The Liturgical Life of Catholic Parishioners in the USA,” 8. Professing that the data of the Notre Dame study suggests that the liturgy is not a major source of “religious experience” for most Catholics, Searle contends that it is a “rehearsal of life in the presence of God.” He writes: “If, however, one takes liturgy seriously as ritual, then it will not be so much an occasion of extraordinary religious experiences, which can happen unprogrammed at any time, as a rehearsal of life in the presence of God, as the source of a more enduring, if less dramatic sense of belonging to God and to the people of God.”

Thus, Searle expresses great concern that a study conducted with regular Mass attendees would show that the celebration of the liturgy is not the chief concern of the parish. Perhaps this can be explained by his second conclusion, which suggests that the discovery of a certain display of apathy is the result of poor catechesis. As he states: “We need liturgical theology. We need solidly based catechesis on the rites, texts and symbols of the liturgy, including the role of the assembly, the role of music and song, of word and gesture, and on their implications for understanding the whole economy of salvation and the responsibilities of the Christian life, collective and personal.”<sup>99</sup> In a sense, the issue is that the liturgy has failed to envelop its participants in a way of celebrating in which mystery and awe stimulate greater commitment to and interest in liturgical prayer.<sup>100</sup>

The evidence that the centrality and meaning of the liturgy in the life of the parish community are clearly undervalued leads to a third concern for Searle, namely the lack of Catholic identity in general. What is needed, according to Searle is “theological reflection and ecclesiological clarification of Catholic community identity in a pluralistic society.”<sup>101</sup>

He interprets the data of the Notre Dame study as revealing a clearly skewed notion of

---

<sup>99</sup> Searle, “The Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life,” 331. Note that the use of the label “apathy” to describe the attitude of Catholics in relationship to the liturgy stems from Searle’s description of the problem itself: “Second, the rather disturbing percentage of these regular, Mass-going Catholics who say they do not care whether there are lay ministers or communion from the cup or a kiss of peace only underline the bishop’s message at the end of the recent Roman Synod: ‘The bishops should not merely correct abuses, but should more clearly explain to everyone the theological foundations of the sacramental discipline and of the liturgy of the church. Catechesis must once again become paths leading into liturgical life (mystagogical catecheses), as was the case in the church’s beginning’.”

<sup>100</sup> See Daniel B. Stevick, “Responsibility for Liturgy,” *Worship* 50 (1976): 291-306. Writing ten years before Searle, Stevick offers a similar warning against liturgical creativity and a call for greater contemplation of the prayer as given by the Church: “We are now aware that liturgy is potentially more complex and exciting than long-held attitudes would have led us to suppose. . . It is, indeed, subject to our control; liturgy is something we make. Yet at the same time, in ways more deep than we can fathom, liturgy makes us. It is something given—and we shall mistake our role as shapers of liturgy if we do not hold our sense of *control* in creative tension with this *givenness*. . . Even as we seek to manipulate liturgy and make it obey our wishes, we find it exerting its own authority over us in rebuke and discovery” (293).

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

belonging to the Church and the discipline that is demanded of those baptized.<sup>102</sup> Searle directly links this issue of Catholic identity to the zeal for individualism in America, which he points out as a fourth major conclusion of the Notre Dame study. Crediting the study of Robert Bellah and his book, *Habits of the Heart*, which appeared in print after the Notre Dame research project had begun, Searle writes:

Bellah sees individualism—that is, the self-serving as final criterion of what is good, true, valuable, moral—as characteristic of Western, especially North American, culture. . . . When people say, for example, that they go to Mass because they enjoy being with God or they enjoy taking part in the liturgy, rather than out of a sense of duty, is that a step forward or a step backwards? In the study as a whole, especially in those parts based on previous studies and which therefore lend themselves to comparative analysis, *there is strong evidence that American Catholics are in process of becoming more characteristically American than characteristically Catholic.*<sup>103</sup>

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 332. Outside of the traditionally extreme issues of morality, the boundaries of what constitutes “Catholic” is very confusing, as Searle writes: “What would one have to do, we asked, to be considered no longer a Catholic? The answers reveal a very confused sense of the difference between belonging and not belonging. There seems to be a reluctance to draw any lines at all. Exceptions include abortion (45% of the parishioners thought that someone procuring an abortion could no longer be considered a true Catholic) and homosexuality (38% thought that practicing homosexuals could not be true Catholics). A traditional way of discriminating between practicing and lapsed Catholics was whether they went to Mass, but 53% of suburban Catholics thought that never going to Mass did not put a person outside the church. *There is obviously more to being a Catholic than going to Mass, but the question does raise the issue of church discipline and suggests the need for an ecclesiology of the American parish.*” Emphasis mine.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 332-333. Emphasis mine. See also Robert N. Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985). For a helpful summary of the dynamics of individualism, see Chapter Six: “Individualism.” The authors write: “Individualism lies at the very core of American culture. . . . There is a biblical individualism and a civic individualism as well as a utilitarian and an expressive individualism. Whatever the differences among the traditions and the consequent differences in their understandings of individualism, there are some things they all share, things that are basic to American identity. We believe in the dignity, indeed the sacredness, of the individual. Anything that would violate our right to think for ourselves, judge for ourselves, make our own decisions, live our lives as we see fit, is not only morally wrong, it is sacrilegious” (142). Later in this chapter, the authors describe how individualism can create tension for what they call “communities of memory.” They write: “People growing up in communities of memory not only hear the stories that tell how the community came to be, what its hopes and fears are, and how its ideals are exemplified in outstanding men and women; they also participate in the practices—ritual, aesthetic, ethical—that define the community as a way of life. We call these ‘practices of commitment’ for they define the patterns of loyalty and obligation that keep the community alive. And if the language of the self-reliant individual is the first language of American moral life, the languages of tradition and commitment in communities of memory are ‘second languages’ that most Americans know as well, and which they used when the language of the radically separate self does not seem adequate” (154). See also Searle, “Issues in Christian Initiation: Uses and Abuses of the RCIA,” 209-210. Here Searle discusses Bellah’s concept of “expressive individualism,” which appeared in the 1960s and 1970s and represented a shift away from the concept of “rugged individualism” to the notion of “doing one’s own thing.” Searle writes: “Bellah

Searle calls the predominant cultural assimilation of American Catholics “a threat to the integrity of the liturgical act.”<sup>104</sup> This is due simply to the fact that individualism is not an attitude fostered by the liturgy; individualism stands in direct opposition to the forming of an assembly. “Where the liturgy is concerned,” Searle states, “this means a growing alienation from precisely that sense of collective identity and collective responsibility which the liturgy might be thought to rehearse.”<sup>105</sup> It is not only the case that the liturgy proves to be an insufficient challenge to American society, but the liturgy itself may be yielding to the American ideal of individualism.<sup>106</sup>

Searle concludes his reflections on the empirical data gathered for and analyzed in the Notre Dame study with three suggestions for further research. First, the religiosity and patterns of participation in liturgical prayer on the part of Hispanic Catholics, a matter deliberately excluded from the Notre Dame project, should be undertaken. Second, Searle believes the findings from the study would be greatly enhanced if they could be compared to similar studies conducted in foreign countries as well as in other U.S. denominations.

---

argues persuasively, however, that this ‘expressive individualism’ was simply a new form of narcissism, a new and even more dramatic form of preoccupation with the individual self. It has nevertheless infected our whole generation, even our churches. How many sermons, books, hymns, banners and posters have we not seen advocating self-discovery, self-affirmation and self-realization? How often have we not heard the gospel boiled down to ‘God wants you to love yourself?’” (209).

<sup>104</sup> Searle, “The Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life,” 333.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid. Searle states: “Far from being able to insure Catholics against the negative aspects of their wider culture, the liturgy may actually be succumbing to such influences.” See also Mitchell, *Liturgy and the Social Sciences*, 28. While Mitchell validates Searle’s reporting of the growing connection between “anti-ritualism” and rampant “individualism,” he once again criticizes Searle for offering opinions that tend to be “sweeping generalizations” more than statements based on hard fact. He writes: “Much of what is said in Searle’s summary seems ‘soft,’ based more on *obiter dicta* than on hard anthropological data or sociological fact. For example, how does one prove that ‘North American’ culture is statistically more self-serving than, say, the cultures of modern Europe or Asia? Indeed, can such sweeping generalizations about culture be made at all? In the United States alone, many cultures and subcultures coexist (not always comfortably), and although one may speak loosely of ‘American culture,’ it makes a huge difference whether one is referring to urban life in New York’s Greenwich Village or to small-town life in rural North Dakota.”

Finally, he suggests that, while the Notre Dame study is helpful for describing widespread trends within the United States as a whole, studies conducted at the local level would be of great assistance for diocesan planning.<sup>107</sup> For Searle this meant even greater examination of the liturgical event in the actual context of the parish: “This is not something liturgists can do alone, but *the turn to the parish*, as opposed to the street or telephone survey, can only be of interest to liturgists, who have always tended to think of the church as being realized in the assemblies of the faithful, most of which occur in parishes.”<sup>108</sup>

Moreover, the findings of the Notre Dame study proved to be of interest to a wider audience than the Church in the United States alone. Thus, in the summer of 1986, Searle took his material to Clifton, England, where he delivered three talks for the Society of Saint Gregory’s Music and Liturgy Summer School, talks that would appear subsequently in the journal *Music and Liturgy*.<sup>109</sup> In the first talk, “Growing Through Celebration,” Searle reveals the challenges for liturgy in a “growth-oriented society” such as the United States:

First of all we are to think about “growing,” about “growth.” I suppose it might be assumed that, since I am coming from the U.S., I am particularly qualified to speak on this topic, for America is after all the land where the myth of progress is well entrenched, the land of opportunity, the land where armies of statisticians keep track of every conceivable measure of growth, because growth is good. You grow or you die, say the businessmen. So growth tends to be accepted as an

---

<sup>107</sup> See Searle, “A View in a Mirror: The Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Liturgy,” 30. In a similar manner, he concludes his talk at Valparaiso University with the call for more studies in the future: “Finally the data of this study would be much more enlightening if we had other studies with which to compare them. The Notre Dame Study will, it is hoped, be repeated in a few years’ time, so that we can detect what sorts of movement are taking place. But how valuable it would have been had we had a comparable study undertaken twenty years ago before all the liturgical changes began!”

<sup>108</sup> Searle, “The Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life,” 333. Emphasis mine. This expression—“the turn to the parish”—is particularly important in understanding how essential the observation of liturgy in the context of the parish was to Searle and his work.

<sup>109</sup> See Mark Searle, “Growing Through Celebration,” *Music and Liturgy* 12:4 (1986): 110-118; Mark Searle, “Participation and Prayer,” *Music and Liturgy* 12:5 (1986): 145-154; and Mark Searle, “Pastoral Liturgy,” *Music and Liturgy* 13:1 (1987): 7-18.



end in itself: bigger is better, more is merrier, growing is prospering.<sup>110</sup>

Searle suggests that the rhythm of the liturgy is something quite different from the concept of “growth” in the United States and other Western industrialized societies. Growth in liturgy entails losing the desire for personal acquisition and surrendering to the praying community in which its members “acquire a deepened sense of who they are and of what they have in common.”<sup>111</sup> Such repeated practice, although it would seem to be moving nowhere, does have a goal: “That is how liturgy can help us to grow: that when the time comes for us to bear witness to God, in that hour when he alone can deliver us out of death, we shall know what to say.”<sup>112</sup>

Searle’s second talk at Clifton, published under the title “Participation and Prayer,” continues the theme of “growth” by intensifying the notion of participation in liturgy as demanding the skill of surrender, which, in turn, necessitates ongoing rehearsal.<sup>113</sup>

---

<sup>110</sup> Searle, “Growing Through Celebration,” 110. He goes on to suggest that what is missing from all this emphasis on growth are the other processes of preparing the ground for planting and cutting back when the plant has become overgrown: “It is interesting to note that, in the New Testament, the terms ‘growth’ and ‘growing’ certainly do appear a lot. . . . There, however, the metaphor of growth is accompanied by other metaphors less frequently used in our more industrialized society: Metaphors of sowing and planting, watering and harvesting, and not least important, images of pruning and dunging! In fact, it is my probably uneducated impression that the New Testament speaks more about bearing fruit than it does about growing, and is more concerned about the steps that need to be taken to bring forth good fruit than it is about growth pure and simple. That is where the pruning and the manuring come in, neither of them the sort of images that is calculated to appeal to our own growth-oriented society.”

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 118. Earlier Searle writes: “The celebration of the liturgy, then is a rehearsal of our obedience to God, the obedience of faith. It is a rehearsal of the pattern of the paschal mystery. Unlike most of the things we call celebrations, it is deeply serious, having to do with the things that ultimately matter most: the glory of God effected through the redemption of humankind. It remains a bloody business, undertaken only in hope and faith and life, like the death of Christ himself. It shapes us to live in faith and in love, because of the hope that has been given us, without which faith and love would be absurd” (117).

<sup>113</sup> See Searle, “Participation and Prayer,” 153. There are several phrases that appear here that are key to Searle’s thinking: (1) “Faith is less a matter of one’s beliefs about the holy than it is a matter of surrendering to the holy and entrusting one’s whole self, one’s whole life, to God, the Holy One;” (2) “Yet another way of putting this would be to say that faith is what we have been talking about as the contemplative surrender of oneself to the life of the Spirit of Christ in one, a surrender which is then practiced whenever we participate in

Suggesting that this kind of participation calls for a “certain quality of attention” in which the community at prayer is caught up in the mystery behind words and gestures, Searle writes:

Imagine someone learning to play the piano. She started by struggling to get the right finger on the right key at the right time. She practices over and over until it begins to come more easily. At first she is not making music, she is making noise: practicing the piano. But, as time goes on, and as her dexterity develops, she can begin to forget about her fingers and start attending to the music. You cannot think about your fingers and still attend to the music. It is like learning to dance: at first you are all feet, but eventually you want to forget your feet and abandon yourself to the dance. This doesn't mean that fingers or feet no longer matter: you couldn't make music or dance without them. But you learn to attend from your fingers to the music, from your feet to the dance. A sculptor who stands thinking about the chisel is likely to make a disastrous mistake; the chisel has to become an unconscious extension of his hand and his attention has to be on the form which emerges from the work of the chisel. We attend from A to B; from the fingers and keys to the music; from the feet to the dance; from the chisel to the sculpture; from the text to what is being said, or better, to the person we are addressing. So, with the liturgy.<sup>114</sup>

Coming upon the heels of the Notre Dame study, which suggested that American Catholics display a certain amount of “uneasiness” with ritual, Searle seems more convinced than ever that liturgy is a rehearsal which “requires that we so empty ourselves of our own agenda and preoccupations that we can reach the depths where the holy Spirit of Christ is praying in us and hymning God through us.”<sup>115</sup> Searle's frustration with the reform's inability to move congregations to this deeper level “where the holy Spirit of Christ is praying in us” clearly surfaces in these two talks given in his native homeland.<sup>116</sup>

---

the liturgy and allow Christ and the Spirit to pray and work within us to the glory of the Father;” and (3) “The faith of the Church is none other than a collective way of life marked by the same mind which was in Christ Jesus. The faith of the Church is her own surrender to God, her characteristic way of leaning into life.”

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 148.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid. Searle suggests that much of what has taken place in the name of reform has failed in leading people deeper into the mystery of what they are celebrating: “This is a strong contrast to some of the things we have

To take a momentary detour, it is necessary to point out here that contained in Searle's theology of participation is a rather harsh critique of liturgical music and congregational singing, a critique he bases on the results of the Notre Dame study.<sup>117</sup> In a short commentary prepared for *Pastoral Music*, Searle contends that the problem at stake does not reflect an attitude of "unwillingness" to sing and participate on the part of Catholics but rather stems from the fact that people do not see the music as an integral part of a "sung liturgy":

[While] no single factor can guarantee "good liturgy," people are in fact much more likely to join in the singing when the music has some clear connection with the liturgy. Conversely, we conclude, music chosen simply for its musical qualities or for its "singability" will not usually succeed in engaging a congregation. *Perhaps there is a congregational instinct here that prompts people to want to sing the liturgy and resists their being coerced into singing pieces chosen at whim.* This, in turn, might prompt reflection on how music and song are used: do they constitute "sung liturgy," or are they floating around the edges of the rite, moving in to fill up "dead time?"<sup>118</sup>

---

been trying to do these past years, like encouraging people to sing their hearts out, for example. We don't want people to sing the liturgy from the heart: we want them to sing, if I may say so, from the heart of Jesus!" He then continues by suggesting that a mistake often made by liturgists is the promotion of emotions as a marker for a quality experience of liturgy, whereas the effort should be made to lead people through the patterned activities of the liturgy to union with God: "So, at one level we are standing, sitting, kneeling, singing, responding, reading, eating and drinking. At another level these actions proceed from the depths of the Spirit of Christ who dwells in us all and prays and acts through us and through the ministry we perform. Then thoughts become attuned to words, not because we try to force our thoughts into the words, but because we, as it were overhear the words which the Spirit of Christ speaks to the Father. Conversely, since the liturgy is not only worship of God, but also our sanctification, we are open, vulnerable to the workings of the Spirit in our own hearts and lives: we become what we do, or rather we are shaped by the holy words and holy actions which come to expression through our active participation in the rite" (150).

<sup>117</sup> See for example Searle, "The Parish at Worship," 77-78. Searle offers the following data regarding the reception of liturgical music in the post-Vatican II American Church: "Congregational participation is higher for the spoken responses and for the invariable parts of the rite, lower for sung parts and for parts, like the *Eucharistic Acclamation*, that vary. (One should also note that support for sung participation leaves much to be desired. Thirteen percent of the Masses had no music at all; 51% had no organ accompaniment; 62% had no cantor; and 66% had no choir or music group to lead the congregation.) *It is not surprising that American Catholics are unhappy with the musical aspects of their liturgy.*" Emphasis mine.

<sup>118</sup> Mark Searle, "Not the Final Word," *Pastoral Music* 10 (1986): 45. Emphasis mine. In terms of the claim that "unwillingness" is not responsible for the lack of congregational singing, Searle writes: "Only 63% are satisfied with the music used and only 60% are happy with the quality of congregational singing in their parish, compared with a satisfaction rate of 85% for the prayers and the readings and 82% for ritual. But the good news is that these figures are not the result of a large, cranky minority holding out for a return to the old ways:

Searle calls upon music ministers to help reveal to the wider Church that “singing is a ‘sacrament’.” “What we need to ponder together,” writes Searle, “is not whether music and song are integral to the rite in principle, but whether they are always found to be so in practice; and not whether musical participation is desirable, but whether and how it is related (again in practice) to the ultimate participation-in-the-Spirit, which is what liturgy is finally about.”<sup>119</sup> If participation in the life of God is the ultimate goal of liturgy (and thereby the goal of liturgical music in general), then serious study needs to explore what qualities of music both work and fail at achieving this end, with the answer coming from the experience of the liturgy itself. Searle states the question as follows: “What criteria can be derived from the nature and the finality of the liturgy that can guide us in the search for adequate musical forms and in the proper performance of the ritual music?”<sup>120</sup>

---

only 4% of all those questioned would like to see an end to congregational singing at the liturgy. Thus, whatever it is that is amiss with liturgical music and singing to produce such dissatisfaction, it cannot be laid at the door of Catholic unwillingness to sing” (44-45).

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 45. Searle contends that while more scientific surveys will be needed, the primary task is to help the church understand that liturgical participation is a means to a greater end. He writes: “But if there is one thing all of us can do—and without the technical expertise and the enormous costs associated with a study like this one—it is to reflect seriously and together on what we mean by ‘participation’ . . . for all of us it is a norm, a goal, an ideal; but a careful study of usage will show that some forms of participation are ends in themselves and others are means to an end. Joining in the singing of a hymn, for example, is a form of participation greatly to be desired. *But is it desired as an end in itself, or as a means to a further end?*”

<sup>120</sup> Ibid. Searle concludes his commentary: “Such questions cannot be answered by the Notre Dame study, but they are prompted by it. Liturgical research will look for answers and future sociological studies will tell us how well we have done in finding them. That is how it goes.” See also Searle, “Ritual and Music: A Theory of Liturgy and Implications for Music,” 317. This article, previously mentioned in Chapter One as representative of a piece of Searle’s that incorporates Suzanne Langer’s understanding of rituals as “rehearsal of attitudes,” is based on a paper Searle presented at a conference on liturgy and music in Milwaukee in June of 1985. Regarding the nature of liturgical music and its connection to ritual, Searle writes: “In other words, are we aiming for a sung liturgy, or merely content to have people join in some singing during the liturgy? If the former, then the music must be of a piece with the rite: i.e. more or less invariable. Conversely, we must ask what the effect is or rarely, if ever, singing the most invariable parts of the rite and of making the sung parts those which can be altered apparently at whim, with no rationale or explanation.” Furthermore, Searle makes the following personal observation: “From time to time my family and I attend the liturgy of a small Melkite community in South Bend. The whole liturgy is in English and it is sung from beginning to end: only the sermon is spoken. Yet there are rarely more than 25 people in attendance, and there is no organ, no cantor, no choir, no guitar group. *The point is: the liturgy is almost invariable, so that people know it by heart. Why can’t we do the same?*”

Returning to Searle's time at Clifton, his third and final talk, entitled "Pastoral Liturgy," reiterates his belief that liturgical catechesis needs to come in the form of learning by doing. "The most obvious, yet most overlooked, feature of the liturgy," writes Searle, "is that it is ritual. We do the same things over and over again."<sup>121</sup> Again, given his experience of the Notre Dame study, which revealed an attitude of suspicion in the American Church toward this primary aspect of ritual, Searle contends that the dynamic of rehearsal needs to be learned for liturgical skillfulness. The following story, which deserves to be quoted in its entirety, serves as an example from daily life to substantiate his point:

Some years ago, in a visit to the town of Virginia Beach, on the eastern seaboard of the U.S., I heard a sermon which conveyed as accurately as anything I have read the purpose of the ritual of the liturgy. The priest spoke about his upbringing in Virginia in the 1940s. He lived in a town where there were several other branches of his family and it was their custom every Sunday to gather together for Sunday dinner. The host family would rise early and go to the early Mass, hurrying home afterwards to set the tables and prepare the food for the other families who would come on over after the late Mass. When everyone had arrived, the children were seated and fed first. When their meal was over, the younger children were sent outside to play while the older children cleared the table, reset it for the adults, and then proceeded to wait on the adults at table. Over the years, the younger children would eventually reach the age when they would be allowed to wait on table and to do the dishes, while the older children in their turn, on reaching a certain age, would graduate to the status of adults and be allowed to take their places for the second sitting. The point this priest was making was that the children learned, from waiting at table and observing how the adults behaved and overhearing the adults' table talk, how to behave and how to talk as an adult. Week after week, year after year, they learned, without any formal lessons, what an adult's table manners were to be. . . "Might it not be," he asked, "that we are required to come here to Mass, Sunday after Sunday, year after year, in order *to rehearse the table manners we will*

---

<sup>121</sup> Searle, "Pastoral Ministry," 14. Accepting this form of catechesis requires honoring the stability of liturgical prayer: "So if we want to ask how the liturgy can be effective, how we can grow through celebration, we are going to have to take seriously the ritual character of the liturgy and ask ourselves why we should be expected to say the same words and do the same things over and over again."

*need if we are to take our place with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob at the banquet in the kingdom of God?”*<sup>122</sup>

From the perspective of liturgy as rehearsal, Searle proceeds to discuss several related characteristics of ritual behavior, concluding that “those with pastoral responsibility, then, need to be aware of the kind of thing ritual is.”<sup>123</sup> “Like actors,” Searle maintains, “we practice and practice and practice, growing into our role by rehearsing it in the company of the Church, until we have got it right.”<sup>124</sup>

A final piece of published writing in which Searle seized the opportunity to reflect upon the status of liturgical reform as it is enacted in the parish is a short article entitled “The Mass in the Parish” which appeared in a 1986 edition of *The Furrow*.<sup>125</sup> Here he certainly uses the statistics of the Notre Dame study as a “jumping-off point,” but, as in his three talks delivered at Clifton, he is more theological than sociological, taking personal ownership for his reflections.<sup>126</sup> For example, Searle assesses the evidence that suggests the predominance of a spirit of minimalism with regard to the wide range of use for symbols in the 1970 *Ordo missae* as personally very troubling:

---

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 13-14. Emphasis mine. Searle repeats this story in *Called to Participate: Theological, Ritual, and Social Perspective* on pages 23-24.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 18. The seven aspects of ritual articulated by Searle are: (1) “Liturgy is a formal performance”; (2) “To engage in ritual is to submit to its constraints”; (3) “Relationships are negotiated through the use of pre-existent ritual forms or conventions”; (4) “What is important to the rite is less the dispositions which the participants bring to it than the willingness to assume the role and to adopt the relational attitude proposed by the rite itself”; (5) “Liturgy is less an expression of feelings than a rehearsal of attitudes”; (6) “Ritual belongs to a community”; and (7) “Liturgy has both changing and unchanging elements.”

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> See Mark Searle, “The Mass in the Parish,” *The Furrow* 37:10 (1986): 615-622.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 615. The opening paragraph details how Searle envisions this piece as using the Notre Dame study as a “jumping-off point” for his own personal ruminations: “Previous contributions in this series have reflected, naturally enough, on the experience of the Mass in Irish parishes. Since this contributor lives in the American Midwest, and since I was recently involved in a study of Catholic parish life which gave prominent place to the Sunday Mass as the common denominator among Catholic parishioners, it might be of interest to present some of the findings of that study, both as a point of comparison with Irish experience and as a jumping-off point for some more personal reflections on the parish Mass today.”

Why is it, one wonders, that these [fully enacted processions] and other opportunities to enhance the splendour of the rite are so little used? *There seems to be a tendency to settle for “low Mass with hymns”, a tendency which can only be accounted for, I believe, by a widespread lack of appreciation for the symbolic, which for the Catholic tradition, is very worrying.* . . Yet there is, I believe, a hunger for meaning, for a liturgy that feeds mind, heart and soul.<sup>127</sup>

For Searle, it is not the case that liturgical reform has failed in the United States, but rather, not enough has been done to probe the depths and reveal the truths of liturgy itself.<sup>128</sup>

Applying a remark once made by G.K. Chesterton about Christianity to liturgical reform,

Searle states: “It is not so much that it has been tried and found wanting as that it has rarely been tried.”<sup>129</sup> He suggests that the desire of the Second Vatican Council to break what he

---

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 616-617. Emphasis mine. Searle does not shy away from holding the clergy responsible for the failure to feed parishioners’ “hunger for meaning.” He writes: “All these practices represent the clergy’s failure to grasp the full symbolic significance of the Sunday Mass, so it is hardly surprising that the laity in our survey showed a similar lack of understanding of the symbols of the Mass. When asked about such practices as the involvement of lay ministers, communion under both kinds, congregational singing and the kiss of peace, parishioners rarely expressed opposition to these things, but about a third of them (on average) said they did not mind one way or another whether they were done or not. If one adds the percentage of those who are opposed to such practices to the percentage of those who don’t care either way, it is clear that a very sizeable proportion of regular Mass-going Catholics (our respondents revealed a 77% level of weekly Mass attendance versus 44% nationally), have little or no idea what these ritual practices mean” (617).

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 618.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid. Another quote from Chesterton that Searle found impressionable—as he had typed it out and placed it in a file labeled “Liturgical Formation Today”—is from the book *Orthodoxy*: “We have remarked that one reason offered for being a progressive is that things naturally tend to grow better. But the only real reason for being a progressive is that things naturally tend to grow worse. The corruption in things is not only the best argument for being progressive; it is also the only argument against being conservative. The conservative theory would really be quite sweeping and unanswerable if it were not for this one fact. But all conservatism is based upon the idea that if you leave things alone you leave them as they are. But you do not. If you leave a thing alone you leave it to a torrent of change. If you leave a white post alone it will soon be a black post. If you particularly want it to be white you must always be painting it again; that is, you must always be having a revolution. Briefly, if you want the old white post you must have a new white post. But this which is true even of inanimate things is in a quite specially and terrible sense true of all human things. An almost unnatural vigilance is really required of the citizen because of the horrible rapidity with which human institutions grow old.” This quote appears on a single sheet under the title “Reform” in MSP, F45, Folder “Liturgical Formation Today.” For the source see Gilbert Keith Chesterton, *Orthodoxy: The Romance of Faith* (New York: Doubleday, 1959), 114-115. This book first appears in 1908. Searle was undoubtedly intrigued by these words which appear in the chapter entitled “The Eternal Revolution,” in which Chesterton suggests that reform does not mean anarchy but rather the endurance of form. He spells this out on page 105: “We need not debate about the mere words evolution or progress: personally I prefer to call it reform. For reform implies form. It implies that we are trying to shape the world in a particular image; to make it something that we see already in our minds. Evolution is a metaphor from mere automatic unrolling. Progress is a metaphor from merely walking

calls the Tridentine “system,” in which people and things were set apart from the world, by the proclamation of Christ’s multifold presence has not even begun to be realized in the parish liturgy and contributes to the growing lack of symbolic imagination.<sup>130</sup>

Furthermore, Searle contends that the lack of understanding (through ritual minimalism) is directly linked to the failure to comprehend, both intellectually and intuitively, the demands of “active participation” on the part of all those gathered for liturgical prayer. He suggests that liturgical reform since the Second Vatican Council has identified “active participation” as “getting everyone to join in the words and gestures allotted to them by the rite;” however, in Searle’s own words, this “does not go far enough.”<sup>131</sup> Consequently, Searle’s challenge to the Church—as it continues to wrestle with implementing the new liturgy—is to understand “active participation” in terms of a relationship that necessitates regular rehearsal. He writes:

---

along a road—very likely the wrong road. But reform is a metaphor for reasonable and determined men: it means that we see a certain thing out of shape and we mean to put it into shape. And we know what shape.”

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 619. Searle states: “Proclaiming anew elements of the Eucharistic faith of the early Church which had long since been forgotten, the Council taught that Christ is not only present in the Eucharistic species and in the person of the priest, but also in the very congregation assembled for the Mass and in the proclamation of the Scriptures. These other modes of Christ’s presence, other modes of access to the holy, were to be given full value alongside the already recognized forms of divine presence. They were to be given their own appropriate forms of ritual expression. Hence the preference for congregational over private celebration of the mass, the insistence on the active participation of the whole gathered people, the introduction of the vernacular, communion under both kinds for all, and the revision of the lectionary to be read to the faithful in their own tongue by a variety of ministers, some of whom would be drawn from the congregation. *These changes in ritual practice were intended to open up new avenues of access to the holy alongside, not in place of, those with which we were already long familiar.*” Emphasis mine. Searle argues that “frustration and boredom” is a regular experience of parish liturgies precisely because ritual practice has not caught up with theological teaching on Christ’s presence. He later writes: “It is one thing to be told that Christ is present in the assembly as his Body and thus that the celebration pertains to and has effects upon the whole congregation, but it will remain strange and abstract until the assembly itself is surrounded by the same kind of rites of reverence that surround and affirm the living presence of the Lord in the form of bread and wine. . . . My point is that new/old insights solemnly promulgated by the Council and accepted as blueprints for the reform of the Mass, cannot be conveyed by instruction alone, any more than the previous belief-system was conveyed by sermons and catechisms alone without benefit of established practices. Today as yesterday, orthodoxy translates into, and is engendered by, orthopraxis” (621).

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 621.



To participate, then, is to allow oneself to become caught up in the eternal relationship of the Son to the Father, a relationship which was enacted in the incarnate life and death of the Son of God and is summarized in the term “paschal mystery.” It is a relationship into which we are introduced when we were first engrafted on to the living body of the Church in baptism, which we live out day by day in persevering obedience to the Spirit, and which we rehearse as a people in the weekly celebration of the Eucharist on the Lord’s Day. “Participation,” then, is synonymous, from different points of view, with the life of grace, with fellowship in the Holy Spirit, with faith, with self-sacrificial obedience in response to the Father’s love. . . . The important point to be made is that the Council’s recovery of the fourfold presence of Christ in the Mass was not a purely notional affair, but an axiom about the nature of the Church which demanded, and still demands, to be translated into a programme of ritualization and church discipline, and eventually into the more fluid and less predictable forms of popular piety and devotion.<sup>132</sup>

The empirical data from the Notre Dame study, which convinced Searle that American Catholics are by-and-large indifferent to the meaning (and thus proper performance) of ritual and its symbols, likewise substantiated his conviction that what is needed is “contemplative attentiveness” to all aspects of liturgical celebration. At a point in the history of Vatican II reform when creativity was believed to be the solution to rejuvenate a declining interest in liturgical prayer, Searle’s voice could be heard as providing a sound theological (rather than anthropological) answer to the dilemma. “American experience,” he writes, “at least, suggests that, if this breakthrough to contemplative liturgical prayer is not yet commonplace at Mass in the parish, the hunger is there.”<sup>133</sup>

---

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 622.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid. He leads up to this concluding remark with an explanation that “more” is needed for the new liturgy to lead people to Christ: “The Church has provided us with a new Order of Mass and told us that, in celebrating it properly, we will encounter Christ in our midst as an assembled people, in listening to the Scriptures, in allowing the ministries to unfold in their diversity, and in eating and drinking together as the Lord commanded. For that to happen, however, ‘more is required than the mere observance of the laws governing valid and licit celebrations’ (SC, 11). That ‘more,’ which constitutes genuine participation, is a kind of contemplative attentiveness to what is being said and done, or to what one is oneself saying and doing, that the truth of the signs might be known and ‘the riches of the glory of this mystery which is Christ among you, the hope of glory’ (Col. 1:27).”

With this “hunger” for a more contemplative approach to liturgical prayer at stake, did Searle have a vision for the future? The answer to this question is undoubtedly affirmative, as he began laying the foundation for further reflection. For example, he collaborated with a group of scholars from the “Ritual-Language-Action: Social Sciences” study group of the North American Academy of Liturgy to prepare empirical instruments and hone parish observation techniques.<sup>134</sup> In 1986, this study group formulated a proposal to examine liturgical practices on an interfaith level and assist in helping members of local communities develop talents in the area of ritual observation.<sup>135</sup> This proposal, which contends that liturgy creates and sustains “bonds of shared beliefs, values, attitudes and ethos which give a community its unique identity,” identifies three different kinds of meaning “which may be operative” in a liturgical event: “normative” (official interpretation given in the rite), “private” (individual interpretation of participants), and “public” (“that which is

---

<sup>134</sup> See Appendix 3, especially the summary proposal offered by Gil Ost diek at the conclusion of the 1985 NAAL meeting. See also Margaret Mary Kelleher, “Liturgical Theology: A Task and a Method,” *Worship* 62 (1988): 2-25. With “participant observation” being a virtually new concept in the mid-1980s, Kelleher writes: “Gathering data from liturgical performance obviously demands participation in and careful observation of that performance. One’s task at this stage is that of attending to the ritual and recording data. One is aiming at a description of the assembly’s liturgical praxis. . . . Questions to be asked of the liturgical performance can be gathered under the three categories of ritual subject, symbols, and process. Since liturgy is a product of the ecclesial process and participates in the dynamics of that process, questions about an assembly engaged in performing a ritual are apt to provide significant data toward disclosing some characteristics of that process” (13).

<sup>135</sup> See Lawrence Hoffman, Gilbert Ost diek, and Mark Searle, “A Grant Proposal from the Social Sciences Study Group of the North American Academy of Liturgy,” in MSP. This proposal seeks funding for two years of study (1986-1987). The purpose of the grant is described as follows: “The grant being sought will provide partial funding for a series of meetings in which research instruments will be developed and, after testing, reviewed and improved. These research instruments are intended for use in churches and synagogues, with the cooperation of liturgical scholars on the one hand and members of specific faith communities on the other. The end product will consist of a set of instruments which will serve two purposes. First, they will provide researchers and theologians with a way of accurately observing liturgical practice and recording it for subsequent analysis, thereby rendering the practice of the liturgy available as a source of theological reflection. Second, they will provide parishes and congregations with the means of describing their own ritual practices and of reflecting on what meanings may be operative in the rites as they are performed in that specific community” (1). The “participating scholars” listed at the end of the proposal are Mary Collins, Lawrence Hoffman, Margaret M. Kelleher, James Lopresti, Gilbert Ost diek, and Mark Searle.

actually communicated by the rite as it is celebrated in this place and by these people”).<sup>136</sup>

The authors write:

These three kinds of meaning are seldom acknowledged by students of the liturgy, let alone by participants, clerical or lay. At best, discrepancies are suspected between “what the rite means” and “what people make of it.” Yet even this suspicion overlooks the fact that the actual performance of the rite may belie the “normative” or official meanings attached to it. As a result, there often arises a split between how people experience the rite and how they have been taught to understand it. Many of the problems afflicting ritual celebrations today, we suspect, are the result of such unacknowledged discrepancies.<sup>137</sup>

In addition to labeling these three kinds of meanings, the proposal indicates that specialists will help to train parishioners how to observe and analyze their own liturgies, enabling them “to assume more responsibility and accountability for their liturgies and for the values that inform them.”<sup>138</sup> For his own part, Searle believed that, while the Notre Dame study provided a solid foundation of information for ongoing discernment, the success of liturgical reform hinged upon empowering the local community for the task of discovering the

---

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 1-2. See also Margaret Mary Kelleher, “Liturgy: An Ecclesial Act of Meaning,” *Worship* 59 (1985): 482-497. As a member of the North American Academy of Liturgy’s Social Sciences Study Group, Kelleher offered this essay as a contribution in defining the assembly as the subject of liturgical action. On page 489, Kelleher writes: “It is within the actual performance of liturgy that meaning is communicated and created by and for the church. This point cannot be emphasized too strongly.” See also Kelleher, “Liturgical Theology: A Task and a Method,” 6. Kelleher writes: “In its liturgical praxis an assembly mediates a public horizon, a world of meaning which provides a context for the assembly’s worship. This public world of meaning must be distinguished from the meanings that are personally appropriated by members of the assembly as well as from the meanings identified in official texts or commentaries on a rite, since individuals may not appropriate all that is publicly mediated, and liturgical praxis may mediate meanings that are not included in the official rite. Although public and private meanings must be distinguished, public horizons play a significant role in the ongoing mediation of both individual and collective subjects.”

<sup>137</sup> Hoffman, Ostdiek, and Searle, “A Grant Proposal from the Social Sciences Study Group of the North American Academy of Liturgy,” 3.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid. “The work of the N.A.A.L. study group has now reached a certain maturity and is at the point where an important further step can be taken. This step consists of developing the tools whereby members of a given parish or synagogue would be able to observe their own ritual celebrations and to analyse them for the public meaning they communicate. Such communities would then be in a position to compare these public meanings with the ‘normative meanings’ of their respective traditions, as well as with their own private understandings and motivations.”

meaning of their parochial liturgies.<sup>139</sup> This would be a task he would engage on an academic level (with the further solidification of teaching according to his method of “pastoral liturgical studies”) and on a parochial level (in promoting further reflection on the findings of the Notre Dame study).

### ***Conclusion***

At the very moment Mark Searle began to articulate in the academic world his method for “pastoral liturgical studies,” he received the invitation to serve as the Assistant Director for Liturgical Studies of the Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life. An unprecedented opportunity to collect and dissect empirical data, this study would serve to be foundational for many of Searle’s published works during the short remainder of both his career and his life. As he wrote regarding the unfolding of his vision: “As pastoral liturgical studies develop, then, more and more data concerning the actual worship of the church should become available for reflection, as well as a whole range of theological problems relating to the anthropological, sociological and psychological structures and preconditions which constitute the ‘flesh’ in which the mystery of grace is incarnated in the worship life of contemporary communities.”<sup>140</sup> Obviously, Searle was not naïve about the potential distress such data could cause, but he deemed this information essential to tackle the deeper issues of liturgical celebration in the local Church.

---

<sup>139</sup> See for example Searle, “Not the Final Word,” 44. Here he articulates the next step: “The format adopted in this issue of *Pastoral Music*, which not merely reports but discusses the data is precisely the kind of thing we hoped might happen. *Our study has carefully collected and analyzed the data: it is for the church to test and evaluate the findings and to decide on future pastoral strategies.* It is very much to be hoped that the discussions begun in these pages might continue, not least at the parochial level.”

<sup>140</sup> Searle, “New Tasks, New Methods,” 307.

Perhaps it is not too strong to say that Searle believed the Church was at a point of crisis in the early 1980s with regard to the reform of the liturgy. In fact, in a 1987 piece entitled “The Spirit of the Liturgy: A Workshop,” he uses just this word:

The crisis has arrived, and the reform of the liturgical texts has done little to remedy it. Textual revisions and catechesis in the form of instruction about the meaning of the “new rites” could only go so far. What remains is the colossal and much more profound task of relearning a forgotten way of doing things, those ancient and long-lost attitudes in which prayer and ritual were synonymous, instead of being inimical, and in which contemplation and ritual action were one and the same.<sup>141</sup>

Here Searle contends that teaching people theory on the liturgy has proven to be ineffective for relieving this “crisis,” rather, what is needed is the “acquisition of the skills necessary to take part in liturgical prayer.”<sup>142</sup> This form of rehearsal attempts to reverse the “uneasiness” with ritual, as reported in the Notre Dame study, and seeks to overturn mainstream American attitudes with a liturgical worldview.<sup>143</sup> This would be a theme that Searle would stress again and again.

---

<sup>141</sup> Mark Searle, “The Spirit of the Liturgy: A Workshop,” *Assembly* 13:5 (1987): 372. Searle goes on to suggest that post-Vatican II liturgical reform has been enacted largely by well-intentioned people who simply do not understand the nature of the liturgical act: “In the period following the Council, the great void created by centuries of practices in the West became all too apparent. This was true not only among those who were simply unable to adjust to the reforms, the adherents of the Tridentine Mass, but also of many who thought their hour had at last come but who shared few if any of the values of the liturgical movement. As a result, the celebration of the mysteries of faith was effectively in the hands of people—priests, guitarists, song-writers, banner-makers, liturgy planners, etc.—who did not know what the liturgical act was or even that such a thing existed.”

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 373. Searle lists some of the basic skill for liturgical prayer: “congregating, posture and gesture, singing, seeing, hearing, the use of material things and the use of space. . . . The mystery of the congregation is not something to be discussed but to be apprehended and rehearsed by the disciples of appropriate acts of reverence and frames of mind.”

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.* Searle writes: “It is difficult for a trained dancer to move or act ungracefully even offstage. In the same way, the skills required for liturgy are skills that carry over into life, in a lifestyle that is gracious, non-violent, attentive, self-effacing and reverent. *In a word, we discovered that the ‘liturgical act’ is itself a rehearsal of those values and attitudes which are truly evangelical. We had been rehearsing to take our parts more effectively in the liturgy, only to discover that the liturgy itself, properly celebrated rehearses us to take our part more effectively in the world, as sacraments of the kingdom of God.*” Emphasis mine. See also Kevin W. Irwin, “Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi—Origins and Meaning: *State of the Question*,” *Liturgical Ministry* 11

Thus, while the years 1983 to 1986 can be identified roughly as years of solidification for Searle's convictions on liturgy—both in his formulation of a way to study it and in the concrete facts about it that flowed from empirical research—the next phase of his professional journey reveals a two-fold plan to address the “crisis” of reform. In the one direction, Searle will move deeper into the scientific world of semiotics in order to formulate a user-friendly approach to the study of symbols in the liturgy, with the ambitious hope of restoring the symbolic imagination of the wider Church. In another direction, he would strive to launch a new liturgical movement, aimed at helping the Church to be more comfortable with ritual forms. It is unlikely that Searle, for his own part, drew such a clear-cut distinction between these two directions, as he saw the academic and the pastoral as mutually informing and inseparable; the study of liturgy should not proceed apart from the real life experience of the parish, and the parish needs the assistance of ongoing theological reflection in order to remain rooted in the tradition. Thus, the third part of this dissertation explores these two emphases of Searle's approach to addressing the state of liturgical reform.

---

(2002): 66-67. In his description of liturgy in relationship to spirituality and ethics, Irwin writes: “Again the issue here is to allow the liturgy to shape and challenge how we look at the world and our corporate and personal lives within it. Among the pioneers in emphasizing this aspect of liturgical theology is Aidan Kavanagh. His oft-repeated remark ‘liturgy does us’ rings true in terms of cogency and challenge: Clearly what the liturgy always does is to offer, articulate, and celebrate a vision of the Christian life in our world that is often at variance with the assumptions of contemporary culture. . . *In the end liturgical rites are about nothing less than getting life less wrong*” (66). Emphasis mine.

# Part III

Searle's Academic and Pastoral Responses  
To the "Crisis" of Liturgical Reform

## Chapter VI

### *Semiotics Applied to the Study of Liturgy*

Among the leading principles of liturgical reform, as initiated by the Second Vatican Council, is the intelligibility of ritual word and action.<sup>1</sup> Toward this end, the Council Fathers decreed that “both texts and rites should be ordered so as to express more clearly the holy things which they signify.”<sup>2</sup> What is at stake here is precisely the recognition that liturgy involves communication not only with God but with the human assembly as well. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* Number 7 describes well this communicative property of the liturgy:

The liturgy, then, is rightly seen as an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ. *In the liturgy the sanctification of women and men is given expression in symbols perceptible by the senses and is carried out in ways appropriate to each of them.* In it, complete and definitive public worship is performed by the mystical body of Jesus Christ, that is, by the Head and his members.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> See *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 21 in Flannery, *The Basic Sixteen Documents*. This paragraph reveals the overall impetus for liturgical reform: “It is the wish of the church to undertake a careful general reform of the liturgy in order that the Christian people may be more certain to derive and abundance of graces from it. For the liturgy is made up of unchangeable elements divinely instituted, and of elements subject to change. These latter not only may be changed but ought to be changed with the passage of time, if they have suffered from the intrusion of anything out of harmony with the inner nature of the liturgy or have become less suitable.” The desire for intelligibility is also the subject of Number 34: “The rites should radiate a noble simplicity. They should be short, clear, and free from useless repetition. They should be within the people’s powers of comprehension, and normally should not require much explanation.”

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., Number 21.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., Number 7. Emphasis mine.



Therefore, conscious participation in the “priestly office of Jesus Christ” necessarily calls for active engagement with liturgical symbols. For those charged with the task of redrafting the rites of the Church, the symbols used in liturgy would not only be the subject of scrutiny, but also, the interaction of symbols in liturgical celebration as a whole would certainly need inspection and reorganization.<sup>4</sup> In other words, just as speech not only requires the knowledge of words but also requires the facility to order those words, so too do liturgical forms require a careful arrangement of both texts and symbols.

Such a reappraisal of symbols in the liturgy rests upon the understanding that symbols, in and of themselves, are not simply a secondary, or lesser, form of communication; rather, they are in fact products of social interaction and thus the core of all communication itself. “Precisely because it affects decision and gives a pattern for action,” writes David Power, “a symbol is not just an image of an already constituted reality; rather it constitutes the reality of which it is the symbol.”<sup>5</sup> In terms of the liturgy, this means that symbols do not simply “stand-in” for an absent reality but that they establish new relationship with the symbolized reality.<sup>6</sup> Again, to employ the words of Power: “The symbol constitutes the

---

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Paul VI, “Address to the Members and *Periti* of the Consilium, 13 October 1966,” DOL no. 633. Charging the Consilium with the project of drafting new rites, Paul VI states: “That task, uppermost in the minds of those intent on reform, is to make the liturgical rites plain and clear to the majority of the faithful in their intelligibility, in their forms of expression, in the way they are carried out. *To match liturgical structure and language to pastoral needs, to the catechetical aims of the liturgy, to the spiritual and moral formation of the faithful, to the desire for union with God, to the nature of the sign of the sacred that allows for comprehension and, by experience, perception of its religious power—that is your work.* What practical knowledge and charity it demands of you who are the artisans of the new liturgy, the bearers of treasures hidden from us till now! For in the liturgy the aim is beauty and simplicity, depth and clarity of meaning, substance with brevity, the resonances of ages past joined to the voices of today in a new harmony.” Emphasis mine.

<sup>5</sup> Power, “Symbolism in Worship: A Survey, I,” 319.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 324. Power writes: “Never must we make the mistake of objectifying the symbols of turning them into mere indications or signs or allegories, illustrating an already known reality. *They are a language of relationship and creation, putting those who use them into a relationship and a meaningful potentiality.*” Emphasis mine. See also Antoine Vergote, “Symbolic Gestures and Actions in the Liturgy,” Trans. Barbara Wall, in *Concilium 62: Liturgy in Transition*, Ed. Herman Schmidt (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971) 42-43. Here Vergote describes how the symbolic nature of gesture effects relationship with God: “So the liturgical

reality, which is the joining-point, the bringing together as one person, of the Word which is spoken in the pasch, and of those to whom this Word is addressed.”<sup>7</sup> All of this makes the value of studying the symbols and their means of communication within the liturgy all the more important, because it is in the symbol that real relationship is established and restored.

It can be argued that, after years of labor on the part of the Post-Vatican *Consilium*, the liturgical rites given to the Church reflected the fruit of sound theological and historical study but were less successful in displaying a serious exploration of the nature of symbol.<sup>8</sup> This is not to say that the reformed rites do not take seriously the role of symbol in liturgical celebration, but rather, that they were implemented with little data as to how new and resurrected symbols would interact with and speak to the human community. As Andrew Greeley testifies:

---

gesture and the religious language of celebration reveal the essential particularity they have in common: to be the sign that expresses and effectuates. This similarity allows us to be actively present at a liturgy in a foreign language, just as it provides the alternation of gestures without words, words without gesture, and moments when the two modes of expressive action coincide. A just evaluation of the liturgical gesture as expression and action of faith also extricates us from a false conceptualization of the sacraments and their efficacy, and frees troubled believers from the impression of ‘receiving’ from the sacraments as from arbitrary means of grace cut off from their person attitude of faith. We are not disputing the truth of the *ex opere operato* doctrine. But if this principle is understood outside all reference to the efficacy of religious language and symbolic gesture, we are in practice led to regard the sacraments as a magic ritualism. *Faith is not just a ‘condition’ for the efficacy of the sacraments; it is achieved in the gesture and the word which, by this fact, are operative in the relationship with God.*” Emphasis mine.

<sup>7</sup> Power, “Symbolism in Worship: A Survey, I,” 324.

<sup>8</sup> See for example Herman Schmidt, “Editorial,” in *Liturgy in Transition* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971) 10. “In his approach to the Christian mystery the specialist in liturgy will seek to understand it as it is apprehended and celebrated in Christian congregations, each in its own fashion integrated into the one (albeit pluriform) world. Archaeology and theological expertise are not going to take him far enough. He is bound to inquire how there come to be vital points of contact between Christ as he now lives and people as they now live. The Word of God must be proclaimed through the Scriptures in such a way that it becomes intelligible to each congregation and speaks with a prophetic resonance amid our problems. Liturgy is a proclamation of the Word that became flesh and so is a kind of symbolic activity in accordance with a richly varied ceremonial; the anthropological study of human gestures has shown how very important symbolic activity is in regard to religious expression, having often a richer content than words or any written material. Now that the Roman liturgy is celebrated in all languages, the symbolic ceremonial, as in the Easter rites, takes on a new value: that of a universal language. See also Ronald Grimes, *Beginnings in Ritual Studies*, 5-39. Grimes maintains sharp criticism of “Christian liturgical theory and practice.” For example, he writes: “Christian liturgy tends to idolize the so-called ‘higher’ senses, especially speech and vision. Words overwhelm most liturgical silences and obscure most of the tactile, gustatory, and kinesthetic aspects of liturgy” (9).

At the time of the promulgation of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, a number of sociologists commented that it was unfortunate that those who framed the Constitution did not have more sociological and psychological *periti* available for consultation. Social scientists would have pointed out that however splendid the vision of that Constitution, it did not devote itself to the practical questions of personality, society and organization which had to be faced if Christian liturgy was once again to become an effective symbol to those who participate in it. I was forced to say at that time that I very much doubted that the reforms envisaged in the Constitution would have much impact on the revitalization of the symbolic contact of the liturgy.<sup>9</sup>

Again, this indictment is not meant to criticize the painstaking work that went into the composition of the “new” liturgy, but rather, it serves as an ongoing challenge for the Church to continually inspect how the liturgy communicates rather than simply what the liturgy communicates. In fact, as much of the empirical data from the Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life demonstrated in the previous chapter, the liturgy itself may be less responsible for failing to communicate than the human assembly which struggles to take part in a meaningful exchange.

### ***Liturgy and Semiotics***

Mark Searle was among those scholars who maintained that the wisdom of the renewed ritual structures and the language of their symbols had yet to be properly mined, a reality which only contributed to a fundamental mistrust of the liturgy itself. “[T]he fault is not so much in the renewed liturgy,” he writes in a 1984 article, “as in what we have made of it . . . the only important thing is to trust the liturgy.”<sup>10</sup> While Searle certainly did not shy

---

<sup>9</sup> Greeley, “Religious Symbolism, Liturgy and Community,” 65.

<sup>10</sup> Searle, “Images and Worship,” 113. Searle places this “trust” in the context of developing an attitude of liturgical contemplation: “Unlike the reform of the liturgy, it (renewal of the Christian imagination) is something which we can each undertake for ourselves: an exploration of the possibilities of a more contemplative approach to liturgical participation. While it would be fostered by ‘good liturgy’ it is not dependent upon it (indeed, the criteria by which one judges liturgy good or bad tend to waver somewhat in these

away from critiquing the texts and symbols of the renewed liturgy, he undoubtedly placed greater emphasis on learning the art of liturgical participation as communication within the already established rites of the Church. What is needed in this communications event is an assembly willing to be caught up in disclosures rather than ideas.<sup>11</sup> As Searle writes: “For the language of the rite is never a statement about what it contains, so much as the coming to light of the mystery itself.”<sup>12</sup>

Furthermore, the communicative property of the liturgy plays an extremely important role in Searle’s method of “pastoral liturgical studies.” After the collection and analysis of empirical data, Searle believed that the second task of the pastoral liturgist was the “study of how the symbolic words and gestures of the liturgy operate when they engage the believing community.”<sup>13</sup> What is most important in this “hermeneutical” task is focus upon symbolic interaction (i.e. how symbols relate to each other and serve communication) rather than upon symbolic content (i.e. what symbols mean).<sup>14</sup> As Searle asserts: “It is by attention to form rather than to content that pastoral liturgy will contribute to the liturgy’s ability to communicate effectively as both expressive of the faith of the community and formative of it.”<sup>15</sup>

---

circumstances). All that it requires is that one strive to relax and centre oneself before the liturgy begins, and to maintain the attitude of attentive receptivity to everything that happens in the rite as it unfolds.”

<sup>11</sup> See Searle, “Liturgy as Metaphor,” 117.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Searle, “New Tasks, New Methods,” 300.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. Searle writes: “The hermeneutical function of pastoral liturgy, then, is not to be identified with catechesis, as that term is usually understood. Instead, it will undertake a study of how symbols operate and how symbolic language communicates.”

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 302.

It is precisely for the need to place form over content that Searle turns to the rather murky and complicated academic field of semiotics. Semiotics is most simply defined as the “study of signs.”<sup>16</sup> While the foundation of semiotics is rooted in linguistics,<sup>17</sup> an expansion of this basic definition would be the study of “all systems of signs used in human communication, including, in addition to language, nonverbal codes, systems of gestures, and other forms of communication.”<sup>18</sup> Perhaps one of the most complicated, yet essential,

---

<sup>16</sup> See A.J. Greimas and J. Courtés, *Semiotics and Language: An Analytical Dictionary*, Trans. L. Crist and D. Patte, and others (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1982) 287-293. See also Peter K. Manning, *Semiotics and Fieldwork* (Newbury Park, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 1987) 25. Manning offers the rather helpful definition of semiotics: “Semiotics is primarily a mode of analysis that seeks to understand how signs perform or convey meaning in context.”

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (1915), Ed. Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye with Albert Reidlinger, Trans. Wade Baskin (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959) 16. Distinguishing semiology from semantics, Saussure writes: “*A science that studies the life of signs within society* is conceivable; it would be a part of social psychology and consequently of general psychology; I shall call it *semiology* (from Greek *sēmeion* ‘sign’). Semiology would show what constitutes signs, what laws govern them. Since the science does not yet exist, no one can say what it would be; but it has a right to existence, a place staked out in advance. Linguistics is only a part of the general science of semiology; the laws discovered by semiology will be applicable to linguistics, and the latter will circumscribe a well-defined area within the mass of anthropological facts.”

<sup>18</sup> D.S. Clarke, Jr., *Sources of Semiotic: Readings with Commentary from Antiquity to the Present* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1990) 124. See also Herbert Blumer, “Symbolic Interaction: An Approach to Human Communication,” in *Approaches to Human Communication*, Eds. Richard W. Budd and Brent D. Ruben (New York: Spartan Books, 1972) 401-419. Blumer maintains that meaning comes out of the process by which humans interact with one another; meaning is produced not individually but socially. This has particular significance for the role of symbols in communication: “Symbolic interactionism does not merely give a ceremonious nod to social interaction. It recognizes social interaction as being of vital importance in its own right. This importance lies in the fact that social interaction is a process that forms human conduct instead of merely a means or a setting for the expression or release of human conduct. Put simply, human beings in interacting with one another have to take account of what the other is doing or is about to do; they are forced to direct their own conduct or handle their situations in terms of what they take into account. Thus, the activities of others enter as positive factors in the formation of their own conduct; in the face of the actions of others one may abandon an intention or purpose, revise it, check or suspend it, intensify it, or replace it. The actions of others enter to set what one plans to do, may oppose or prevent such plans, may require a revision of such plans, and may demand a very different set of such plans. One has to fit one’s own line of activity in some manner to the actions of others” (406). This article appears in MSP, A4 (Symbolic Interactionism). See also Roland Barthes, *Elements of Semiology*, Trans. Annette Lavers and Colin Smith (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967). Barthes attempts to demonstrate how semiotics can be applied to such systems as food and clothing. For example, he contends that food communicates by virtue of: (a) how various foods are associated with one another, (b) how they subscribe to certain rules of exclusion (taboos), and (c) how they are used ritually. He writes: “The *menu*, for instance, illustrates very well this relationship between the language and speech: any menu is concocted with reference to a structure (which is both national—or regional—and social); but this structure is filled differently according to the days and the users, just as a linguistic ‘form’ is filled by the free variations and combinations which a speaker needs for a particular message” (28).

aspects of this science is the way in which it strives to discover meaning in relationships through the identification of continuities and discontinuities.<sup>19</sup> Thus, a symbol is never studied in isolation but always in terms of its relationship to other symbols.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, semiotics is based upon the premise that meaning is established in the process of interpretation that involves both Sender (enunciator) and Receiver (enunciatee).<sup>21</sup> Before arriving at a level that is unnecessarily complicated, perhaps it is best to return to Searle's own academic pursuits and his desire to incorporate semiotics in the study of liturgy.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> See A.J. Greimas, *Structural Semantics: An Attempt at Method*, Trans. Daniele McDowell, Ronald Schleifer, and Alan Velie (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1983) 18-31. "Today the only way to approach the problem of signification is to recognize the existence of discontinuities on the plane of perception and the existence of differentiating gaps (following Lévi-Strauss), which create signification, without concerning ourselves about the nature of the differences" (18).

<sup>20</sup> See Barthes, *Elements of Semiology*, 58-59.

<sup>21</sup> See Herbert Blumer, "Symbolic Interaction: An Approach to Human Communication," in *Approaches to Human Communication*, Eds. Richard W. Budd and Brent D. Ruben (New York: Spartan Books, 1972) 404.

<sup>22</sup> It is to be noted that there are a variety of methods, or approaches, that have been developed for semiotics. For example, it is possible to trace semiotics back to two founding "fathers," namely, Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914) and Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913). These figures stand at the forefront of two basic schools of semiotics. The Peircian school follows Peirce's definition of semiotics as "the logic of general meaning," with its inquiry following philosophical lines, while the Saussurian school studies signs within the context of society. See Ronald Schleifer, "Introduction," in A.J. Greimas, *Structural Semantics: An Attempt at Method*, Trans. Daniel McDowell, Ronald Schleifer, and Alan Velie (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), xiii. See also Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 6. He writes: "The subject matter of linguistics comprises all manifestations of human speech, whether that of savages or civilized nations, or of archaic, classical or decadent periods." See also Daniel Patte, *Structural Exegesis for New Testament Critics* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1990). Here Patte breaks down the Saussurian method even further: "[S]emiotic theories can be classified in two groups, each giving priority to one of the two basic insights of de Saussure. One group of semiotic theories is primarily based upon de Saussure's insight that language is a system of *signs*; they take as their starting point the question of the process of communication by means of signs. . . . A second group of semiotic theories is primarily based upon de Saussure's insight that signs are meaningful through their interrelations and through their differences. When this insight is generalized, one can recognize that in any meaningful phenomenon (including texts) meaning is produced through the interrelations, according to certain structures, of the features that can be perceived as different from each other" (3-4). A third, more contemporary, figure, whose thought serves as the basis for the majority of the theories studied by Searle, is A.J. Greimas (1917-1992). Greimassian semiotics follows in the tradition of Saussure and stands at the front of the Paris school. See Gerard M. Lukken, "Semiotics and the Study of Liturgy," *Studia Liturgica* 17 (1987): 108-117. Regarding the method of Greimas, Lukken writes: "A.J. Greimas has developed a semiotic metalanguage, i.e. a language about language. This metalanguage does not concern itself only with verbal expressions, but applies to non-verbal expressions as well. . . . Through the years A.J. Greimas has thus built up a conceptual apparatus by which various sign entities can be analysed as to their signification. This is

Toward the end of his one and only sabbatical year (to be discussed in the next section), and in preparation for the 1990 meeting of the North American Academy of Liturgy in St. Louis, Searle wrote an essay entitled “Introduction to the Semiotics of Liturgy,” in which he puts forth the basic question: “What can semiotics bring to liturgical studies?”<sup>23</sup> To answer this question, Searle suggests that one must be willing to engage in “painstaking analysis” of all the signs (codes) that comprise the “text” of the rite, thereby unlocking a host of new insights:

Because its distinctive approach to a text is to ask not what it means, but how it means, semiotics does not claim to offer the definitive interpretation of a sign’s meaning. Rather it hopes to describe the mechanisms governing the polyvalence of a text or sign. In so doing, it can show that some interpretations (e.g. liturgical theologies or theologies of sacramental causality) are better grounded than others, and may provide new insights which might generate better theologies.<sup>24</sup>

---

continuously being developed and refined. It focuses on the analysis of sign entities; this means that if, for example, it treats a literary discourse, the issue is not the analysis of detached sentences, but the point is the architecture of signification within this particular discourse in its entirety. . . . An important concept in the semiotics of A.J. Greimas is the generative trajectory. A.J. Greimas tries to lay bare the relations of meaning which lie hidden under the discourse as we immediately perceive or read it. The discourse, as it presents itself to us, is situated on this immediately perceptible level, called manifestation level. Regarding the network of relations which lies as it were hidden underneath this level, A.J. Greimas distinguishes three levels, which unfold each in their own way the signification of the discourse. . . . The three levels (going from the most concrete to the most abstract level) are called: the level of discursive structures, the surface level, and the deep level. Each level comprises two components which are linked together: the syntactic component and the semantic component. . . . Through the analysis of all kinds of discourses, A.J. Greimas got on the track of four structural phases, which narratively speaking occur in discourses. These are the phase of the *manipulation* of a receiver by a sender, the phase of the *competence* of the receiver with regard to the act he has to perform, the phase of the *performance* (the actual act) by the subject of a performance who brings about a transformation, and the phase of the *sanction* (judgment) of the performance and the new situation which originates from it thanks to the sender or his delegate” (109-111).

<sup>23</sup> Mark Searle, “Introduction to the Semiotics of Liturgy,” 1, in MSP, Unprocessed. See also Mark Searle, “Semiotic Study of Liturgical Celebration: A Report Submitted to The Association of Theological Schools,” 2, in MSP, Unprocessed (Matthew). With regard to the preparation of the “Introduction,” Searle writes: “At the end of the year I set myself the task of clarifying and consolidated what I had learned by writing a 30 page (single space) ‘Introduction to the Semiotics of Liturgy.’ This will serve in the immediate future as a basis for discussing liturgical semiotics with interested groups . . . , but, with development and revision, will also serve as the introductory chapter to a book on liturgy and semiotics.”

<sup>24</sup> Searle, “Introduction to the Semiotics of Liturgy,” 2. However, just because semiotic analysis can yield a broad range of meaning, it is a “highly accountable” undertaking. As Searle writes: “Semiotic theory is partly indicative and partly deductive. This means that while the analysis of a text is an application of the theory, it is

Shifting from “what” liturgy means to “how” it means is the most significant contribution of semiotics to the study of liturgy precisely because this method provides new insight for participation. Stated in a somewhat simplistic way, semiotics is a means of “reading” the dynamic nature of connections rather than content.<sup>25</sup>

In keeping with Greimas and the “French School” of semiotic theory, Searle presents a two-part method of reading, that is based upon the “tracking” of “trajectories,” in which “we count on being able to recognize words that belong together, words that are associated with each other by the text and combined and organized.”<sup>26</sup> The first part of this method is called “discursive analysis” (form of content), with the first step being a preliminary reading of the text in order to acknowledge a plethora of meanings.<sup>27</sup> The second step is to classify the contents of the text into three categories: actors, times, and places (this is a process

---

also a contribution to the theory. In consequence, semiotic analysis is a very explicit and highly accountable procedure. Unlike what often happens in theology, for example, a semiotics of liturgy (or of theological writings for that matter) has to be able to demonstrate its claims by detailed reference to the text on which the claims are based” (2-3).

<sup>25</sup> See Mark Searle, “Semiotics: Getting Started,” 1-2, in MSP, Unprocessed (Semiotics Course). This instructional essay Searle prepared as an aid for his students has been reproduced in full in Appendix V: *Handouts on Semiotics*. Searle contends that proceeding with semiotics depends upon learning a new way to read the text: “It may be worthwhile stopping to try to grasp what we do when we read, and how texts of different kinds produce their meaning. . . . To read is to confront the text itself and to allow oneself to be seized by the word that takes shape there. It means making connections, both within the text itself and with other text, and with other ways in which the word takes form or meaning is expressed.” See also Walter Vogels, *Reading & Preaching the Bible: A New Semiotic Approach* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1986). Concerning a method of semiotics, Vogels writes: “The basic principle is that *any discourse respects a grammar*. A discourse, a text longer than a sentence, is kept together through structures, through a set of laws which make the text a network of operations and relations. Everything in the text is important and keeps the whole together” (43).

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 2-3. Regarding Step One, Searle simply states: “On first reading a text looks like a mass of words, all with a range of possible meanings, a real virgin forest! How is one to find one’s way? How to identify the pathways of meaning? There are characters, actions, objects, places, qualifications. . . .”



called “segmentation”).<sup>28</sup> The third step of “discursive analysis” explores changes among these three categories; finding and naming differences is the key to semiotics. Searle writes:

Finding the difference enables us to approach the text from the side of the ORGANIZATION OF THE MEANING of the text. When we stand before a landscape, a scene, a situation . . . we know how to recognize, read, interpret, evaluate, judge, because we know how to perceive differences of shape, colour, quality. Difference is the basis of the meanings we perceive: NO DIFFERENCES, NO MEANINGS (“By night, all cats are grey.”) Similarly with texts: reading is a matter of identifying and describing the differences, the gaps, the oppositions between the trajectories of meaning we have identified. This does not take a lot of science, but it does take a certain way of looking.<sup>29</sup>

The identification of differences within the text allows for the fourth step to occur: namely, making the judgment as to which parts of the text “go together” according to certain themes. The objective here is to classify elements according to similarities and oppositions. Searle draws the following analogy: “This way of reading is a bit like someone watching a football game. Initially, it looks as though there are just a lot of people running around in all directions. But, after a while, the observer notices the actors following certain trajectories, making certain connections, entering certain oppositions. . . And these are repeated. . . By

---

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 3. Ordering the text according to these three “poles” creates “discursive situations.” Searle writes: “This enables us to recognize (and segment) the different scenes in the text: where one or more actors are found in a certain place at a certain time.” See also Mark Searle, “Questionnaire,” 1, in MSP, Unprocessed (Semiotics Course). This document is reproduced in its entirety in Appendix V: *Handouts on Semiotics*. Segmentation involves trying to identify how an actor is defined in each scene. Thus, Searle offers the following items to be examined: “note the figurative descriptions provided by the text; note the relations established between the actors and how these relations are described in the text; note the actor’s relations to space; note the actor’s relations to time.”

<sup>29</sup> Searle, “Semiotics: Getting Started,” 3-4. See also Searle, “Questionnaire,” 1. Searle offers the following questions when a change is noted: “Is there any change in the way the actors are described or defined? Is there any change in the way the contexts are organized, either on the figuratively or thematically (changes of relations, of oppositions between figures)? How does the text select its meaning-trajectory? How does this trajectory realize itself in each segment? Is it possible to say precisely what it is that this text is about?”

categorizing the trajectories, the contacts, the oppositions, the observer eventually arrives at a glimpse of the code underlying the game he is watching.”<sup>30</sup>

The second part of Searle’s method for “reading” a text is “narrative analysis” (form of expression). Thus, after the actors, times, and places are organized according to perceived codes, then work commences to determine how the text tells a story. Furthermore, stories rely upon “transformation” in the text: “So for there to be a STORY, we need (at least) an INITIAL STATE (a), a FINAL STATE (b), and a transformative PERFORMANCE (realized by an OPERATOR or subject of the performance.”<sup>31</sup> Transformations in a text are realized according to four necessary phases (called the “Canonical Schema”):

MANIPULATION: making-to-do  
Someone (Sender) looks for someone else (Performer) to undertake a task, and tries to get them to agree to it.

COMPETENCE: being-able-to-do  
If the first phase works out (the hero agrees), the story moves on to the quest for competence: the hero needs whatever means may be necessary to accomplish the task.

PERFORMANCE: doing  
If the necessary competence is acquired (Operator is able to act), the story moves on to the transformation itself, which causes the subject to pass from an initial situation to the transformed situation.

SANCTION: evaluation  
Once the performance is accomplished, the Performer/hero needs to be recognized by those who prompted the performance (Senders). For the Performer, this is the veridictory text (seeming vs. being).<sup>32</sup>

Thus, while the first task of “discursive analysis” takes note of the differences based on trajectories (actors, places, and times), “narrative analysis” takes note of the differences on

---

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

the basis of how these trajectories are functioning.<sup>33</sup> The end result of such an unraveling of the text is to come to a greater understanding of underlying “values” of the actions that take place in a text, thereby revealing the “deep structure” of the text.<sup>34</sup>

But how do such semiotic elements as “discursive analysis” and “narrative analysis” have any impact on the study of liturgy? Essentially, Searle believes that developing the skills of semiotics would force students of the liturgy to “read” differently. As Searle writes:

Usually, as liturgists, we read ritual texts to discover (a) what was or is done and how (historical reconstruction), or (b) how the authors or originating community understood what they were doing (theology), or (c) what clues the text might give as to the circumstances of the text’s production and/or use (socio-cultural matrix). A semiotic approach brackets such questions in order to ask how the text produces its meaning or meanings. It asks: What “persons” appear in the text? How are they related to each other? What roles do they fulfill? In what situations? To what ends? What changes are registered or anticipated.<sup>35</sup>

While Searle, for his own part, was intrigued at approaching a text as an intricate puzzle to be unraveled, he did not assume naively that semiotics would catch on quickly or be widely embraced. As he confesses: “It is not for everybody, certainly, nor does it replace existing and proven methods of liturgical study. But for those who have the patience to master it and

---

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>34</sup> See Searle, “Introduction to the Semiotics of Liturgy,” 28. Searle writes: “The values we are looking for, then, are the semantics or semic values which the texts circulates, i.e. the differences of meaning-effect produced in the text. At the narrative level these are conjoined with objects to create actualized values, which may be conjoined with subjects as realized values. Once the values are separated out from the objects in which they are invested and looked at on their own, we call them virtual values. Once we have reach that stage, we have moved into the deep level of the text.”

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 20. Searle continues by arguing that such a way of reading liturgical texts helps in the realization that they are living and active words for the community, rather than simply texts belonging to a former generation: “Such questions have less to do directly with meaning of the text than with the form the meaning is given. This approach assumes that meaning is not just lying there in the text, but is produced by a number of organizational mechanisms which ‘activate’ meaning when a reader takes up the text. What the reader gets from the text depends in part, of course, on the reader’s competence as a reader, but the text is not passive, and in interaction with successive readers, can be a continuing source of meaning.”

apply it, it promises new and more secure insights into liturgies past and present.”<sup>36</sup> Searle clearly possessed the gift of patience and made this approach a mark of his career as a scholar of the liturgy. What follows in the rest of this chapter is an attempt to display the great importance Searle attached to semiotics as well as an effort to demonstrate, through the examples of his writing, why he thought semiotics to be so promising to the study of liturgy.

### *A Sabbatical Year for the Study of Semiotics*

By the late 1980s, after having articulated his method for “pastoral liturgical studies” and having sifted through the empirical data of the Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life, Searle identified himself as being at a “rather crucial juncture” in his academic career.<sup>37</sup> Believing that he needed to change his approach to teaching, Searle turned more intensely to semiotics.<sup>38</sup> An “intermittent interest” of Searle’s since the late 1960s, semiotics had sparked his imagination during a brief exposure to the science at the *Institut Supérieur de Liturgie* in Paris.<sup>39</sup> Although Searle’s courses Christian Initiation and Pastoral Liturgy included

---

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>37</sup> See Searle, “Grant Proposal: Lilly Endowment Faculty Open Fellowships for 1988-1989,” 2, in MSP, Unprocessed (Matthew). Searle comments: “I find myself, then, at a rather crucial juncture in my own professional life and in the development of my field. Through my own reading and research, I have been investigating a number of different approaches to the study of ritual over the years and have now reached the point where I recognize the need to learn a second discipline, (complementing my earlier historical-theological training), which will enable me to engage in genuine cross-disciplinary study of ritual performance.” This grant proposal is reproduced in its entirety in Appendix 6.

<sup>38</sup> See Searle, “Lilly Endowment Faculty Open Fellowships 1988-89 Application,” 10. Anticipating the sabbatical year as an opportunity to change as a teacher, Searle writes: “While this project has clearly developed out of my experience as a teacher, it also represents the possibility of a change of direction. I would regard the honor of a Lilly Faculty Open Fellowship as a golden opportunity to broaden my approach to teaching liturgical studies by developing competence in a new but complementary discipline which would be applicable not only to Christian liturgy, but to other forms of ritual behavior.”

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 5-6. Regarding the significance of Searle’s initial exposure to semiotics, he writes: “As it happened, I had the opportunity, before beginning to teach, to spend several months in Paris at the *Institut Supérieur de Liturgie*. This was in late 1968, in the aftermath of the ‘events’ of May of that year in France, and at a time when signs of disillusionment with the liturgical reforms were already beginning to appear in the Church. On the one hand, there was a certain amount of resistance to the changes, especially as they grew more and more

elements of the human sciences (psychology, sociology, and anthropology) in the study of ritualization, he confesses that, for him, this was “ultimately unsatisfying”:

. . . I try to develop in students a *critical* appreciation of the tradition and a habit of paying attention to the way in which the messages conveyed in the actual performance of a rite may not altogether coincide with what liturgical theology says the rites are supposed to mean. There is an eclectic character to this way of teaching which, for all its merits, remains, to the teacher at least, ultimately unsatisfying. I have long since come to recognize that to be capable of genuinely interdisciplinary work I need to immerse myself in a second discipline (alongside my historical-theological training), preferably one which will pull together many of the insights I have picked up over the years, but which will, at the same time, present a new point of departure in my work as a teacher and scholar. Semiotics has been an intermittent interest of mine ever since I read Ferdinand de Saussure, Roland Barthes and Pierre Guiraud in the late sixties. . . This is precisely the direction I see the need to take as I enter the second half of my career as a teacher.<sup>40</sup>

In his application for a Lilly grant (quoted above), Searle argues that while valuable contributions have been made in developing a method for applying semiotics to texts,<sup>41</sup> his desire is to bring semiotics to bear on liturgical performance. “But what I really want to do,” Searle writes, “is to go beyond the text to develop ways of accurately describing and

---

extensive; on the other, more progressive elements, impatient with the pace and scope of the reform, were pressing ahead with their own experiments. In response both to the academic ferment in France and to the new situation in the Catholic Church, the Paris Institute was looking to supplement its established programs in history and theology with courses in anthropology, religious psychology, semiotics and other aspects of the ‘human sciences.’ These were intended to provide ways of taking into account, as the initial phases of the reform had not, the cultural conditions governing liturgical celebrations and the possibilities of liturgical change. *Such a brief encounter with the ‘human sciences’ and with what they had to offer liturgical studies hardly constituted an adequate introduction, but it sufficed to lodge firmly in my mind the importance of attending not only to the texts of the rites, but to the ritual performance as a whole, and of paying attention to the rooting of ritual in the human condition.*” Emphasis mine.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>41</sup> See for example Daniel Patte, *The Religious Dimensions of Biblical Texts: Greimas’s Structural Semiotics and Biblical Exegesis* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1990). Although these texts were yet to be published, Searle was very much familiar with Patte’s scholarship. See Searle, “Lilly Endowment Faculty Open Fellowships 1988-89 Application,” 7-8. He writes: “Though his (A.J. Greimas) has been introduced to this country by Daniel Patte (Vanderbilt) as a method for us in biblical studies, no one has as yet explored its application to ritual. Following Patte, I have found the method extremely useful for analysis of ritual texts, especially when used in conjunction with speech-act theory, and have been able to use it in modified form in the classroom.”

analyzing liturgical *events*.<sup>42</sup> In addition to the project of employing semiotic analysis in the study of the human performance of liturgy, Searle also intended his sabbatical year to be a time in which he would develop a means of making semiotic theory more accessible to students of the liturgy.<sup>43</sup> As Searle would soon discover and later admit, this agenda would prove difficult to fulfill given a discipline that is “notorious for its jargon and the opacity of its concepts.”<sup>44</sup>

Thus, with a grant of \$25,000 from the Lilly Endowment, Searle relocated his family to Holland, where he began a sabbatical year of study at the *Theologische Fakulteit* of the Catholic University of Brabant in Tilburg (The Netherlands).<sup>45</sup> Searle chose this part of the world because there had been established there a relatively new group of semioticians, gathered together under the name SEMANET, who were invested in studying liturgy through

---

<sup>42</sup> Searle, “Lilly Endowment Faculty Open Fellowships 1988-89 Application,” 8.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. Searle states: “[M]y experience as a teacher leads me to believe that, once I have mastered the matter myself, I can develop a simplified and less technical methodology for classroom use. The promise of Greimas’ brand of semiotics is that it makes it possible not only to investigate how ritual works, but also to identify the world of meanings, or ‘semantic universe,’ out of which a text or rite is produced. Providing students with the tools to do this for themselves will enable them to recognize the social and cultural values inherent not only in religious rites, but in social and ritual events of all kinds.” See also Robert A. Krieg, “Letter to the Open Fellowship Committee,” dated October 16, 1987, in MSP, Folder “Matthew.” In his letter of recommendation for the Lilly grant, Krieg writes of Searle: “Professor Searle’s proposed project is ambitious. He will gain proficiency in the skills of semiotics and then integrate these into his existing exceptional competence in liturgical studies and theology. . . Scholars of semiotics study our structures of communication, and yet some of these scholars have a hard time communicating with their audience. This will not occur with Professor Searle.”

<sup>44</sup> Searle, “Lilly Endowment Faculty Open Fellowships 1988-89 Application,” 8. See also Mark Searle, “Semiotic Study of Religious Ritual,” in MSP, Folder “Matthew.” This document was prepared for the 1989 Faculty Open Fellowship Conference/Reunion held on June 7, 1989. In reflecting on his intended goals in the midst of his sabbatical year, Searle writes: “I had originally hoped to analyse an actual ritual celebration, but the formidable problems caused by the sheer complexity of the rite make this presently unattainable. Nonetheless, I have worked on analyzing a variety of texts—a hymn, a biblical canticle, a solemn blessing, vows—as well as the interior of a local church and the use of gesture in the rite, to develop the tools necessary if all the languages of the rite are to be taken into account. With luck, when my study leave comes to an end in July I shall not only have acquired a new set of skills for my own teaching and research. I may also have the makings of a book which will make a significant contribution to the way theology is done.”

<sup>45</sup> See Mark Searle, “Semiotic Study of Liturgical Celebration: A Report Submitted to Lilly Endowment, Inc.” in MSP, Folder “Matthew.” Searle states quite simply that the “goal of the project was to see how the semiotic theory of A.J. Greimas might be applied to the analysis of liturgical celebrations.”

semiotic analysis.<sup>46</sup> Searle's primary mentor and colleague, from the time of his arrival in August 1988, was Professor Gerard M. Lukken, who guided Searle through difficult language barriers as well as helped him to modify his rather lofty goals and expectations for the sabbatical year.<sup>47</sup> With the overall goal of performing a semiotic analysis on the ritual event of infant baptism, Searle articulated his plan for the year:

September-November: study the work done so far by the SEMANET group; further investigate non-textual semiotics with a view to establishing my own procedures.

November-January: begin field work with a visit to a church to observe ritual; write up protocol; compare different modes of recording the event in terms of their usefulness for semiotic analysis; decide on mode of recording the event to be analyzed.

---

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. See also Lukken, "Semiotics and the Study of Liturgy," 108-109. Here Lukken provides a brief history of SEMANET: "In 1976 a few instructors in the Theological Faculty at Tilburg decided as a group to further improve themselves in structural text analyses. The group named itself 'Strex', which is an abbreviation of 'Structural Exegesis'. Strictly speaking, the name was too limited for both the composition of the group and the object of its research; for, in addition to the Bible, liturgy and catechesis were also studied. This led to a change of the name from 'Strex' to 'Semanet', an abbreviation of 'Semiotic Analysis by Dutch Theologians'. Gradually it became obvious to the group that they would have to make a choice. It seemed better to learn thoroughly one of the different models of analysis than to fall into a kind of methodological eclecticism. More and more attention was paid to the semiotics of A.J. Greimas. . . At this moment 'Semanet' is an inter-university study group of the Theological Faculty at Tilburg and the Catholic Theological Institute at Utrecht. 'Semanet' is engaged on the research program 'Study, application and development of the semiotics of Greimas in relation to Christian expression', which for the time being has been planned from 1984-1989."

<sup>47</sup> See Mark Searle, "Report to the Lilly Endowment, Inc., Indianapolis, Indiana, Concerning the Faculty Open Fellowship Award, 1988-1989," in MSP, Folder "Matthew." This document represents Searle's mid-sabbatical report, and with regard to Gerard Lukken's influence he writes: "Besides participating actively in these sessions (monthly meetings with SEMANET), I have been meeting for about three or four hours a week with Gerard Lukken to review my own work-in-progress and to discuss the various problems that have arisen. I cannot say too much for the generosity with which Dr. Lukken, in particular, has made his time and his scholarship available to me." See also Gerard Lukken, "The Unique Expression of Faith in the Liturgy," in *Liturgical Expression of Faith*, Eds. Herman Schmidt and David Power (New York: Herder and Herder, 1973) 13. Here Lukken expresses the core of his theological belief regarding the liturgy, namely that it is real communication with God: "Christian behaviour is less important as an expression of faith than the words and symbols of the liturgy which concern the whole of man and bring about a true communication between God and man and his fellow men." See also Kevin W. Irwin, *Liturgical Theology: A Primer* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1990) 29-31. Here Irwin provides an overview of Lukken's contributions in the area of liturgical theology and writes: "Lukken's ideas about taking seriously both official and unofficial forms in contemporary liturgy and his proposal about how to deal with a contemporary liturgical theology were groundbreaking and remain timely. The relationship of liturgy and theology is taken quite seriously in a way that makes praxis an important aspect of this study" (31).

February-July: preliminary analysis of the event, with opportunity to return to the observation-description stage as necessary; begin writing up research.

Throughout: participation in bi-weekly SEMANET seminars.<sup>48</sup>

In hindsight, what would prove to be more valuable than the attempts Searle made on specific projects (such as a semiotic analysis of the rite of infant baptism) was his overall immersion into the language and methods of semiotics in general. “Since my interest in semiotics is more practical than speculative,” writes Searle, “I studied it by using it.”<sup>49</sup>

Thus, it is quite clear that Searle’s objectives for his sabbatical might be considered overly-ambitious, as he had to focus not only on his professional goals but on the challenges of helping his family to adjust to a foreign culture and a different language.<sup>50</sup> Consequently, Searle reformulated his expectation of the sabbatical, envisioning it more as a time of “laying the foundation” for his subsequent scholarship. As he writes in his end-of-the-year evaluation to the Lilly Foundation:

It became clear rather quickly, however, that while it was possible to work with specific “languages” of the rite (rite of infant baptism), the project of analyzing a single ritual in all its dimensions was, as the Dutch say, *toekomstmuzik*, a dream as yet beyond realization. What I

---

<sup>48</sup> Searle, “Lilly Endowment Faculty Open Fellowships 1988-89 Application,” 9.

<sup>49</sup> Searle, “Semiotic Study of Liturgical Celebration: A Report Submitted to the Association of Theological Schools,” 1.

<sup>50</sup> By the time of his mid-sabbatical report in December, Searle was very realistic about not being able to meet his original goals. See Searle, “Report to the Lilly Endowment, Inc., Indianapolis, Indiana, Concerning the Faculty Open Fellowship Award, 1988-1989,” 3-4. He writes: “I find myself reaching the cutting edge of research more quickly than I had anticipated. I knew work had been done in each of the areas I need to be familiar with, but until I got here and began to read up on what had been done I did not know how tentative it was. . . . As I have already mentioned, it now seems unlikely that the goal of analyzing a specific ritual celebration will be realized this year. However, that goal was chosen as a way of giving the project a specific, short-term focus, to keep my studies on track as I worked to acquire the tools for semiotic analysis of liturgical ritual. I can say that I am very satisfied with the progress I have been able to make towards that larger goals and that I expect to continue to explore specific areas of semiotics, specifically the semiotics of architecture and the semiotics of gesture in the coming months. While my primary concern is to read, make notes, and generally ‘immerse’ myself in the theory and methods of semiotics, I hope to emerge with more than one finished article to show for my labors.”



did, in fact, was to update myself on developments in French semiotics in general and practice using semiotic methods to analyze different aspects of the rite. In this sense, the goal of the sabbatical was certainly achieved and I was able to lay the foundations for several years of research and writing.<sup>51</sup>

Searle was exceedingly appreciative for the opportunity to advance himself through living and studying in The Netherlands. Expressing his gratitude to the Lilly Foundation, he comments: “It was a rejuvenating experience for me, both personally and professionally. For my family, too, it was an invaluable opportunity to become immersed in another culture, with an unfamiliar language and unfamiliar ways of doing things.”<sup>52</sup>

Finally, it is worth noting that Searle anticipated bearing fruit from the sabbatical year in the quality and form of his teaching, in formal presentations of his research, and in future publications. First, with regard to the classroom, Searle offers this confession: “Here perhaps the first thing to be remarked is that, after a year’s break, I am rediscovering the joy of teaching, the joy I had once known but had gradually forgotten over the long years since I first began.”<sup>53</sup> He anticipated teaching a graduate level course at Notre Dame specifically on the semiotics of liturgy, using the marriage rites as the focus of study. Second, in terms of presentations on his research, Searle made the commitments to speak at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago (November 8, 1989), the North American Academy of Liturgy in St. Louis (January 5, 1990), a colloquium at Notre Dame entitled “Church Architecture as a Theological Source” (February, 1990) and a presentation for pastors at the Center for

---

<sup>51</sup> Searle, “Semiotic Study of Liturgical Celebration: A Report Submitted to Lilly Endowment, Inc.,” 1. Regarding Searle’s sense of indebtedness to Gerard Lukken, he writes: “I arrived in Holland in early August 1988 and at once made contact with Prof. G.M. Lukken. . . . From August until June inclusive, I met weekly with Prof. Lukken and participated in the bi-weekly seminars held by SEMANET in Tilburg or Utrecht.”

<sup>52</sup> Searle, “Semiotic Study of Liturgical Celebration: A Report Submitted to Lilly Endowment, Inc.,” 4.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 3. He continues: “This is all the more remarkable because I so enjoyed the sabbatical that I was afraid I would resent having to return to the classroom.”

Continuing Formation in Ministry (Spring, 1990).<sup>54</sup> Third, Searle envisioned the publication of a book on the use of semiotics in liturgical studies as well as a collaborative work with Gerard Lukken on semiotics and church architecture, with only the latter coming to fruition.<sup>55</sup> Thus, there is no doubt that the sabbatical year 1988-1989 left an indelible mark on Searle's professional career, a mark which was frequently criticized and often misunderstood by colleagues who disagreed with his emphasis on semiotics.<sup>56</sup>

In addition to "Introduction to the Semiotics of Liturgy," which he compiled during his sabbatical, Searle also wrote several other essays that involved semiotic analysis. Prior to the year in The Netherlands, Searle wrote a 30-page piece entitled "Rite for the Anointing of the Sick Outside Mass: A Semiological Analysis," which remains unpublished. In 1991, two essays were printed: "*Fons Vitae*: A Case Study in the Use of Liturgy as a Theological Source" was published in Gerard Austin's *In the Fountain of Life*, and "Between Utterance and Enunciation: Toward a Semiotics of Prayer Texts" was translated into Dutch and appeared in *Gelukkig de mens' Opstellen over psalmen. Exegese en semiotic aangeborden aan Nico Tromp*, edited by P. Beentjes and others. Two other Semiotic analyses were

---

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> See Gerard Lukken and Mark Searle, *Semiotics and Church Architecture: Applying the Semiotics of A.J. Greimas and the Paris School to the Analysis of Church Buildings* (The Netherlands: Kok Pharos Publishing House, 1993).

<sup>56</sup> See Jan Michael Joncas, "Introduction to '*Fons Vitae*: A Case Study in the Use of Liturgy as a Theological Source'," in *Vision: The Scholarly Contributions of Mark Searle to Liturgical Renewal*, Eds. Anne Koester and Barbara Searle, 204-207 (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2004). Joncas cites several reasons for scholarly suspicion regarding semiotics applied to liturgy: "However, scholars have not followed Searle's lead in steeping themselves in semiotic theory as a tool for examining the sign-systems operating in a liturgical act. I suspect there are many reasons for this: a scholarly movement from a 'closed' structuralist theory (of which semiotics is a late development) exploring fixed levels of meaning manifest in cultural artifacts to an 'open' post-modernist deconstructing of the notion of fixed meaning(s) inhering in any sign-system; the esoteric vocabulary and difficult thought-forms employed by semioticians; the difficulty of bringing the semiotic analysis of multiple interacting codes into a global analysis; and the lack of clear pastoral impact of such studies" (207).

published posthumously: “Semiotic Analysis of Eucharistic Prayer II,” which was printed in 1992 in *Gratias Agamus: Studien zum Eucharistischen Hochgebet für Balthasar Fischer*, and two chapters studying the exterior and interior of the Church of SS. Peter and Paul in Tilburg, which was part of the 1993 book *Semiotics and Church Architecture*. Finally, it is necessary to add to this list the essay “*Semper Reformanda*: The Opening and Concluding Rites of the Roman Mass;” while not a semiotic analysis in the strict sense, this piece is a good example of Searle wrestling with the “meaning-effect” of ritual structure.<sup>57</sup>

The next three sections of this chapter provide an overview of these written works, in the hopes of shedding light on why Searle believed his emphasis on semiotics would contribute to “pastoral liturgical studies.” Therefore, these sections explore the application of semiotics to: (1) ritual units (the opening and closing rites of Mass and the rite of anointing of the sick); (2) prayer texts (the blessing of water and the blessing of Chrism); and (3) church architecture.<sup>58</sup>

---

<sup>57</sup> See Mark Searle, “*Semper Reformanda*: The Opening and Concluding Rites of the Roman Mass,” in *Shaping English Liturgy: Studies in Honor of Archbishop Denis Hurley*, Eds. Peter Finn and James Schellman, 53-92 (Washington, D.C.: The Pastoral Press, 1990).

<sup>58</sup> It should be noted that Searle’s use of Greimas’s method for semiotic analysis is quite complex, and what follows most definitely does an injustice to Searle’s scrupulous and meticulous presentation of his study. Nevertheless, a reading of Searle’s work generates the insight that the application of semiotics to liturgy is essentially about drawing out the relationships that reveal the liturgical event as a real experience of God’s operative grace; participation in the liturgy rehearses these relationships and establishes the commitment to ongoing relationship. See Lawrence A. Hoffman, *Beyond the Text: A Holistic Approach to Liturgy* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987). Hoffman wishes to propose a means of studying liturgy that is relationship-centered. He writes: “I mean to replace a category of books with a category of human activity: the community at prayer, an activity that I understand as organized around a set of relationships between people and their neighbors, people and the holy texts, people and their God. The totality of these relationships constitutes the liturgical field” (150). See also Mark Searle, “Review of *Beyond the Text: A Holistic Approach to Liturgy*,” *Worship* 62 (1988) 472-475. Searle offers great praise for the work: “Hoffman’s new approach, which, like all ‘new’ approaches, is a creative synthesis of the best ideas around, seems to work brilliantly for the Jewish tradition which he knows so well. If it is valid, however, it must work equally well for the traditions. . . . This refreshingly well-written book is indispensable reading for all who work in the area of liturgical studies” (475).

### *Semiotics Applied to Ritual Units*

As mention previously, one of the primary reasons Searle believed that semiotics could make a valuable contribution to liturgical studies is that it stresses the importance of analyzing structure.<sup>59</sup> Even from his days as a student, Searle demonstrated a keen skill and a high degree of satisfaction with dissecting all kinds of texts—biblical pericopes, catechetical texts of the early Church mystagogues, and liturgical prayers alike.<sup>60</sup> His fundamental belief was that knowledge could be found in “reading” not what a text says but how it communicates through its structure. “Ritual is rather like speech,” Searle writes, “in that it consists of a sequence of sign-units and communicates effectively when the sign-units are not only carefully chosen but carefully ordered in sequence.”<sup>61</sup>

---

<sup>59</sup> See Searle, “Semiotics: Getting Started,” 6. He lists the following as one of the advantages of reading semiotically: “Attention to the organization of meaning: To read is to attend to how the text produces its meaning, how it classifies and organizes its data, its language. Read like this, the Bible can challenge our habitual ways of thinking and talking about life and death, about love, truth, etc. In that sense, it is not we who interpret the text, but the text which interprets us.” See also Claude Lévi-Strauss, “Structure and Form: Reflections on a Work by Vladimir Propp,” in *Structural Anthropology*, Trans. Monique Layton (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1976) 182. Lévi-Strauss writes: “If the oral literature considered is of an ethnographic type, there are other contexts provided by the ritual, religious beliefs, superstitions, and factual knowledge. It turns out that the eagle and the owl together are put in opposition to the crow, as predators to scavenger, whereas they are opposed to each other at the level of day and night . . . Thus, step by step, we define a ‘universe of the tale,’ analyzable in pairs of oppositions interlocked within each character who—far from constituting a single entity—forms a bundle of distinctive features . . .” This piece appears in MSP, G31, Folder “V. Propp & Lévi-Strauss.”

<sup>60</sup> This statement about Searle’s ability is made simply by perusing his notebooks from his days as a seminary student as well as from his coursework in doctoral studies. He readily used columns and various colored pencils and pens to mark both the differences and similarities of words and phrases.

<sup>61</sup> Searle, “*Semper Reformanda*: The Opening and Closing Rites of the Roman Mass,” 54. Searle argues for careful attention to syntax, which is as technical—in terms of the semiotic world—as he will be in this piece of writing. He provides the following substantiation for his approach: “Good ritual, like good speech, requires careful attention not only to vocabulary, but also to syntax. While this analogy should not be pushed too far (for ritual is more like a full-length drama than a simple sentence), *the distinction between the process of selection (the paradigmatic axis) and the process of combination (the syntagmatic axis) of the elements is one that is fundamental to any semiotic system . . .*” Emphasis mine. See also Michel Amaladoss, “Sémiologie et Sacrement,” *La Maison-Dieu* 114 (1973) 7-35. Amaladoss regards sacrament as structure: “Considérer les sacraments comme une structure, c’est-à-dire une unite ordonnée d’éléments multiples n’est pas une découverte. Les théologiens sont habitués à diviser les éléments constituants d’un sacrement entre essentiels et non essentiels, et parmi les éléments essentiels entre la forme et la matière. . . La notion de structure et de système, comme elle est comprise dans les systèmes de communication, nous offer un modèle plus adapté à

An example of an analysis of structure can be found in the 1990 essay “*Semper Reformanda: The Opening and Concluding Rites of the Roman Mass*.” In accessible language, Searle examines the reform of the beginning and ending of the Mass, attempting to scrutinize their success or failure for “effective communication.”<sup>62</sup> Thus, in fastidious fashion, he organizes the parts of the opening rite according to their structure in: (a) the Preconciliar Mass, (b) *Ordo Romanus Primus*, (c) the schema proposed by *Coetus X* (the subgroup of the Consilium charged with the task of preparing the new Mass), and (d) the final product revealed in the 1970 *ordo missae*.<sup>63</sup> In addition to his laborious comparison of the ritual elements of these texts, Searle employs the Notre Dame Study to demonstrate how parishes in the United States are actually celebrating the opening rite. All of this produces the following results: whereas the opening rite of the Preconciliar Mass rested on the “triumph of the non-verbal,”<sup>64</sup> and while the opening rite functioned in the *Ordo Romano*

---

l’intelligence de la structure interne du rite sacramentel” (32). See also Jean-Yves Hameline, “Aspects du Rite,” *La Maison-Dieu* 119 (1974) 101-111. Hameline wishes to discuss rite as “program”: “Dans cette perspective, nous proposerions la définition suivante, que ne correspondrait bien évidemment qu’à cet angle de vue particulier: la catégorie de *rituel* désigne un ensemble de déterminations formelles, axiologiques, hétéronomiques, attachées à des procès sociaux communs (vie ‘quotidienne’, travail, relations publiques, institutions familiale, scolaire, hospitalière...) ou donnant lieu à des procès sociaux spécifiques et autonomes (pratiques proprement rituelles, ou rites) pouvant constituer un corps plus ou moins systématique de pratiques séparées” (104).

<sup>62</sup> Searle, “*Semper Reformanda: The Opening and Closing Rites of the Roman Mass*,” 54. Searle argues that the Consilium responsible for drafting the new liturgy was operating under principles that were at odds with one another: “The Council had issued a number of directives intended to enhance the communicative qualities of the liturgy of the mass, especially in SC, article 50; but it had also insisted that ‘sound tradition be retained . . . [that] there must be no innovations unless the good of the Church genuinely and certainly requires them; care must be taken that any new forms adopted should in some way grown organically from forms already existing;’ (SC, art. 23). These two sets of principles, while not necessarily irreconcilable, posed the possibility of conflict and it is the thesis of this essay that, in the later states of the reform, particularly, *the urge to conserve overwhelmed the concern for effective communication*.” Emphasis mine.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 58. He writes: “There was, therefore, a certain consistency in the messages being communicated by the opening rites of the Tridentine Mass—at least when the specific verbal contents were ignored—a consistency all the more remarkable given the haphazard and largely accidental way the elements had come together in the course of history. What secured this consistency was the *triumph of the non-verbal*: the Latin language effectively prevented close reading of the contents of the texts, while the architectural and decorative

*Primus* to establish “hierarchically structured relationships,”<sup>65</sup> and while the schema of the original draft of the *missa normativa* sought to restore the “traditional character” of the ancient pattern,<sup>66</sup> the end product simply “salvaged” elements from the Tridentine Mass with little regard for “effective communication.”<sup>67</sup> Although Searle’s analysis is far more complex than this, his conclusions that incorporate the experience of the American Church are worth reproducing at length:

The original draft of the Order of Mass (Schema 113) attempted to strike a balance between musical, verbal, and non-verbal codes. Speech was kept to a minimum, gestures were to speak for themselves.

---

features of pre-Vatican II churches worked well with the musical and ritual codes to communicate this conception of a ‘double liturgy’ of which one part was clearly official and indispensable and the other entirely subordinate and ancillary.” Emphasis mine.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 62. Searle suggests that the early Roman pattern welcomed different people doing a variety of things to all bring about a coordinated rite: “In the first place, for all the variety of individuals and groups involved, it remains a single, integrated rite. The people gather, process to the church, and take their appointed places. The suburban bishops and other clergy also take their places in the apse, and the schola assumes its place between the altar and the people. They wait. The Book of the Gospels is carried in as a holy object and placed upon the altar. The liturgy proper [begins] with the entry of the pope, to the accompaniment of the introit and its psalm sung by the schola. On arrival at the altar, the pope signals and the introit cedes to the *Kyrie*, which is sung by the schola alone, but which is a ritual chant expressing the whole assembly’s acknowledgement of the lordship of Christ. Similarly with the *Gloria*: it is sung by the choir alone, but the pope and ministers and people stand in their serried ranks facing east, looking beyond the assembly, beyond the space of the basilica, to the ‘Lord God, heavenly king, God the Father almighty.’ Finally, this solemn, imperial opening comes to a close when the pope, standing again at the head of his people, addresses God on their behalf in the name of Christ. *In effect, then, the opening rites of the OR I serve to establish various sets of hierarchically structured relationships.*” Emphasis mine.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 68-70. Searle writes: “The traditional character of these rites is patent in that the basic structure of the ancient Roman Mass has been restored: the procession accompanied by an entry chant, the greeting of the altar and of the people, the acclamatory chant (*Kyrie*, *Gloria*) and the prayer of the day. . . It constitutes a coherent syntagm, or sequence of sign-units, moving from the assembling of the faithful, through the formal entrance of the ministers and the greeting of the altar and people [with incense], to an acclamation of Christ present in the assembly and the first direct address to God in the name of all those congregated in Christ (collect).”

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 76. “The effect of the alterations and additions is not merely a simple increase in the amount of words used. The grammar of the rite has been ignored and the concern for simplicity and clarity of the symbol-structure which were to ensure effective communication has yielded to a concern to salvage as many elements of the preconciliar rite as possible.” See also Ralph A. Keifer, “Our Cluttered Vestibule: The Unreformed Entrance Rite,” *Worship* 48 (1974) 270-277. Searle cites this article which makes the claim that the entrance rite is less an example of liturgical reform and “more the result of minor tinkering” (276). Keifer states the basic problem: “The general effect is to turn the entrance rite into a series of artificially connected devotional exercises of dubious character, while dissociating the functions of the ministry of the word from its proclamation in the biblical readings. The result is a disastrous duplication of the liturgy of the word—a duplication because it anticipates it, and disastrous because of the combination of didacticism and disorder” (273).

The procession was to include all those who exercised any special ministry. The arrival at the altar and the constituting of the assembly were marked by a series of signs of respect offered both to the altar and to the congregation. Contemporary American practice, on the other hand, is marked by a tilt away from the non-verbal and from the ‘ceremonies of respect.’ In part, this is symptomatic of a cultural attitude that does not stand on ceremony, preferring informality to formality. Liturgically, this is expressed in the reluctance to ritualize the entry procession. In only about two-thirds of all Masses was there a procession through the assembly and then it invariably consisted of presider, servers, and the reader, without cross, book, or candles. Even at the main Sunday Mass, parishes rarely availed themselves of the options for solemnizing the rite: Incense was not used in any of the Masses in the parishes surveyed; the cross was carried at ten of the seventy Masses; lights at two; the lectionary or Gospel book at fourteen. The option to reverence the people with incense, or course, no longer exists, but the option to incense the altar was never used.<sup>68</sup>

The contemporary experience of the opening rite demonstrates, for Searle, that an increase of words together with a reduction of rich symbols does not serve the dynamics of healthy communication.<sup>69</sup> “[T]he present practice,” writes Searle, “is not only verbose, it also hiccups along.”<sup>70</sup>

---

<sup>68</sup> Searle, “*Semper Reformanda*: The Opening and Closing Rites of the Roman Mass,” 84-85. Finally, Searle concludes: “U.S. liturgical practice has clearly departed in significant ways from the vision which guided the liturgists charged with drawing up the new Order of Mass. Changes introduced into the blueprint between 1964 and 1969 did not improve the design, and these design weaknesses have been dramatically shown up in parochial use. Or, to switch back to our original communications model, we might say that the elegance of the ritual complex drafted by *Coetus X* was compromised by a desire to retain elements from the Tridentine structure which complicated the new structure with mixed signals and inconsistent messages. Carried out in churches designed with a different conception of the Mass in mind by people necessarily conditioned by the previous experience of the Latin Low Mass—either in clinging to it or in repudiating it—the new entry rites hardly stood a chance.”

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 78. Searle suggests that the reformers chose to reduce the “grammar” of the opening rite to words rather than relying on the power of symbols: “The net result was that the communicative efficacy of these opening rites was diminished through the heaping up, once again, of disparate elements. . . [C]ommunication seems to have been identified with the spoken word: the formula for the sign of the cross, the greeting, the introduction to the Mass of the day, the call to repentance, the penitential act, the *Kyrie*, [the *Gloria* on certain days], the call to prayer—itself open to elaboration—and finally the collect.”

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 83-84. See also page 72 where Searle talks about a “tide of verbosity.” In terms of the reform, Searle writes: “One way of reconciling the use of the vernacular with the need to ensure that new forms grew organically out of the old was to keep the verbal elements to a minimum. Since the sign of the cross was made by the ministers alone and in silence, the first spoken utterance in the Mass was the priest’s greeting of the people. The provision of two other texts (based on greetings in the Pauline Epistles), besides the traditional

Searle's treatment of the closing rites in "*Semper Reformanda*" is far less complex but deserves attention in terms of Searle's desire to demonstrate how liturgy communicates rather than simply what it communicates. Thus, he proceeds to examine two oft-experienced problems with the concluding rites of Mass: first, the "abruptness of its ending," and second, the need to "redefine the nature of silence."<sup>71</sup> With regard to the first, Searle contends that a swift conclusion is the traditional nature of the Roman Rite and that the need to incorporate additional blessings as well as congregational singing merely highlights the inherent discomfort and awkwardness with parting in general.<sup>72</sup> Arguing that the sequence of parts in the closing rites are often "jumbled," Searle continues with a second concern, namely, that silence, while being a natural desire at this point in the liturgy is usually misunderstood and therefore performed incorrectly—"from being a deep well of prayer it becomes an empty silence of waiting for something to be said or done."<sup>73</sup>

---

*Dominus vobiscum*, enhanced not only the solemnity of the greeting, but its ability to establish contact between priest and people. *However, it was the difficulty of moving without further ado into the Kyrie which initially opened a small hole through which a tide of verbosity was later to flow.*" Emphasis mine.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. These phrases are found on pages 85 and 89 respectively.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 88. "In keeping with the Roman tradition, the exit of the ministers occurs without ceremony and without accompanying chant: 'the priest and ministers, after making appropriate reverence to the altar, leave; and all return to their good works, praising God' (Schema 113). It appears that this rather informal exit was never queried or discussed at any time in the process of revising the Mass, which is rather extraordinary when the human dynamics of the situation are considered, for parting is usually found awkward unless adequately ritualized. But perhaps this is a problem only for those in German- and English-speaking countries, who apparently feel an irresistible need for a 'closing hymn' if a service is to be properly ended."

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 89. Searle describes the "jumbling" of ritual units in the closing rites in the following manner: "The source of the difficulty seems to be that there is rarely a thanksgiving song after the distribution of holy communion: one Mass out of the seventy observed had a thanksgiving song sung by the people and another had a piece sung by the choir. The preference for a period of silence is understandable, given that a song after communion will often appear as a mere duplication of the song sung during communion. Instead, people tend to kneel in silence during the communion rite and then sit down when the presider moves back to his seat. Because they are sitting at this point, it apparently seems appropriate to many presiders to make the announcements here. The congregation then stands for the postcommunion prayer and for the blessing and dismissal. As a result, the postcommunion prayer, instead of being the conclusion of the communion rite, which is its traditional role, becomes part of the dismissal of the assembly; while the silence after communion, instead of giving birth to common prayer, is abruptly terminated by the notices" (88-89).



However, it is Searle's final considerations of these "so-called 'secondary' parts of the Mass" that provide a provocative illustration of how semiotic study is capable of uncovering inconsistencies and problems in modern liturgical reform. He maintains that what is at stake is an issue of inculturation, when the "local Church attempts to make something of the texts and directives appointed for its use."<sup>74</sup> Searle writes:

This is not to suggest that one form or style of celebration is inherently better than another, but merely to point out that the freedom of choice permitted by the Order of Mass, together with a further degree of freedom not permitted but nonetheless claimed, is resulting in patterns of celebration which are actually restructuring the Roman rite and profoundly altering its character. Here we have only examined the opening and concluding rites, but these so-called "secondary" parts of the mass are crucial for defining the identity of the assembly and the nature of its common undertaking. *Consequently, the inevitable effect of restructuring both these rites is to alter the character of the Mass as a whole. . . . But this at least can be said: for better or worse, the Mass as experienced by most English-speaking Catholics today is not the Mass envisaged by those—whether scholars or pastors—charged with revising the liturgy of the Roman Mass.*<sup>75</sup>

Therefore, greater attention must be given to understanding the various forms (gesture, word, music, etc.) that serve as the "grammar" of the rite as well as the way in which these forms combine to shape the intended "syntax" of the Mass.<sup>76</sup> "Another way of putting this," Searle contends, "is to say that the Church at large needed (and perhaps still needs) the opportunity

---

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. Emphasis mine.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 90. Searle employs the example of music to suggest that rampant flexibility of musical forms will drastically change the meaning of the liturgy: "In the English-speaking world, the close control over texts and music envisaged by the Consilium were never realized. It was an exceedingly complex pastoral task, with heavy emotional, economic, and political overtones. In the U.S., the bishops wanting to encourage the creation of new liturgical music, removed virtually all constraints and effectively left the matter to the market to decide. As a result, instead of the sung liturgy envisaged by the architects of the new Mass, most English-speaking Catholics know only Low Mass with hymns or other religious songs, largely interchangeable one with another. *What has not sufficiently been grasped is the way music—however it is used—affects the structure of the liturgy itself. The choice of musical forms determines the character of the whole rite, either working with the words and actions of the liturgy or compromising them.*" Emphasis mine.

to learn the language of the rite, to be rehearsed in its grammar and syntax, formed by its spirit, before being allowed to create new dialects.”<sup>77</sup> Thus, flexibility and adaptability must be preceded by a clear understanding of both what the ritual is trying to say and how it is designed to go about saying it; “*arbitrariness is the death of meaning*.”<sup>78</sup>

A second, more definitively, semiotic analysis of a ritual unit can be found in Searle’s unpublished paper entitled “Rite for the Anointing of the Sick Outside Mass: A Semiological Analysis”<sup>79</sup> Written in 1988, this essay’s primary objective is to demonstrate how the sacramental celebrations of the Church (specifically the Rite of Anointing, in this case) may be discussed theologically in terms of “deep structure” rather than “matter and form.”<sup>80</sup> In

---

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. Searle concludes with the forward-looking suggestion that taking into consideration the various codes embodied in liturgy as well as the way in which these codes work together to provide meaning is the level to which those responsible for “translating” the liturgy at the local level and at the macro level need to move: “Given that these developments were not intended by those entrusted with drawing up the new Order of Mass, and given that they have occurred less by deliberate choice than by unreflected evolution, one wonders whether, two decades later, some public evaluation of the outcome is not called for. Perhaps the mandate of the International Commission on English in the Liturgy should now be extended beyond the text of the Mass to include the translation and inculturation of those other ritual codes touched on here. Their role in effective ritual communication may not have been as obvious as that of the spoken word, but their impact on the shape of celebration has proved surely no less significant.”

<sup>79</sup> See Mark Searle, “The Rite for the Anointing of the Sick Outside Mass: A Semiological Analysis,” in MSP. Searle argues that his semiological analysis is founded on three principles: “First, it will attend, not to particular parts of the rite as such, but to the rite as a whole, working on the principle that, just as a sentence cannot be understood by isolating individual words, so the parts of a rite likewise find their proper meaning when seen in the larger context of the whole rite. This will preclude any a priori judgment as to what is essential or inessential in the rite. Second, the semiologist is less interested in particular utterances than in the language system which makes such utterances possible and which is theoretically retrievable from a study of all possible utterance in a given language. From a ritual point of view, this means that our focus will be on the rite as a program for performance, not on any particular celebration of the rite. We shall therefore prescind from any consideration of the way in which the rite may be affected by the particular circumstances in which it is used, looking rather to see whether, from a close reading of the text, we can say anything about its potential for ritual enactment, how it might be expected to communicate when actually used. Third, semiology looks at a system as a totality whose meaning is discoverable within its own parameters. A story, or a literary corpus, should be intelligible on its own terms, without reference to external sources if it makes any sense at all. This is in no way to denigrate the value of liturgical history and liturgical theology for an adequate understanding of a contemporary rite, but since this is an exercise in semiological method we shall dispense with these other methodologies in this paper” (1-2).

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 3. Searle defines “deep structure” in terms of relationships: “the identification and transformation of relationships between God and the gathered people, between the sick and the healthy, between sin and sickness

other words, Searle hopes to demonstrate how meaning is conveyed in what the ritual accomplishes, i.e. the transformation of relationships.<sup>81</sup>

Searle clearly identifies that from the outset of the rite of anointing, the issue of establishing and affirming relationships is critical. Thus, the greeting, which might often be considered of minor importance, plays a primary role: “The people here gathered, formalize their relationship for the purpose of this transaction—despite, perhaps their previous introduction and prior acquaintance—by invoking and accepting a formula which reciprocally identifies them in their role as Christians.”<sup>82</sup> The instruction, which follows and employs the exhortation from James commanding the community to summon elders for the anointing, serves to establish the Lord’s mandate to the community, and as Searle contends, functions as an “institutional narrative”:

In short, the “instruction” is really an institution narrative, grounding the ritual performance which is about to be undertaken by this (as yet)

---

and grace and the overcoming of sickness, between the individual and the community, between Christ and the *ecclesia*.”

<sup>81</sup> See André Fossion, “Structural Readings of Scripture in Catechesis,” *Lumen Vitae* 33 (1978) 446-470. Fossion calls the text a “texture of significant relations” and writes: “The text is, in fact, seen as an intertwining of threads, woven together and forming a texture, as on a loom. The text brings into mutual relationship a whole series of elements. Each of these elements is significant through its multiple connections with other elements. This conception of the text as *texture* helps us to see the old problem of form and content in a very different light. For, from the structural standpoint, the reading in *depth* (i.e. the content *behind* the form) is replaced by a *lateral reading*. The meaning no longer lies *behind*, in a *hinterland*, but takes shape or form to the extent that one grasps the (lateral) relations between the elements of the text. In these circumstances, reading consists in tracing a path between the elements of the text, in locating circuits, and in establishing relevant tracks. It is only then that the significations spring forth, that the text becomes alive and meaning takes shape, circulates, proliferates. Reading is a matter of entering into this sport of the written text.”

<sup>82</sup> Searle, “The Rite for the Anointing of the Sick Outside Mass: A Semiological Analysis,” 5. Searle continues: “It [the greeting] thus establishes the framework, or set of identifications, which will be assumed by the participants until the Rite is over and the self-conscious ‘we-are-Christians’ role can be safely laid aside. Thus the greeting also serves as a cue or signal to those present that they are now to embark upon a new course of joint action, which will require the adoption of a new *persona* on everybody’s part” (5-6). Furthermore, the rite of sprinkling immediately after the greeting serves to affirm the community’s identity in Christ. As Searle contends: “The members of the group are all identified, without distinction as yet, as a baptized people destined to be the beneficiaries of the promised ‘living water,’ ‘stream of grace,’ and ‘redemption’ which are identified as being in Christ’s power to give us. It is important to underline the fact that, at this stage, the community-coming-to-be remains undifferentiated. It will only be with subsequent ritual steps that certain differentiations appear . . .” (8).

undifferentiated community: those assembled are to commend the sick to Christ as the elders did; the Lord will anoint the sick through the mediation of this community and will raise them up. Thus this “instruction” assumes an extremely important function in the unfolding of the rite, a function so important that one must wonder about the wisdom of permitting the priest to use “these or similar words,” (and one must wonder still how a collect incorporating the James text can be said to be saying or doing the same thing when its addressee is not the community, but God.) . . . If the “instruction” is not retained very clearly as an institution narrative grounding the performance of the anointing and its efficacy, the very identity of the Rite must surely be jeopardized.<sup>83</sup>

All of the introductory work of the rite is brought to a close in the penitential rite whereby the community accepts the Lord’s mandate by pleading for forgiveness. In this way “distance is overcome, so that they can act ‘in the name of the Lord’.”<sup>84</sup> Having been reminded successfully of its identity and its commission, the assembly is now open to hearing God’s Word.

Thus, Searle turns to the Liturgy of the Word and examines the reading of Mark 2:1-12 (the story of the paralytic) by dissecting it into four “narrative segments.”<sup>85</sup> Searle’s analysis essentially demonstrates how the use of the biblical text in the rite of anointing is to

---

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 11. Searle sums up what has occurred in the rite thus far—greeting-sprinkling-instruction: “So far, then, we have seen that the people gathered at the sickbed are assembled and identified by the Greeting as Christians. This role-assumption is then further manifested as one of dependence upon Christ in the rite of sprinkling. The particular consequences of dependence upon Christ as Subject are then spelled out in the performative language of the ‘instruction,’ which publishes the Lord’s mandate regarding what is to be done in the circumstance in which they now find themselves and invites them to accept that mandate. In the terminology of structural analysis, the praying community (PC), which is generally in the role of Receiver of redemption from Christ, now accepts the mandate and itself moves into the role of Subject or Co-Subject with Christ, putting the sick person into the role of Receiver. Thus, for the first time, differentiation is introduced into the praying community; and it is a differentiation not between priest and laity, but between the community (including the priest) and the sick person who becomes the focus of the community’s Christ-mandated activity from now on” (11-12).

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 15-19.

allow the community to recognize further its identity.<sup>86</sup> “The act of reading this text in an assembly of believers,” writes Searle, “is an effective anamnesis of the efficacious word of God manifest in the person, words and actions of Jesus.”<sup>87</sup> Thus, when the Gospel passage is proclaimed in the midst of the assembly, the objective of the story is less about the paralytic regaining the ability to walk as it is “the transformation of the mute crowd, deprived of the word of God, into a company of witnesses.”<sup>88</sup> The outcome of the reading of God’s Word, especially when silent meditation and a homily follows, is to allow the assembly to reaffirm its faith commitment and to realize its competence to act in Christ and to be renewed in relationship with the one who is to be anointed.<sup>89</sup>

---

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 18. Searle writes: “The crowd, hungry for the (undefined) word, because of their (undefined) lack, receives that word, is astonished, and responds to the word in praise of God, the Sender of Jesus. . . . The body of the narrative, however, is constituted by a sequence of events which serve to identify the nature of the word brought by Jesus (and thus the nature of the crowd’s lack which makes them need that word), and it also says something about how that word is to be received.”

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 19. Searle continues by suggesting that the community assumes all the roles represented in the Gospel passage: “Vis-à-vis Jesus, (now ‘present among us’) the assembly gathered for this Rite assumes the roles of the crowd, the paralytic, the friends of the paralytic and the scribes. . . . In other words, God once again commits himself in Christ with a promise of a speech-act that forgives, heals and restores. At the same time, since what matters is not the individuality of historical actors but the paradigmatic identification of actantial roles, the assembly is simultaneously invited to assume the role of the friends of the paralytic and to recognize the danger of playing the role of the scribes. *As those present move to assume those roles, the narrative, because paradigmatic, will begin to unfold all over again in their midst, developing through the same successive stages of (a) proclamation; (b) forgiveness of sins; (c) raising of the sick; (d) testimony.*” Emphasis mine.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 20. Searle maintains that the Word of God performs in such a way that the “undefined” lack of the assembly is now reversed by “fulfillment”: “First, the ‘word’ is an action, or a series of actions: God reveals by acting in Christ for the salvation of humanity, with the result that people are transformed from a negative state of lack (Receivers) to a positive state of fulfillment, which in turn implies their moving into the role of Subject. Second, it is to be noted that the word-events recounted in the Gospel in the past tense are accepted by the community here and now as performatives, as God’s promise to this group. God may be held to his word” (21).

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 21. Searle places great importance on the opportunity for silent meditation and homiletic reinforcement: “The period of silent reflection and the homily that follow would seem to provide the community with an opportunity to lay hold of that promise and to reflect upon how it transforms their situation. *Thus the logic of the Rite requires that it involve meditation upon the images which re-describe their present state (deprivation, alienation, paralysis, blindness, death, imprisonment) and the promised outcome of the ritual performance (walking, forgiveness, testimony; or sight, aliveness, blessedness).* It will also involve reaffirmation of faith (desire and confidence) vis-à-vis the God who saves in Christ. Finally, it will require a heightened awareness of the way that salvation is to be mediated through the symbolic substitution of

After the Liturgy of the Word, the Liturgy of Anointing commences with a litany that serves as the community's move to fulfill the Lord's mandate to pray for the sick. In other words, the litany does not serve as a response to God's Word as such, but rather, it now seeks to enact what the Lord commanded it to do in the opening instruction (what Searle labeled the "institution narrative").<sup>90</sup> While Searle does not address the laying on of hands that immediately follows the litany, he labors at great length to break down the prayer over the oil into several "narrative statements."<sup>91</sup> It is in this prayer that relationships are clearly both identified and ratified; even the oil is to be interpreted relationally:

Looked at in terms of the overall dynamic of the whole Rite, the function of this prayer is once again to demonstrate that the present ritual action of prayer and anointing is grounded upon the paradigm of the Christ-event. The continuity between past and present is further established by the references to "consolation." It was the "God of consolation" who sent Christ to heal the sick: the same God is now asked to "send the power of your Holy Spirit, the Consoler, into this precious oil. This mention of the oil raises the question of what is actually being done to the oil: what does it mean to "bless" the oil? In terms of performative theory, the "performative force" of the blessing would seem to be to establish the oil in a specific and significant role in terms of the convention being invoked (the anointing).<sup>92</sup>

Turning to the ritual gesture of anointing, Searle draws a parallel between the words of the formula used during the anointing and the text from James employed at the opening of the

---

themselves for Christ in the ritual act, with all the consequences that entails for their on-going sense of responsibility towards the sick person." Emphasis mine.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 23. Regarding the litany, Searle writes: "In summary, it may be said that the structure of the Litany reveals a two-fold attribution. On the one hand, the 'healing' of the sick is attributed to the work of God, who alone is assigned the ability to strengthen, pardon, protect, etc. On the other hand, the 'healing' is also attributed to the community, insofar as it acts towards the sick person 'in the name of the Lord'."

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 26.

rite in the instruction.<sup>93</sup> Then, after comparing the English translation of the formula to the Latin original as well as to the old form in the 1614 *Rituale Romanum*, Searle offers the critique that the new ritual is actually quite “weak” at this point because it does not clearly label the source of the struggle for the sick person; in the previous rite, “Satan” was the culprit, but the new rite fails to name the source and only speaks of being “freed” from sin and “raised up.”<sup>94</sup> What is at stake here, for Searle is that in the absence of a character role for “Satan,” the Christian imagination will struggle with the presence of Christ, who acts to destroy that character in the story’s plot: “Christian tradition flourished in the imaginative scenario of a continual struggle between Christ and the forces of evil, a struggle which was not limited to the death-bed, but was already joined in the rites of initiation and was pursued through the daily prayers and rituals of Christian living.”<sup>95</sup> Next, Searle organizes in columns the many images gleaned from all seven collects (Prayer after Anointing), noting that “taken together, then, they define what the community expects as the effect of the

---

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 29-30. “The priest anoints the forehead of the sick person, saying: ‘Through this holy anointing may the Lord in his love and mercy help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit.’ The anointing of the hands follows immediately: ‘May the Lord who frees you from sin save you and raise you up.’ If one identifies the key words in these formulae—‘anointing,’ ‘Lord,’ ‘save,’ ‘raise us,’ ‘frees you from sin’—one can immediately see that the formula is deliberately and closely modeled upon the James text, i.e. it self-consciously fulfills the command of the Lord Jesus Christ as handed on by James. This is particularly noticeable when the expected effects are identified. At this crucial moment, the ritual refrains from any elaboration on the desired effects, such as has been seen in the Litany and the blessing and will be seen again in the concluding prayer, being content to use the terms used by James.”

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 33. Searle writes: “The problem of the unidentified dialectic is this. The old rite is semantically strong because it pits Christ against Satan, whereas the new rite is weak because it fails to indicate the contraries of Christ, community, and prayer of faith. Given this empty space, some may fill it with ‘Satan,’ which restores the dialectic of the old rite, but others are more likely to fill it with abstract terms relating to the psychological state of the sick person, such as ‘loneliness,’ ‘silence’ or ‘doubt.’ . . . By emphasizing the role of the community and of its faith (expressed in prayer) the PC certainly moves into the active role of Subject—or Co-Subject with Christ—but the role of Christ is more problematical. To grasp the role of Christ present and acting in the community requires a more refined religious imagination if this is to be done without the help of a corresponding negative *persona*.”

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 33-34.

invocation of the convention.”<sup>96</sup> Finally, Searle scrutinizes the placement of the Lord’s Prayer in the ritual, which follows the Prayer after Anointing, and concludes that it serves as the community moving out of its role as “Co-Subject with Christ” back into its “undifferentiated state.”<sup>97</sup> Relationships have been transformed as the community acknowledges together with the sick person their common dependence upon God.<sup>98</sup>

Finally, Searle concludes his semiotic study of the rite of anointing by commenting briefly on the fourth part of the liturgy, properly called the Concluding Rite, and then by making several observations about the effects of ritual anointing. Regarding the four options for the concluding blessing, Searle notes that the English translations are preferable to the Latin originals because “they fail to distinguish between the sick person and the rest of the community”—the rite has moved from specific roles to return to an “undifferentiated assembly.”<sup>99</sup> Furthermore, he observes that the final blessing offers little in the way of “meaning-content” but acts rather as a “social convention”: the purpose of the blessing “is

---

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 38. “What is the function of the Lord’s Prayer at this point in the rite? Often it will immediately precede Communion and will doubtless receive its interpretation from that, but it is to be noted that it is to be said at this point whether or not Communion follows. Located after the anointing and after the collect which follows the anointing, the Lord’s Prayer occupies a place on the downside of the rite, if the prayer and anointing are considered its climax. In reciting this prayer together, (the Latin is emphatic: *nunc autem una simul Deum deprecemur*), the community seems to begin to withdraw from its actantial role as co-Subject with Christ in his work of healing, to identify once again with the sick brother/sister in seeking the communication of such gifts as daily bread, forgiveness of sin, protection and deliverance from evil, i.e. the community begins to return to its undifferentiated state.”

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 39. With regard to renewed relationships and the Lord’s Prayer, Searle writes: “In saying this prayer, then, the PC moves out of its role of co-Subject with Christ to assume the role of co-Receiver with the sick person. In identifying with the sick, the PC acknowledges its own dependence upon God for bread, forgiveness and protection, confident that the power, glory and rule of God will be made visible in a situation characterized by the explicit confrontation with and acknowledgement of human weakness.”

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 40. The Latin texts are directed specifically to the sick person.



not to communicate information, but to bring about a new state of affairs, viz. the dissolution of the group in its explicit role as a praying community of Christians.”<sup>100</sup>

To bring the essay to a conclusion, Searle examines whether or not his “non-theological method” can provide insight on the theological dimensions (effects) of the sacrament.<sup>101</sup> Thus, Searle makes it clear that the rite, like all sacraments, is not one of “physical causality” but rather “symbolic causality,” with the effect being “to redefine the way specific persons or objects are regarded and related to within a specific social context.”<sup>102</sup> Searle offers the following assessment:

[W]e have seen in our analysis of the Rite, the ritual performance puts participants through their paces in the reenactment of specific ritual roles. The community for its part assumes the role of Christ vis-à-vis the sick person, while the sick person adopts the role of one visited by and ministered to by Christ. This is not a theological assertion, but merely a synopsis of the *dramatis personae* derived from a careful reading of the ritual as it unfolds. In both instances, by demanding of the different participants that they say and do certain things in the

---

<sup>100</sup> Ibid. Searle distinguishes the final “blessing” from the “blessing” over the oil: “The Blessing of Oil is a convention which establishes enduring status for this oil in the context of Christian sickness. The final blessing of ‘the sick person and others present,’ on the other hand, releases participants from their ‘sacred’ roles. They are now free to relapse into ordinary conversation, concern themselves with ordinary affairs and, if necessary and appropriate, depart. . . . Thus the prayer after anointing, the Lord’s Prayer and the final blessing serve to effect a transition back to the everyday world, acting as a sort of decompression chamber between the world of the rite and the world of the everyday.”

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 41. Searle writes: “Before concluding this study, it seems worth asking whether the non-theological methods we have used can shed any light on the theologically fractious questions of the effects of the sacrament. Throughout, we have treated the Rite for the Anointing of the Sick as an instance of conventional behavior, a ritual procedure invoked by a particular community in specific circumstances. Consequently, whatever can now be said about the effects of the Rite must also be governed by the same non-theological perspectives.”

<sup>102</sup> Ibid. Searle also asserts: “The effects of symbolic causality are no less real than the effects of physical causality, but they operate at a different level, at the level of the specifically human, at the level of meaning. . . . The stranger is greeted, two single persons are married, candidates become graduates, the accused is found guilty. In each instance an appropriate procedure is invoked by appropriate persons in appropriate circumstances *and there is an immediate reordering of the relationships between the parties involved and between them and the larger society*” (41-42). Emphasis mine. See also Mark Searle, “Symbolic Causality” in MSP, G56, Folder “Ritual: Symbolic Causality.” This is a class handout dated March 19, 1989 in which Searle tries to work through how semiotics aids the notion of sacraments resting on “symbolic” causality: “A central problem since the time of Augustine, certain since the scholastics has been to relate the role of sacraments as signs to their role as causes” (1).

course of the Rite, the *conventional procedure which they are acting out involves them in a series of self-involving speech-acts which commit them to certain attitudes (thoughts, feelings, intentions) which are valid and demanded not only for the duration of the ritual itself, but beyond it.* These would include the appropriation of Christian identity (mentioned above), the defining of life within the terms of covenant, submission to and dependence upon Christ, (though this is done in different ways by the sick members of the community and by the rest of the community), a redescription of what sickness is, and therefore a reevaluation of how it is to be confronted, within the framework of the Christian *mythos*. *Thus the Rite directs the thoughts, feelings and intentions of the participants in specific ways which may modify or renew the ways in which they relate to God, Christ, the sick person, one another and life itself.*<sup>103</sup>

Acknowledging that the effects mentioned above are not generally the topic of theological discussion, which tends to focus on the meaning of the terms “save” and “raise up,” as well as the relationship between healing and the forgiveness of sins, Searle contends that semiotic study serves to “enlarge” the meaning of these theological categories as it interprets the Rite as more than the act of anointing; it is the fulfillment of a mandate given by Christ.<sup>104</sup>

“Because of this,” Searle writes, “the effectiveness of the Rite . . . depends upon the willingness and the desire of the gathered community to act *in nomine et persona Christi*, being prompted and guided in so doing by the Rite itself and motivated particularly by the reading of Christian Scriptures.”<sup>105</sup> A final semiotic claim that Searle makes regarding the

---

<sup>103</sup> Searle, “The Rite for the Anointing of the Sick Outside Mass: A Semiological Analysis,” 43. Emphases mine. Searle continues to demonstrate how the rite concretely rehearses Christian attitudes: “For example, Christ is related to specifically as the agent of God’s victory over sin and sickness, in a way which reveals a different aspect of Christ from that manifested in, say, Christian marriage. *But the attitudes rehearsed in the Rite demand to be followed through.* The care for the sick person and the sick person’s readiness to be ministered to, which are enacted in the Rite, would seem to be incompatible with subsequent neglect of the sick person or with continuing resentment on the part of the patient. . . . *The Rite is effectual not because it produces such after-effects, but because it claims them for participants.* . . . Treating a liturgy as a social convention (whose claims on participants are only strengthened by the dimension of ultimacy provided by the ‘religious’ character of the ritual), with close attention to the outlooks and attitudes to which participants commit themselves in the course of the rite, helps us to be more precise and specific in talking about the relationship of liturgy to life” (43-44). Emphases mine.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 44-45.

Rite is that its ultimate effectiveness is found in the “testimony” of all those who participated in the Rite, as it has transformed the relationships of all participants.<sup>106</sup>

### ***Semiotics Applied to Prayer Texts***

As suggested in the previous section, one of the primary contributions of semiotics to the field of liturgical studies is its ability to derive meaning of ritual units through an analysis of ritual structure. In this case, the method involves studying all codes of communication involved in the particular ritual: language, gestures, movement, silence, etc. However, it is also possible to perform a semiotic analysis on isolated prayer texts. In this case, the relationship of words and phrases in the text becomes the primary means of identifying meaning rather than the function of the prayer in the context of a larger ritual program.

While Searle’s proposed focus of study for his sabbatical year included a semiotic analysis of the Rite of Infant Baptism, his end result proved to be considerably more modest. Instead of examining the entire rite, Searle discovered merit in analyzing the prayer text for the Blessing of Water, with his findings subsequently published in essay form under the title “*Fons Vitae: A Case Study in the Use of Liturgy as a Theological Source.*”<sup>107</sup> In this

---

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 48-49. Suggesting that “testimony” is given when people discover the meaning of the rite, Searle contends: “The claim that the efficacy of the rite depends upon community consensus as to its meaning will sound reductionistic unless it is remembered that this is a semiotic claim, not a theological one. Throughout this essay, we have been at pains to restrict ourselves to a semiotic analysis of the system of meanings revealed by the text and within the text. In other words, we have done no more than offer a close reading of the text. It remains for the sacramental theologians to work out the theological implications of this reading and to decide whether the insights gleaned from a semiological analysis of the Church’s rite square with customary theological understanding of the sacrament. Should there at any point appear a discrepancy between semiological reading and theological tradition, it will need to be decided whether this is the result of a defective reading of the ritual text or of the tendency, often remarked, of sacramental theology to stray too far from its object, the liturgical celebration of the rite.”

<sup>107</sup> See Mark Searle, “*Fons Vitae: A Case Study in the Use of Liturgy as a Theological Source,*” in *In the Fountain of Life*, Ed. Gerard Austin, 217-242 (Washington, D.C.: The Pastoral Press, 1991). Reprinted in *Vision: The Scholarly Contributions of Mark Searle to Liturgical Renewal*, Eds. Anne Koester and Barbara

particular essay, as the title suggests, Searle's use of semiotics may help to substantiate liturgy as a credible theological source. Thus, he sets out to eradicate the suspicion which he articulates in the following anecdote: "Theologians, for their part, while accepting the *lex orandi* in principle, mostly seem to look at the liturgy as a townsman might look at a milk cow, uncertain at which end to begin to exploit its potential."<sup>108</sup>

Crediting the Paris School and the method of A.J. Greimas, in particular, Searle contends that by examining a prayer text as a narrative form, thereby probing beneath the images found in the text, it is possible to determine the "deep structures" that reveal the foundational values and thus the prayer's ultimate meaning.<sup>109</sup> In this case, Searle suggests that rather than exploring the organizational structure of the prayer (as he did in his work with ritual-units), it is necessary to concentrate on the narrative form of the prayer. Thus, what Searle is doing is abandoning a typical theological analysis of the text in favor of

---

Searle, 208-230 (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2004). See also Joncas, "Introduction to '*Fons Vitae*: A Case Study in the Use of Liturgy as a Theological Source,'" 206-207. Joncas writes: "What is prophetic about Mark Searle's article is his recognition that taking liturgical worship as humanly significant behavior demands accounting for a vast number of codes interacting in a variety of ways to produce meaning. He recognized that earlier forms of liturgical studies had concentrated almost totally on the texts of worship (their historical development and theological content) without recognizing that the meaning of these texts can be reinforced, interacted with, or subverted by other codes operating in the same event (e.g., the ritual performance of a Eucharistic prayer in which alternation of speech and singing may highlight certain texts and downplay others, ritual gestures during the Institution Narrative may dramatize the action of the Last Supper thus removing the text from a prayer addressed to God the Father to a drama performed for the congregation-as-audience, or having the clergy stand while the laity kneel during most of the recitation of the prayer constrains the meaning of 'We thank you for counting us worthy to stand at your altar and serve you.') *While many liturgical scholars instinctively attended to some of these text/nontext yokings (gendered roles, posture, gesture, locomotion, color, time, spatial deployment, etc.), Searle called for a rigorous accounting for all the coded interactions, even though he himself seemed most comfortable doing textual and gestural analysis.*" Emphasis mine.

<sup>108</sup> Searle, "*Fons Vitae*: A Case Study in the Use of Liturgy as a Theological Source," 217.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 220. Searle writes: "Within a text, too, there are different levels at which contrasts and oppositions are operative. In the method we will use here—that of the Paris School, associated with A.J. Greimas,—it is customary to distinguish the form of the signifier from the form of the signified and to focus on the latter. (In other words, we shall not examine the presentation and lay-out of the blessing, but the form of its semantic content). *Within the form of the content, there are three levels: That of the discourse (the images employed by the text), that of the narrative which underlies the images and organizes them to reflect a certain logical sequence, and that of the 'deep structures' or underlying values that account for the fact that this text says what it says.*" Emphasis mine.

inquiry at the level of narrativity, with the goal being to demonstrate the great value of the *lex orandi* as a theological source.<sup>110</sup>

Searle begins his semiotic analysis of the text of the Blessing of Water by spelling out the distinction between enunciation (the “act of saying”) and utterance (“what is said”) as well as revealing that he will examine the prayer through the phases of the “canonical narrative schema”: mandate—competence—performance—sanction.<sup>111</sup> Searle sees these phases at work in the Blessing of Water in the following description:

---

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 217-218. At the outset of the essay, Searle summarizes the argument which opposes the *lex orandi* as a viable theological source made by Herbert Vorgrimler in 1986. See Herbert Vorgrimler, “Die Liturgie al Thema der Dogmatik,” in *Liturgie—eine vergessenes Thema der Theologie?*, Ed. Klemens Richter (Freiburg: Herder, 1986) 113-127. The problem, Searle contends, lies in the movement(s) of liturgy: from God to the Church (katabatic) and from the Church to God (anabatic), with Christ usually understood as the mediator between the two. However, what about other transactions between God and humankind? Are they less grace-filled just because they are outside the boundaries of liturgy. As Searle writes: “The problem, as Vorgrimler sees it, lies in the claim that the liturgy possesses an efficacy beyond any other kind of divine-human transaction, and that the movement of God to humankind is in some sense more particularly reliable in the liturgy than elsewhere.” Thus, Searle asks: “Does the liturgy in fact give ground for thinking that there is an anabatic and a katabatic dimension, and that the latter is somehow automatic?” This question provides the groundwork for his semiotic analysis of the text of the Blessing of Water. See also Mark Searle and Kenneth W. Stevenson, *Documents of the Marriage Liturgy* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1992). Although the contents of this book do not reflect Searle’s interest in semiotics, it is clearly an example of the *lex orandi* serving as a theological source. In the conclusion, Searle writes: “Once the possibility of full, conscious, and active participation in a sacramental marriage is established, then the kind of vision offered by these rites comes into play. They offer, we have tried to suggest, elements for a theology of marriage in which the validity of the experience of married people is fully accepted and provides a context of faith in which to interpret such experience. In doing so, they provide a timely reminder of the objectivity of the married state, work to counter an excessive psychologization of the married relationship, restore a sense of marriage as a vocation to be followed in faith and fidelity, and thus propose a view of marriage as a salvific reality, a participation in the dying and rising of Christ” (269-270). See also Paul Covino, “Introduction to ‘Marriage Rites as Documents of Faith: Notes for a Theology of Marriage’,” in *Vision: The Scholarly Contributions of Mark Searle to Liturgical Renewal*, Eds. Anne Koester and Barbara Searle, 231-234 (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2004). Covino writes: “Pastorally, Mark Searle’s attention to marriage rites as documents of faith contributed to a growing awareness that the *Rite of Marriage* was a valuable source of reflection for both engaged and married couples. . . . Similarly, the largely untapped arena of pastoral care with recently married couples could find in the texts and ritual actions of the wedding liturgy excellent fodder for mystagogical reflection on the lived reality of Christian marriage” (233). See also Mark Searle, “Review of *Nuptial Blessings: A Study of Christian Marriage Rites*,” *Worship* 58 (1984) 72-75. While Searle praises Kenneth Stevenson’s work, he also makes it clear that it calls out for a “companion volume,” which *Marriage Documents* eventually fulfills: “Stevenson is right to point out the need to tip the scales in the direction of euchology where marriage is concerned, lest it be left merely to canonists and casuists, sexologists and pop-psychologists. The liturgical-historical contribution to a theology of marriage has hardly begun. Perhaps one may be permitted to express the hope that this scholarly offspring of Stevenson will be the first of several and that he will live to see his children’s children unto the third and fourth generations” (74-75).

The past acts of God were performances for which God was motivated and competent and which reach their final stage (sanction, or acknowledgement of what has transpired) in the liturgy itself. The future acts of God presume the same motivation and competence and will in turn be sanctioned. Between past and future narrative sequences (both of which, note are only alluded to in fragmentary fashion in many prayers) there intervenes the ritual present and the unfolding timeline in which the praying community (PC) acts as a subject mandating a new performance or series of performances from God. *The importance of all this is that it shows how the narrativity of the rite goes far beyond its allusions to stories past and future (the utterance, or what is said) to incorporate the community itself into a larger or higher level narrative line. By prayer, then, the praying community (PC) enters into salvation history.*<sup>112</sup>

Searle goes on to suggest that the text for the Blessing of Water is basically an act of “manipulation” specifically in three ways: the text manipulates the community by providing what the community is to say and how it is to say it; the praying community manipulates God to follow through on the action intended by the rite; and the praying community manipulates the water to provide sanction of God’s action.<sup>113</sup> In the case of this last “manipulation,” the prayer of blessing verifies the work of God; it gives praise and glory to God for the action that God will accomplish in the waters. “The ‘blessing of water’,” Searle writes, “is a prayer for the fruitful celebration of the rite which is about to follow, a prayer whose main theme is precisely that the divine activity accompany the ritual activity which signifies it.”<sup>114</sup>

---

<sup>111</sup> Searle, “*Fons Vitae: A Case Study in the Use of Liturgy as a Theological Source*,” 223. Placing the prayer in the framework of the “canonical narrative schema,” Searle writes: “This schema, common to all narratives, and without which narratives would lapse into absurdity, consists of four phases, each one of which logically supposes the others: mandate – competence – performance – sanction. Any performance logically supposes a Subject of the performance who is mandated or motivated for it and who has the necessary resources and know-how (‘competence’) to carry it out. After the performance is completed, the sanction phase consists of the recognition of the Subject’s performance and of the new state of affairs which it brings about.” See also Appendix 5, *Handouts on Semiotics*, “Semiotics: Getting Started,” 4. Here Searle spells out in concise form the phases of the narrative. Also, see above pages 257-258.

<sup>112</sup> Searle, “*Fons Vitae: A Case Study in the Use of Liturgy as a Theological Source*,” 223-224. Emphasis mine.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 233.

In the end, Searle returns to Vorgrimler's objection regarding liturgy as being an automatic source of God's grace (which limits God's freedom), concluding that Vorgrimler may, in fact, "be jousting at windmills created by sacramental theologians dealing with the issue in abstraction from the liturgy itself."<sup>115</sup> Searle argues that the value of applying semiotics to prayer texts (here the Blessing of Water) is precisely its ability to reveal the "deep structures" of the relationship between signifier (Praying Community) and signified (God in action):

In the final analysis, (again, semiotically speaking), that is the point of recalling the past performances of God, the baptism, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and the mandate to baptize. Not only does the Praying Community affirm the truthfulness of the narratives it has inherited, and thus the truthfulness and competence of the God who features in them, but, on the basis of such conviction, persuades *itself* that the semiosis between the "rich symbol" and the grace of participation in Christ's paschal mystery can be relied upon.<sup>116</sup>

Semiotic analysis alleviates the question as to whether or not God will act and ultimately leads to the question as to whether or not the praying community will enter into the duties of

---

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 235. He continues: "In that sense, it might be more precise to speak of a 'prayer for the blessing of the water-rite', where 'blessing' is understood precisely as the 'katabatic' dimension of the rite, as opposed to the 'anabatic' dimension represented by the blessing of God by the PC."

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 236. In defense of drawing theology from the liturgy, Searle continues: "A text, of course is not the whole liturgy, and one must be willing to concede the influence of sacramental theology on liturgical practice and sacramental discipline. The very way theologians have posed the question of how the sacraments 'work' has contributed to a minimalizing of the sacramental signs in practice. Nonetheless, the faith of the patristic church is preserved in such older prayers as the one we have studied and must claim a larger authority than theological speculations over matter and form, efficient causality, instrumental causality, and so forth." See also Irwin, *Context and Text: Method in Liturgical Theology*, Chapter 5, "Euchology," 176-218. Here Irwin works out in careful detail how liturgical texts are source material for theology. For example, he writes: "Prayer texts do not remain on the level of historical description or merely retell the story of the birth, life, death and resurrection. They always specify how in the liturgy the community shares in the same salvation won for us, which once for all experience is now a new reality of salvation. . . . To suggest that these texts are *normative* does not mean that they have not or cannot be changed. . . . What remains normative, however, is the *theology* of the way euchology underscores the reality of divine/human interchange leading to identification of and more importantly (through the liturgy) *with* the paschal mystery as *the* mystery of faith" (186-187).

<sup>116</sup> Searle, "*Fons Vitae: A Case Study in the Use of Liturgy as a Theological Source*," 237.

relationship as intended by the ritual performance.<sup>117</sup> What is expressed in liturgical texts, when proclaimed in the assembly of the Church, is the dynamics of mutual trust: trust that God will act (with competence bestowed in previous acts), and trust that the Church will be transformed (as it displays the faith to carry out the ritual act). “In that sense,” writes Searle, “the prayers of the liturgy are not only expressions of faith, but *rehearsals of faith*, establishing a relationship of trust between the believers and God on the basis of which the sacramental signs may be taken seriously as effecting what they signify.”<sup>118</sup>

As suggested in “*Fons Vitae*,” a fundamental benefit of performing a semiotic analysis on a prayer text is its ability to articulate a relationship between the Sender of the prayer (the “enunciator”) and the Receiver of the prayer (the “enunciatee”).<sup>119</sup> Instead of being narratives, in the strict sense of the word, liturgical prayers function to “transform those who use them into actors in a larger narrative in which the act of praying is one

---

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 239. Searle writes: “The ecclesial status resulting from the rite is a sign of (and ought thus to be correlated with) an intersubjective relationship with God, just as the ritual celebration of the church is a sign of (and ought therefore to be correlated with) the forging of that relationship with God. . . . It is precisely this more-than-conventional quality of the relationship (expressed as ‘grace’ or ‘participation in the divine life’) which requires a faith that transcends simple belief in the conventional efficacy of the rite, a faith that opens the participants (community and candidates) to an intersubjective relationship with God. It is for this reason that the ‘blessing of baptismal water’ comes where it does in the liturgy: preceded by the readings of the word of God in the Vigil and followed by a collective renunciation of Satan and a personal profession of faith in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, in the holy church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting.”

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 238. Emphasis mine. See also A.J. Greimas, “Knowing and Believing: A Single Cognitive Universe,” in *On Meaning: Selected Writings in Semiotic Theory*, Trans. Paul J. Perron and Frank H Collins, 165-179 (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1987). Greimas argues that trust is an essential part of veridiction: “Our hypothesis consists in claiming that sanction—or the epistemic presupposition in the case of the instance producing the utterance—must be interpreted as an adhesion of the proposed utterance to that portion of the cognitive universe to which it formally corresponds. Further, this sanction will choose the ‘fiduciary’ or ‘logical’ variant of its structure within this formal locus” (174).

<sup>119</sup> See Mark Searle, “Between Utterance and Enunciation: Towards a Semiotics of Prayer Texts,” (Published in *Gelukkig de mens’ Opstellen over psalmen. Exegese en semiotiek aangeboden aan Nico Tromp*, Eds. P. Beentjes et al., 193-211 [The Netherlands: J.H. Kok, 1991]). The references that follow are taken from the original draft which he submitted for publication, and thus, the pagination will not reflect the published form. Acknowledging that he is not the first to apply semiotics to prayer texts, Searle writes: “While a number of experiments have been undertaken in applying the semiotics of the Paris School to prayer-texts, little attention has so far been paid to one of their most distinctive features, namely the overriding importance of the relationship between the enunciator and the enunciatee” (1-2).



moment (of manipulation or sanction) of the canonical schema.”<sup>120</sup> In other words, liturgical prayer texts are not meant primarily to provide cognitive content as much as they are meant to locate those who utter the prayer within the enunciated values prescribed by the prayer itself.

Thus, a second piece of writing which displays Searle’s defense of a semiotics of prayer texts is his 1991 essay entitled “Between Utterance and Enunciation: Toward a Semiotics of Prayer Texts.” In the context of his argument that prayer texts are designed to “thematize and figurativize the subjects of the enunciation,” Searle examines the text for the Blessing of Chrism.<sup>121</sup> After demonstrating the way in which the prayer seeks to establish the “competence” of the blessed oil,<sup>122</sup> Searle asserts the intentionality of the prayer: namely, “the programs which the community wants God to undertake and the values (inner transformation, eternal life) which it seeks for those to be anointed.”<sup>123</sup> He continues:

---

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 2. See also Jean Calloud, “Sémio-linguistique et texte liturgique,” *La Maison-Dieu* 114 (1973) 36-58. In this article, Calloud performs a semiotic analysis on the prayer texts of the opening collect for the First and Second Sunday of Advent. At the outset of “Between Utterance and Enunciation: Towards a Semiotics of Prayer Texts,” Searle cites Calloud’s work as an “experiment . . . in applying the semiotics of the Paris School to prayer-texts” (1). This article appears in MSP, G58, Folder “Calloud: Sémio-linguistique et texte liturgique.”

<sup>121</sup> Searle, “Between Utterance and Enunciation: Towards a Semiotics of Prayer Texts,” 3. Searle writes: “As a way of illustrating this hypothesis, let us take a liturgical text: the blessing of chrism in the Roman Rite. This has the advantage of being longer than the collect and thus of giving us a little more to work with. Of itself, it is not the most interesting or original of the *praefatio*-style prayers so characteristic of the sacramental liturgies in the Roman tradition, but for that very reason it is perhaps representative of the genre.”

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 12. Searle states: “The text of the ritual proposes and directs a performance that is both verbal and non-verbal: to the verbal dimension belongs the invitation to pray and the prayer itself; to the non-verbal dimension belong the mixing of balsam and oil, the making of specific gestures (breathing over the oil, extending the hands) and the choice of either saying or singing the prayer. The mixing of perfumed balsam to the oil is a demonstrative modalizing of the oil. (The fact that the mixing can be done beforehand indicates that it is perceived as a cognitive, rather than a pragmatic performance.) As scented oil, it acquires new connotations and is thus able to function as a different sort of symbol than unperfumed oil. The breathing over the oil might be said to represent a further modalization of the oil, but one that confers a competence which, like breath, is invisible yet life-giving.”

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 14.

The prayer has to be looked at from two perspectives. As an *enonce enonce*, it contains a number of statements of quasi-narrative character relating to the past (God's performances in creation, after the flood, in the wilderness, at the time of Jesus' baptism, and in the case of unspecified anointings of kings, etc.); to the present (God's gifts in the sacraments); and to the future (God giving joy, etc., to those to be anointed after baptism). More important for our purposes, however, is to read the text as an *enonciation enonce*, or as an uttered enunciation which is to be re-enunciated. Here there are two kinds of performance, both cognitive: a series of sanctions or verifications concerning God's past performances and a series of manipulations, in the form of requests, for God to undertake as yet unrealized performances resulting in certain actors receiving as yet unrealized values.<sup>124</sup>

In other words, the purpose of the prayer is to demonstrate God's competence in past actions in order to make the request of God to transform both the oil and those anointed with it.

However, Searle suggests that the prayer has an intention that belongs to the Church as a whole, namely, to reestablish its own relationship with God.<sup>125</sup> Once again, what is articulated in the prayer is a matter of trust; trust in God's past actions, trust that God will act, and trust that the values of the community will be transformed by renewed relationship.

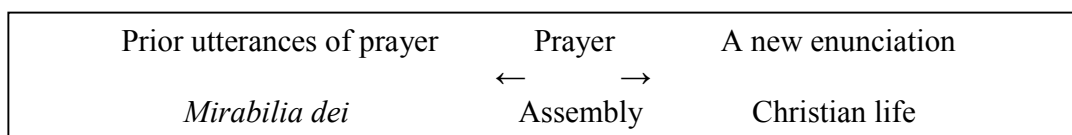
Searle's concern here is to show that the prayer text provides the praying community with the opportunity to identify itself in the prayer by "filling the gaps" between what God has done in the past and its own commitment to the values in the prayer. Searle calls this "symbolic competence," in which the members of the praying Church "find themselves

---

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 28. "By making the local church a collective enunciator, with God as enunciatee, the relationship with God is confirmed. In particular, that relationship is confirmed as one that has been mediated in the past by the use of oil as a religious symbol, and will shortly be again. This presupposes considerable 'symbolic competence' on the part of the members of the church. On the one hand, it presupposes a discursive memory which is able to expand upon the condensed references to the flood and to David, to Aaron and Moses, to Jesus and John the Baptist, as well as being able to fill the gaps left in the prayer. . . . So much is omitted, so much undeveloped. The congregation is expected to fill the gaps from its own memory, its familiarity with the symbols, narratives, and ritual practices of the Christian community."

between the utterances that make up the prescribed text and the act of assuming those utterances in a new enunciation.”<sup>126</sup> Diagrammed this relationship looks something like this:



Searle’s analysis of the Blessing of Chrism demonstrates that the prayer leaves quite ambiguous the expectation of the Christian community for the future; it does not specify concretely the moral values of those who are to be anointed with the oil. However, this is precisely how the Church as a whole is to “fill the gaps”: they are called upon to use their “symbolic competence” in seeing how the prayer is part of the larger Christian story of salvation. “A prayer is only a moment in a larger transaction,” contends Searle, “and it is to that larger transaction that the faithful commit themselves ‘between utterance and enunciation’.”<sup>127</sup>

Furthermore, a third example of Searle’s application of semiotics to prayer texts can be found in an essay written for a *festschrift* honoring his *Doktorvater*, Balthasar Fischer, in which he examines the text of Eucharistic Prayer II.<sup>128</sup> Once again, Searle performs a “discourse analysis” and a “narrative analysis” on the text, illuminating how meaning is generated as the prayer unfolds in its entirety.<sup>129</sup> In doing so, Searle follows the “canonical

---

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> See Mark Searle, “Semiotic Analysis of Eucharistic Prayer II,” in *Gratias Agamus: Studien zum Eucharistischen Hochgebet für Balthasar Fischer*, Eds. Andreas Heinz and Heinrich Rennings, 469-487 (Freiburg, Germany: Herder, 1992).

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 472. He writes: “The difference between a random list of sentences and a coherent piece of writing is that the latter has a meaning that belongs to the whole and that is built up through a series of sentences that are

schema” as outlined by Greimas and Courtès, which consists of the four previously described elements: manipulation, competence, performance, and sanction.<sup>130</sup> Like his analysis of the Blessing of Chrism, Searle locates Eucharistic Prayer II “between utterance and enunciation”:

So the prayer is *part* of a narrative structure in that things are said or done by those praying in order to bring about change of some kind. . . . In particular, there is the narrative in which the praying community (enunciators) are involved, since they are asking God (enunciatee) to intervene in various ways which will alter their lives: the prayer represents a phase in an unfolding program. This we shall call the “narrative structure of the enunciation”, to distinguish it from the narrative programs, completed or proposed, to which the speakers may refer in their utterance. . . .<sup>131</sup>

Thus, more than articulating contents of faith, the utterance of the prayer is to be understood as part of the trajectory of the Christian community: it places the worshipping assembly in the context of past events in order that it may act in the present and hope for the future.<sup>132</sup> In

---

organized in such a way that the meaning of the whole gradually unfolds. In part, this occurs through the accumulation of meaning invested in the different figures of the text: we gradually get to know more and more about the characters, more about the places or times they move in more about the topic of an argument, and so on. Thus there is cumulative semantic investment. But this would not be possible without the whole story or essay itself being organized in such a way that the development is coherent and intelligible and not riddled with contradictions and inconsistencies. The study of how figures come into focus as their meaning is built up and defined is known as discourse analysis. Narrative analysis, on the other hand, is the study of the narrative organization underlying the discourse, an organization which a speaker or writer has to put in place and which a hearer or reader has to recognize, if the whole is to make sense.”

<sup>130</sup> See Greimas and Courtès, *Semiotics and Language*, 203-206. Searle offers the following description of the “canonical schema,” labeling it as a “certain logical progression”: “For a SP (Subject of the Performance) to achieve something requires, for example, a certain *competence*: knowing what to do and how to do it, as well as wanting to do it. There also has to be some person or situation which prompts the SP to act: this is known as “*manipulation*” and the actant responsible (it could be an inner drive, or a law, or love) is known as the Sender. So the Sender sets the process in motion and may, at the end, verify that the goal has been accomplished by the SP. This latter phase is known as the “*sanction*”, a phase in which heroes are recognized and rewarded and villains are unmasked and punished” (472-473). Emphases mine. Also see pages 257-258.

<sup>131</sup> Searle, “Semiotic Analysis of Eucharistic Prayer II,” 473-474.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 475-476. Searle argues that the Introductory Dialogue itself represents this pattern: “In summary, then, priest and people engage in dialogue at the enunciative level. At the utterative level, the two parties wish each other the presence of the Lord, find that presence realized, and then express the duty and willingness to thank the Lord who is *their* God for unspecified past actions. Thus, while the opening dialogue is oriented towards what follows, it is unintelligible without a commonly acknowledged past. *It is on the basis of this past*

the eucharistic prayer, a unified community (which mandates the priest to speak on its behalf in the introductory dialogue) performs the utterance of thanksgiving and glorification and subsequently petitions God to transform the gifts and to transform the Church.<sup>133</sup> “Clearly, then,” Searle writes, “the very act of offering the eucharistic prayer represents, on the part of those who offer, a commitment to the goals established by God and to the implementation of his will going beyond the merely liturgical.”<sup>134</sup>

There are many more specific elements that could be attended to here; however, what is most important for the purpose of this project is the significance of using semiotics to “read” the eucharistic prayer (or any other prayer text for that matter). Searle offers his assessment at the end of his essay, stating that looking at the prayer through the lens of semiotics moves away from arriving at a meaning that is “overdetermined” by prior theological speculation or even rubrics that guide the performance of a text:

[T]he meaning of the prayer text stands in some tension with the meanings generated by these other signifying sets, which tend to focus on the institution narrative as itself constituting the whole meaning and effectiveness of the eucharistic prayer, obscuring its subordinate role in the prayer as a whole. Of course, some tension is inevitable and

---

*that a certain mutual understanding ('fiduciary contract') is evoked in the dialogue which will serve as the motivator and enabler of the joint action of thanksgiving.”* Emphasis mine.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 483-484. Searle’s summary of his reading of the eucharistic prayer is worth citing in its entirety: “To summarize, then. At the level of the enunciation, the assembly of the priest and people manipulate and motivate each other (in the opening dialogue) to become a single collective subject of a common performance. This performance (uttering the Eucharistic prayer itself) is one of thanksgiving and glorification (lines 7-23), leading into petitions for the transformation of the gifts (lines 24-28) and for unity here and now and beyond death (lines 50-68). The transformation of the gifts will enable the community to do what Christ did and commanded to be done in his memory. Lines 42-44 and 45-49 represent interpretative reflections on the significance of ‘doing this’ in memory of Christ: the underline the cognitive (thus the symbolic) dimension of the action and make explicit its intentionality. The petitions that follow express the Church’s desire that God’s work in Christ for the unity of humankind be brought to its proper conclusion (‘perficere’, line 54). The final doxology glorifies God not only for what was done in the past, as in lines 7-18, 48-49, but proleptically for accomplishing what is yet to be realized, namely, the conjunction of the praying community, the universal church, and the dead with the desired objects of values. These objects of value are identified, as we saw, with the unity of communicants in the Spirit, perfecting of the world-wide ‘ecclesia’ in love, the admission of the dead into God’s presence; and (for all) a share with the saints in eternal life.”

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 484.

necessary, for prayer, as encounter with God, always requires the kind of tension associated with metaphor, where the literal meaning is only the springboard for the intended meaning. On the other hand, one is inclined to wonder whether or not the “overdetermination” of the eucharistic prayer, which turns it simply into a “prayer of consecration”, does not in fact reduce most of the eucharistic prayer to incoherence.<sup>135</sup>

Thus, Searle contends that a reading of Eucharistic Prayer II which resists “overdetermined” meanings communicates through its insertion of the worshipping community into a larger story of salvation history; the assembly must “fill the gaps” through “memory and imagination.”<sup>136</sup> Likewise, such an analysis brings to the surface the dynamic of trust involved in praying the text; not only is God trusted to act, but the community is trusted to commit itself to the values it utters. All of this is to say that prayer texts are not magical formulas but the enactment of relationships.

### ***Semiotics Applied to Church Architecture***

If semiotics may be employed to probe the “deep structures” of ritual units and prayer texts, then this method may also be used to analyze the way in which church buildings “speak.” For his part, Searle maintained an interest in church architecture throughout his academic career and believed strongly that physical places of worship in use today, by-and-large, fail to coincide with the established post-Vatican II ecclesiology. As he writes in an editorial for the November 1983 issue of *Assembly*:

What is not always fully recognized, however—either by those involved in church building and renovation or by those who object to

---

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 485-486.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 485. Searle writes: “What we would find from such an analysis, as from an analysis of the figures of the text, is that a prayer like this, for all its alleged “richness”, is really little more than a sketch, full of shorthand allusions which the faithful would be expected to catch and expand in memory and imagination. I refer to such lines, for example, as “verbum tuum per quo cuncta fecisti” or “eos in lumen vultus tui admitte”. In short, the prayer requires of participants a fairly elaborated grasp of salvation history and a rather rich store of biblical and liturgical metaphors. Thus liturgical scholarship needs to bear fruit in accessible catechesis.”

spending for such ventures—is the degree to which a community is shaped by the building it occupies. It is not so much the physical shortcomings of a given building that are in question here, for the liturgy of the church makes so many conflicting demands that it is hard to satisfy them all. Rather more important is the whole concept of the building itself. No church building is ecclesologically innocent: it expresses—and forever thereafter impresses—a sense of what it means to belong to the church, the respective roles of different ministries, the wealth or poverty of the Christian imagination, the sense of where Christ is to be found and so on. *It is more than a sermon in stone: it is a multimedia communication of a version of the Christian Gospel, communicated in the shape of the building, its interior arrangements, its decorations and appointments, the kind of interaction it fosters or prohibits among the worshippers.* Everything speaks, everything tells us who we are (for better or worse) and what our place is.<sup>137</sup>

Searle asserts that the “power” of church architecture resides in its ability to engage the imagination, precisely because places of worship provide the setting for the continual renewal and making of new relationships.<sup>138</sup> The role of church architecture is not simply to open the imagination to the things of heaven but to assist worshippers to make associations with the relationships of this world as well. A church building, well-designed, leads to contemplation of both the things of heaven and the things of earth.

Such was Searle’s basic thesis in a short article written in 1983 on the nature of sacred space. In opposition to those who would contend that modern church architecture

---

<sup>137</sup> Mark Searle, “Church Building,” *Assembly* 10:2 (1983) 225. Emphasis mine. Searle begins this editorial with the claim that the majority of worship spaces are “inadequate” for the celebration of the postconciliar liturgy: “In the considered opinion of many who are qualified to judge, as many as ninety percent of existing Catholic churches are inadequate to the worship needs and the ecclesial identity of the postconciliar Church.” He concludes the piece by calling for greater study of architecture in relationship to worship: “All of which suggests the need for more than just careful planning. It suggests that the decision to begin thinking about building or renovating must become an invitation to the whole community to begin to think about its baptismal identity and God-given mission, to rediscover itself as a people with a purpose, graced with the opportunity to pass on, even in bricks and mortar, the fullness of faith to coming generations.”

<sup>138</sup> See Mark Searle, “Sacred Places,” *Assembly* 10:2 (1983) 226-228. Searle writes: “Such places are sacred places, places where life—or death—has touched us. They are places of more-than-ordinary power: places we dream of, places we long to be, places that haunt us, places where we were once at home, places where we find healing. They are places of *power*, they are *sacred* places. Profane places, on the other hand, are places where nothing happens, where the imagination is not engaged; places truly mundane, forgettable, without associations” (226).

represents a loss of the sacred, Searle argues that the real issue is much deeper in that what we are in danger of losing is our ability to make the fundamental associations that restore awe and wonder. He writes:

It is not, I think, that we have entirely lost our sense of the sacred, for we continue to dream and to have memories. What is true is that we live in a society that does not foster the sense of the sacred, but offers entertainment instead of engagement, making us consumers instead of contemplatives, technocrats instead of artists. . . . If Christianity is what Christianity claims to be—a religion of incarnation—then the house of the church must be a place of wholeness, of reconciliation with God, with our fellows, with the natural world. It must be a place where all these things come together again, a sacred place. But to say that a church must be a sacred place is not to advocate the multiplication of blessings or a return to church spires. *For Christians . . . sacredness is not a quality inherent in places or things. Rather it is a quality associated with the way we experience them. Sacredness is a way of doing things, a way of relating.*<sup>139</sup>

Thus, Searle contends that sacredness is not simply something that Christians occupy (as in moving between “sacred” and “profane”) but rather is a basic attitude that marks the entirety of Christian living.<sup>140</sup> This sense (or attitude) of sacredness is what the liturgy rehearses

---

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 228. Searle states later that sacredness, as a way of relating, has to be about such things as truthfulness and harmony: “Sacredness, then, has a lot to do with truthfulness, (letting things be what they are and not pretending they are something else) and with harmony, (letting things come together respectfully).”

<sup>140</sup> Ibid. “This attitude towards life and towards the world in which we live *should* characterize the whole Christian life. The tearing of the veil of the Temple signified the release of the sacred and its potential for permeating the whole human world.” See also Mark Searle, “House of God, House of the Church” in MSP, F34, Folder “Place of Worship.” This is a talk prepared for an anonymous audience on the issue of renovating a chapel. Regarding the Christian attitude toward “sacred” space, Searle writes: “There is plenty of evidence to suggest that Christians have always had sacred places, but there is also a lot of evidence to suggest that Christians have an understanding of what the “sacred” means which prohibits any clear distinction between sacred and secular. Put another way, I would see in Christianity a deep-seated ambivalence about such questions as whether a church is a secular place or a sacred place, and whether church-building or renovation is a sacred act or a secular undertaking. What I do not think is tenable in Christianity is the view which sees the building itself as purely secular until it is baptized in the rite of consecration after which it is a sacred place. That idea is fairly modern, the idea that once dedicated, a church is off limits for secular activities. For example, in the middle ages, when the rites of the dedication and consecration of church buildings were coming to their full flowering, a church was definitely a sacred place; but that did not prevent people from using it also as a council hall, a place for town meetings, a place where criminals could seek asylum, even a place where, if the weather turned bad, a fair could be held. . . . So there was always a certain ambivalence about sacred space and secular space, and this ambivalence goes all the way back to the New Testament itself” (3-4). See also Larry E. Shiner, “Sacred Space, Profane Space, Human Space,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*



week after week: “Our liturgy, at least, and the environment in which it is celebrated must be sacred: experienced as lifting life, healing the wounded spirit, restoring the broken heart, reviving the soul.”<sup>141</sup> In this way, the church building cannot be considered a passive partner in liturgical worship but rather an active participant in the communication of sacred relationships.

In the foreword of Regina Kuehn’s *A Place for Baptism*, Searle would speak more concretely of architecture and environment in terms of sacramentality. Attending to the physical environment theologically rather than simply aesthetically means striving to create the space in which “everything belongs,” or as Searle writes: “Everything belongs to the sacrament; everything contributes to the sign value of the rite, which is the medium through which God in Christ communicates with us.”<sup>142</sup> Searle contends that as sacramentality was gradually reduced in scope (most narrowly to a precise moment upon the altar) church architecture gradually waned in its ability to communicate sacramentally:

Thus it was only in this century that a combination of tight finances and diminished sacramental sense spawned the rash of shoddy, soulless buildings which all too often pass for Catholic churches. Even in the nineteenth century, where, for lack of imagination among other things, building a church meant imitating medieval buildings, there was still a sense that a parish community needed a building that spoke of more than itself, that directed the eye and the heart beyond

---

40 (1972) 435. In his photocopy of the text Searle emphasizes the following quotation as key: “If we begin with a sacred/profane or religious/secular dichotomy every piece of evidence tends to get polarized from the beginning and we end up with artificial paradoxes. On the other hand, if we begin with the concept of *human* spatiality, of lived space with its fundamentally heterogenous, oriented and meaningful organization, we can accommodate the kinds of extreme phenomena for which the concepts of sacred and profane space were developed without distorting the phenomena which lie between these poles.” This sentiment underscores Searle’s own perspective on the Christian understanding of space. This article appears in MSP, F34.

<sup>141</sup> Searle, “Sacred Places,” 228. He continues: “[C]hurches and their liturgies are not to be conceived as isolated enclaves, but as opportunities for a new beginning to be made in the redemption of human life. In short, a house for the church must be the kind of place that dreams are made on, a place where vision is fostered, a place where the Spirit’s presence might be felt, renewing the face of the earth.”

<sup>142</sup> Mark Searle, Foreword to *A Place for Baptism*, by Regina Kuehn (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1992) iv.

the veil to the mysterious but vital realities grasped by faith. The building was a *sign*. Often enough it was, admittedly, a sign of ethnic pride, of Catholic chauvinism, or of simple affluence. But, for all its ambivalence, it was also a monument to the people's faith in the reality of the other world and, by that fact, a sacramental or outward sign of God's presence among and concern for the local population.<sup>143</sup>

Again, Searle's suggestion that the physical worship space contributes to the sacramentality of the liturgical event serves as a reminder that the liturgical event must always be widened, rather than condensed, in scope. Toward this end, the church building must always maintain reference to the world beyond it to lead Christians outwards to the mystery of life. Searle writes: "In short, a sacrament 'works' when it speaks of more than itself."<sup>144</sup> The same must be said for the church building—it "works" when it speaks of more than itself.

Although the above examples of Searle's writings on church buildings and sacred space may have little to do with the rigorous science of semiotics, they clearly lay the groundwork for his contemplative vision of seeing the way in which buildings and their furnishings participate in the communications event. As previously noted, during his sabbatical year in The Netherlands, Searle collaborated with Gerard Lukken in studying the parish church of SS. Peter and Paul in Tilburg (the parish church of the Searle family during the year) through the application of Greimassian semiotics.<sup>145</sup> Their final product was a short book entitled *Semiotics and Church Architecture*, which was published the year after Searle's

---

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., v.

<sup>145</sup> Lukken had recently articulated his perspective on the language of architecture in a 1987 article. See Gerard Lukken, "Plaidoyer pour une approche integrale de la liturgie comme lieu théologique: un défi a toute la théologie," *Questions liturgiques* 68 (1987) 242-255. He suggests that meaning is established in looking at the "chain of activities" that takes place in a building from the moment of its construction: "Or donc la sémiotique de l'architecture s'occupe de l'espace bâti: un espace conçu par la voie de toutes sortes de représentations telles que dessins, maquettes, descriptions de matériaux, décomptes, etc. Le bâtiment est la résultante de toute une chaîne d'activités qui va de conception, de la programmation des activités jusqu'à sa construction et, aussi, sa mise en exploitation. Cette dernière, y compris les qualifications ultérieures ajoutées par l'utilisateur (mobilier, aménagement, décoration, etc.) appartient également à la sémiotique de l'architecture" (250).

death in August of 1992.<sup>146</sup> The book's method is two-fold: the first half (written by Lukken) spells out semiotic theory, while the second part (written by Searle) applies this theory to the exterior and interior of SS. Peter and Paul. "It aims," writes one reviewer, "to raise the level of awareness among both architects and patrons of how buildings have a voice of their own, how they can both form and deform the people who inhabit them, and how they often have effects that are unforeseen both by architects and their clients."<sup>147</sup> Thus, despite its heavy emphasis on semiotic theory, the underlying goal of the book is pastorally oriented. Therefore, rather than retracing the intricacies of Greimassian theory, what follows here are some of the pertinent insights articulated by Searle that lead to pastoral application.

In keeping with his theological perspective on the sacredness of the places in which Christians gather for prayer, Searle begins his analysis by affirming the language "spoken" by sacred space. For Searle, this language is dependent upon the imagination's ability to make connections with memories or past experiences. He writes:

[W]hile it would be absurd to claim that the language of buildings is universal, it is true that they are usually easier to identify and thus to 'read' than the noises one hears around one in the streets, or the strange words posted in public places, or even the gestures and behaviour of an unfamiliar people. Yet while we learn to speak and are taught to read and write, it is hard to say how we are introduced to the language of architecture, how we learn to distinguish domestic from commercial buildings, for example, or schools from hospitals, or

---

<sup>146</sup> See Lukken and Searle, *Semiotics and Church Architecture*, 7-8. In the preface, after describing the work of SEMANET and its impact on liturgical studies, Lukken writes: "So, after an initial period in which the focus was on texts, SEMANET has more recently moved to the analysis of non-linguistic sign-systems, and it was at this stage that my colleague, Mark Searle of the University of Notre Dame (Indiana, U.S.A.) joined our working group. His contribution was to take the analytical method which I had worked out on the basis of semiotic theory and apply it to an actual church, that of SS. Peter and Paul in Tilburg, which is of interest both as a representative modern church building and as particularly intriguing object for semiotic analysis. This book, then, represents the fruits of our semiotic research. It shows how Greimassian semiotic theory as it relates to architecture was developed into a usable method for analyzing actual buildings and then demonstrates how such an analysis might be conducted. . . Shortly after the manuscript was completed, Mark Searle, aged 51, died of an incurable disease. May this book be a posthumous tribute to him as an exceptionally amiable colleague and a competent and creative liturgical scholar."

<sup>147</sup> R. Kevin Seasoltz, "Review of *Semiotics and Church Architecture*," *Worship* 68 (1994) 277.

libraries from restaurants. Often we are aided by verbal or iconic signs, but the existence of such signs, even the need for such signs, does not take away from the fact that we learn to read the different places in which we find ourselves. That it happens is obvious, but for it to be able to happen there must be recognizable patterns, recurrences, redundancies, similarities and differences, which are recognizable and identifiable.<sup>148</sup>

Searle proceeds to examine the exterior of SS. Peter and Paul (Chapter 4) and the interior (Chapter 5) as though he were a stranger to the building and its worship, thereby attempting to arrive at the “meaning-effects” communicated by the form of the church alone.<sup>149</sup>

Keeping in mind that Searle’s analysis follows the Greimassian semiotics, his method is two-

---

<sup>148</sup> Lukken, and Searle, *Semiotics and Church Architecture* 75. He continues: “To claim that buildings ‘speak’ is merely to claim that they are signs. It is not implied that they were invested by their builders, or subsequently endowed by their occupants, with heavy doses of connotation, for even the most functional constructions bespeak their function, the values pursued there, the values of those who built them, and the values of those who presently occupy them. To claim that buildings speak is merely to say that, like written texts, they have a double articulation: they signify something, even if it is not easy to put one’s finger immediately on all that they signify. They signify something in virtue of having a structure or form of expression and a corresponding content structure (form of the content)” (75-76).

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 76. It is worth citing the specific reasons Searle provides for using SS. Peter and Paul as the subject of investigation: “In the first place, it is a remarkably satisfying building, designed with great thoughtfulness and constructed and furnished with the closest attention to detail. At the same time, it is a most intriguing building, especially from the outside, for it offers the passer-by little clue as to its identity. It is reticent, almost taciturn in its lack of self-advertisement. What does it say, and how does it say it? Here the problems of what the outside says are quite different from those posed by the interior, so it provides an excellent example of the need to analyse the outside and inside of buildings quite separately. Moreover, the originality of the design and, in particular, the ambivalence of its exterior makes it a worthy case on which to test the strengths and limitations of the semiotic method.” See also Seasoltz, “Review of *Semiotics and Church Architecture*,” 277-278. Here Seasoltz offers his opinion of the building: “Looking at the photographs, visually literate readers will agree that the exterior of the Tilburg church is quite satisfactory, carefully designed to avoid monumentality, and located on the site with attention to the topography and the suburban setting. Liturgists, however, will be rather severely critical of various aspects of the interior of the church which was consecrated in 1969. On the positive side, the main body of the church has been designed as a place for the whole assembly to celebrate liturgy. It is a place for action. The people are gathered on three sides of the altar; the presider’s chair is modest in design; the altar is placed in appropriate proximity to the people; and the space is both warm and light. The ambo, however, is unimpressive, but most disappointing is the design of the baptismal font, which resembles a shallow bird bath, inappropriate to symbolize baptismal washing. Likewise, the phallic symbol of the paschal candle plunged into the middle of the water is questionable. Two images of Our Lady are placed in the devotional space, causing iconographic confusion. Probably the most objectionable is the design of the daily Mass chapel which also serves as a place for the reservation of the Eucharist. The glass tabernacle actually resembled a covered cake stand; it is placed on a heavy plinth immediately behind the altar which is an undistinguished table. Unlike the chairs in the main assembly room which are portable, the benches in the daily Mass chapel are permanently installed in lines facing the front of the altar and tabernacle. Overall, the space seems cramped and does not inspire devotion or a sense of transcendence.”

fold. First, Searle examines the “form of the expression” (the SIGNIFIER—the components that make up the “language” of the building—i.e. location, size, lines, building materials, etc.). Second, he analyzes the “form of the content” (the SIGNIFIED—what the building is saying—i.e. similarities and differences with other buildings) in three steps: (a) he performs a “discursive analysis,” in which he attempts to determine how the architecture communicates its identity; (b) he moves to the “surface level” in which he envisions the building in use (i.e. how it is engaged and negotiated by visitors; how it endows competency); and (c) he arrives at the “deep level” where the values of the building are communicated.

Thus, in terms of the “form of the expression,” Searle “reads” the building as more horizontal than vertical, more domestic than public, and more human than super-human.<sup>150</sup> Turning to the “form of the content,” his “discursive analysis,” demonstrates that the building is quite silent about its identity (“The building bears no traces of the instance of enunciation”—i.e. who built it or when it was built) thereby exuding a lack of welcome.<sup>151</sup> At the “surface level” Searle imagines how the building interacts with human subjects, suggesting that the church grounds and the entryways to the church work together to bestow the competency necessary for gathering as a distinct assembly.<sup>152</sup> Finally, Searle arrives at

---

<sup>150</sup> Lukken, and Searle, *Semiotics and Church Architecture*, 80. “In summary, this is a building in which horizontal lines dominate over the vertical, the front is more imposing than the rear, and the right side is more imposing than the left. Despite its size, which seems to suggest it is not used, at least in its entirety, as a private residence, the domestic scale dominates over the public. We might also say that the human wins out over the super-human, for it is a building that seems careful to accommodate itself to the human scale and refuses to use its size to overawe the visitor.”

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 83. See also page 86, where Searle details the “unwelcoming” message of the building: “For anyone who stops to look at the building, the exterior of SS. Peter and Paul’s is somewhat unwelcoming. . . Visually, the church is open to the world in that the walls and shrubbery are kept low to permit a full view of the church. On the other hand, the construction of the church itself presents the view of a solid wall.”

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 90. His conclusion in this regard is as follows: “In short, then, the doors and the walls collaborate in manipulating or virtualizing a Subject by forbidding direct access, whether physical or visual, to the interior

the values that govern the “meaning-effects” of the building (the “deep level”) and suggests that it speaks primarily of the value of secrecy:

Whereas the traditional churches are erected in public places like squares and thoroughfares, and make their presence felt on the general public, SS. Peter and Paul is nestled discreetly in a quiet residential area and set well back from the road. Whereas the other churches use height and size to testify to the power and transcendence of God and his church, SS. Peter and Paul is discreet, anonymous and apparently content to assume the domestic values of a relatively affluent neighborhood. Thus, while being a church, the *Petrus en Pauluskerk* opts not to identify itself with the traditional church and defines its relationship to the larger world quite differently. It is as if the exterior issues a double mandate: to the world, a discouragement against entering; to the church within, a prohibition against overflowing into secular life around it. It no longer jostles with the world on the sidewalks and in the market-place, but maintains its reserve and keeps its distance.<sup>153</sup>

Searle reiterates that it is not that the exterior of SS. Peter and Paul lends itself to ambiguity, meaning that a choice may be made between several communicated identities, but rather that its identity is not readily accessible. “The problem,” contends Searle, “is one of veridiction, of establishing the relationship between what the building seems to be and what it really is.”<sup>154</sup>

---

and, at the same time encouraging the use of the limited access that is provided. They also actualize the Subject, by endowing it with various competencies, both pragmatic (being-able-to-enter) and cognitive (being-able-to-see-or-recognize). The overall effect is that of a near-complete separation of the interior space and its activities from the outside world. It is as if the Sender had issued a double mandate: to the ‘world’, a having-not-to-enter; to the ‘church’, a having-not-to-overflow-to-the-outside” (92).

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 94. Searle concludes by ruminating on why secrecy would be the prevailing value for a church building built after the Second Vatican Council: “It is tempting to speculate on why this Roman Catholic parish church should be so secretive, so reticent to identify itself for what it is. Planned in the late sixties and built in the early seventies, this building went up during a time of profound transition for Dutch Catholicism. Was it simply an honest effort to translate into bricks and mortar the new, less triumphalist ecclesiology of the church as the People of God? Or did it represent, however unconsciously, a certain failure of nerve before the wave of secularization that swept over Dutch society in the sixties? It is for historians, rather than semioticians, to answer such questions by hunting for clues as to the mind of those involved at the time. *What this analysis is intended to demonstrate is how the exterior of a building presents itself to be read by those who encounter it, how the form of the expression is articulated with the form of the content to make such a reading possible*” (95). Emphasis mine.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 94.

Turning now to the interior of the church, Searle follows the same semiotic method, determining first the “form of the expression” and subsequently the “form of the content.” He begins with a rather simple statement about the “language” of space: “The interior arrangement, furnishing and decoration of any building provides copious information about the kinds of transactions which occur there and about the values of those who occupy the space.”<sup>155</sup> Two features constitute Searle’s reading of the interior’s basic expression: first, as with the exterior, the orientation of the floor plan is essentially horizontal, with very little to overwhelm or dwarf the visitor; second, the building “embeds” various spaces through a series of concentric, interlocking hexagons.<sup>156</sup> Next, Searle moves to the “form of the content.” First, at the “discursive level” (the level at which the architect and those responsible for the building invested it with meaning), he discovers that “the building bears no traces of the enunciator.”<sup>157</sup> In other words, as noticed on the building’s exterior, there is nothing that would tell the story of its original construction (i.e. the reasons why it was built, who built it, what planning went into building it, etc.). However, by analyzing oppositions in

---

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 96. He follows this simple statement with a more semiological viewpoint: “Reading such information implies viewing the building and its arrangement as a complex sign, consisting of a signifying syntagm (the form of the expression) and a signified syntagm (the form of the content).”

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 101. With regard to this second feature, Searle writes: “Most characteristic of this building is the use of embedding. The exterior walls of the church, including the low walls along the front of the forecourt, constitute a broken hexagon. Not only is the motif reflected in the pattern of paving in the forecourt, but it is repeated inside the building in the shape of the main congregational area and, embedded within that, in the shape of the sanctuary. The sanctuary, in turn, contains moveable chairs for the ministers and a moveable lectern for the reader, but is actually focused on the fixed stone altar which occupies the most prominent position in the sanctuary. Thus the altar stands immovably at the center of a series of concentric hexagons and serves as a pole for the whole building.”

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 109. Here Searle offers a helpful description of what is involved in discursive syntax: “A text is always an ‘utterance’ whose surface construction arranges the contents in various frameworks or ‘scenes’ marked by a certain unity of time, place and actors. The same is true of an architectural ‘utterance’ whose production is largely organized in terms of the various kinds of activity that will take place there and the occasions on which it is intended to be used, and people thought likely to use it and the respective roles they are likely to play in using the building. In each of these dimensions—actorial, temporal and spatial—it is possible, though not always likely, that some traces of the original enunciation may be discovered.”

the overall space, as well as the way in which various spaces work together, Searle determines that a major “meaning-effect” of the building is that it speaks of the tension “between what is ‘in the midst of the assembly’ and what is ‘beyond’ it.”<sup>158</sup> Searle now proceeds to the “surface level” (in which the focus of examination is upon “a given space which, in relation to another space, invests the occupants with certain competences in relation to the occupants of the other space”),<sup>159</sup> in other words, this is the search to determine how the various spaces of the church interior define roles for imagined users. Again, Searle finds that the “embedded” nature of the various spaces ensures the competence of not only the presider in the sanctuary but the gathered assembly in its place as well.<sup>160</sup> Finally, Searle arrives at the “deep level” and asks: “It is possible, out of all the different thematic and classematic oppositions to find a single semantic opposition running through

---

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 119. Searle writes: “These oppositions summarize the characteristic ways in which this church handles the received tradition of providing a building for public worship. Its characteristic features can be seen all the more clearly in comparison with ‘classical’ churches. The roundness of the central congregational space and the way it encloses and includes the sanctuary area, makes this clearly a space that is intended for events in which all those in attendance are involved in what is going on. The liturgy is led by a leader, instead of being conducted in semi-privacy on behalf of the people and out of range of their sight and hearing. A clear distinction is also made between this public space and other functions that may occur in the church, such as private devotions (Stations of the Cross, prayer to Mary) or small-group activities (baptism, weekday Mass). These are removed, literally, to the periphery and are out of sight of those gathered in the main space. While it does not lack elements of the ‘transcendent’ or ‘sacred’ (particularly the icons and statues), these are kept rather discreet, contained within the human space rather than breaking out of it. Similarly, while it maintains the practice of marking role differentiation in spatial terms, it clearly strives to incorporate such differentiations within the unity of the whole assembly, and to minimize the hierarchical implications of such distinctions” (118).

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 119.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 125. Searle writes: “Conjunction with these poles and with their corresponding *topoi* in the congregational area and the sanctuary invests the subjects with the appropriate modal values required by the delegated enunciator and the collective enunciatee. These are the modal values of ‘being able to speak/act for God’ and ‘being able to address God’, ‘being able to listen to God’ and ‘being able to receive the gifts of God’. But these modal values at the level of enunciation logically presuppose the constitution of the collective actant who is to be invested with such further modalizations: ‘being able to do’ presupposes a realized state of ‘being able to be’.”



them all which would constitute the elementary structure of the signification?”<sup>161</sup> He offers a possible answer to this quandary:

At the discursive level we identified a basic opposition running through the whole building: ‘in the midst’ vs. ‘beyond.’ This seems to constitute a basic tension in the building. /In the midst/ gives rise to the human scale, the embedding, the minimalization of sacred or other-worldly isotopies, the general ‘levelling out’ of differences, the predominance of the collective over the individual or semipublic narrative programs. On the other hand, the /beyond/ generates the peculiar actantial roles (ministerial roles of ‘priest’ and ‘reader’ as filling the actantial role of a delegated subject who is not delegated by the assembly, for example), the presence of traditional sacramental sign-objects (font, altar, lectern), and the presence of iconic and scripted representations of other-worldly community (saints, the dead).<sup>162</sup>

Thus, Searle’s “reading” of the architecture of SS. Peter and Paul as an agent of communication reduces the nature of the building to the opposition between presence and absence, and he contends: “It is in the incessant negation and assertion of these oppositions that the identity of the church of SS. Peter and Paul is constituted.”<sup>163</sup>

At the end of his semiotic analysis, Searle deems it necessary to remind his reader of the very objective of this sort of investigation, which many would deem “unnecessarily complicated.”<sup>164</sup> “The purpose of semiotic analysis,” he posits, “whether it be of written texts or of brick and concrete buildings, is not to offer the definitive ‘reading’, but to explore

---

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 127.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>164</sup> See Seasoltz, “Review of *Semiotics and Church Architecture*,” 277. Seasoltz offers the following critique of the book: “After spending considerable time on this text, I could not help but wonder: Would not a really competent architect and liturgical designer, well informed by a sound theological brief provided by a client, intuit many of the conclusions that are arrived at by using the semiotic method? The method seems *unnecessarily complicated* for the results that could probably be more easily attained by commissioning distinguished architects and designers in the first place.” Emphasis mine.

the structures of signification that make any reading possible.”<sup>165</sup> In other words, such a “reading” of the church’s architecture and environment merely provides insight into how the building might participate in the act of communication; there may be other “readings” that provide different and worthwhile insights. Searle concludes: “As this attempt to analyze the church of SS. Peter and Paul must surely have demonstrated, semiotic analysis itself, for all its methodological rigour, can only in the end offer a hypothetical construct of the structures of signification and always remains open to the possibility that a more perceptive or rigorous analysis may suggest another, better hypothesis.”<sup>166</sup>

### **Conclusion**

In many ways, it may seem difficult to reconcile Searle’s attempts at applying semiotics to liturgy—attempts which are rather heady and scientifically dense—with his previous works that aimed largely at providing readers with a solid background on the nature of liturgy as well as offering positive ways in which liturgical participation could be fostered and enhanced. One might even refuse to believe that these diverse forms of writing came from the pen of the same author. How could the man responsible for *Liturgy Made Simple* make liturgy so complex by calling liturgical prayer an “*enonce enonce*” or a moment “between utterance and enunciation?”

---

<sup>165</sup> Lukken and Searle, *Semiotics and Church Architecture*, 129.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 129-130. Searle writes: “Even so, a semiotic analysis of a building or a poem will always leave some loose ends, not only because of the deficiencies of the analysis, but also because of the deficiencies of the text itself. There is no such thing as a perfect poem or a perfect building, but only approximations to perfection in which not everything will be significant, and in which not everything that is significant will quite achieve the same transparency of form to content. This problem of ‘loose ends’ and ambiguities is clearly seen in the case of ordinary speech, which is rarely precise or eloquent, and which may prove quite incoherent when read back out of context. *Nevertheless, people do succeed in communicating more or less adequately, and the same can be said of other more formal acts of human creativity such as religious rites or public architecture. By attempting to account for how meaning effects are produced, semiotics can also contribute to more successful communication.* Semiotic analysis of church architecture will serve, it is hoped, to raise the level of awareness among both architects and church people of how buildings have a voice of their own and may ‘speak’ in ways not foreseen or intended by those who planned and erected them.” Emphasis mine.

Perhaps the words of Lawrence Hoffman provide the best answer to this ostensible contradiction: “Mark was convinced that people would believe serious liturgy if seriously done.”<sup>167</sup> One of the primary ways in which Searle wanted to demonstrate the seriousness of liturgy was through stern and sober scrutiny of the power of the Christian imagination and its ability (or inability) to grapple with symbols and their place in communication. However, such a prophetic challenge calls for deep and lasting conversion, for as Searle once wrote: “To transform the working of the religious imagination is to enable people to situate themselves differently in the world, to challenge their values, to bring them to question their accepted patterns of behavior.”<sup>168</sup>

It is precisely toward the goal of transforming the Christian imagination that Searle wished to teach students of the liturgy the art of semiotics. While he in no way discounted the value of historical and theological methods, Searle envisioned their supplementation with a form of inquiry that would take seriously the role of symbols in liturgical celebration:

Semiotics does not import into the study of liturgy models drawn from elsewhere, *but takes the production of meaning through signs in the liturgy on its own terms*. It requires the closest possible attention to the “text” of the rite (using “text” here in the sense of the given object of study) and a painstaking analysis of the procedures it employs to produce the meaning it produces. Because of its exclusive focus on the “text” of the rite and only on the “text,” it requires no specialized historical or theological knowledge. In that sense, it is more “democratic” than, say, historical studies and closer to the process which ordinary participants engage in during the rite.<sup>169</sup>

Thus, Searle’s objective was to help formulate a means of interpretation that resisted the influence of “overdetermination” by layers of theological speculation and historical facts.

---

<sup>167</sup> Lawrence A. Hoffman, “Appreciation,” in *Vision: The Scholarly Contributions of Mark Searle to Liturgical Renewal*, Eds. Anne Koester and Barbara Searle (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2004) xiii.

<sup>168</sup> Searle, “Images and Worship,” 112.

<sup>169</sup> Searle, “Introduction to the Semiotics of Liturgy,” 2. Emphasis mine.

Simultaneously, this goal would fulfill the hermeneutical task of his conception of “pastoral liturgical studies.” Semiotics, he hoped, would serve to impress upon the pastoral liturgist the need to be alert to the various “meaning-effects” that are communicated when symbols interact with each other and with human participants in the liturgical event. “If everything means or signifies something,” writes a colleague of Searle’s, “then Mark Searle is among the persistent heralds of attention to language and space and behavior in the public worship of the Church.”<sup>170</sup>

Again, it is important to underscore the fact that Searle’s desire was not to overcomplicate matters by introducing semiotics into the curriculum of liturgical studies, but rather, it was his aspiration that this science could help turn the interpretive lens away from literalism. Furthermore, for Searle, semiotics would not only substantiate the possible insights gleaned from the study of symbols and their relationships, it also would demand that students read with great care and inquisitive intrigue.<sup>171</sup> However, despite his personal and academic commitment to semiotics, Searle would not live to see the wide-spread approval of its use in liturgical circles. As Lukken writes in the year of Searle’s death:

The semiotic reading is not yet familiar to us. In liturgics as well as in exegetics we became accustomed to understanding the texts from the direct meaning of the words: this signifies or signified that. And we almost concentrate on the text as a reference to the world outside of the text with special attention to references to historical data. . . . However, this can be stated: the more a reading hypothesis recognizes the signification of this text, the closer it comes to the enunciator as the origin of this text. In this way the reader attempts to reach as closely as possible the source which has originally produced the meaning in

---

<sup>170</sup> Koernke, “Introduction to ‘Liturgy as Metaphor’,” 25.

<sup>171</sup> See, Lukken and Searle, *Semiotics and Church Architecture*, 95. Searle confesses that not everyone will be capable of reading semiotically: “As is the case with written texts, not every reader will take the time to undertake a really close reading, but will skim the signifying object more or less unthinkingly and ‘make sense’ of it. Nonetheless, whatever the reader may make of it, however the viewer may react to it, the building is there, awaiting our attention.”

this discourse. It is an attempt to re-enact and to re-enunciate the text.<sup>172</sup>

Whether he was before his time in trying to apply semiotics to the study of liturgy or whether resistance from fellow scholars discredited his contribution, Searle simply was not graced with enough time in his life to forge a path with this approach to hermeneutics. It must be added that, while Searle was trying to enhance the seriousness of the project of liturgical studies, he was extremely busy on the speaking-circuit articulating the pastoral need to begin a “new” liturgical movement. It is this dimension of his academic career that is the subject of the next chapter.

---

<sup>172</sup> Lukken, “Liturgy and Language: An Approach from Semiotics,” *Questions liturgiques* 73 (1992) 50. See also Daniel Patte, “Preface,” in *Semiology and Parables: Exploration of the Possibilities Offered by Structuralism for Exegesis*, Ed. Daniel Patte (Pittsburgh, PA: The Pickwick Press, 1976) xviii. Patte writes: “Semiotic analysis cannot but be disconcerting and disquieting to the reader because it does not establish a meaning as *the* meaning of a text, i.e., as a meaning which could be part of a meaningful system upon which the reader could quietly settle down. . . Hermeneutic must then be viewed as an open-ended process which reflects the open-endedness of human communication.”

## Chapter VII

### ***Launching a New Liturgical Movement***

The indisputable cornerstone of postconciliar liturgical reform mandated by the Council Fathers is the participation of all the faithful gathered for the act of worship. This mandate is expressed with clarity in *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 14:

It is very much the wish of the church that all the faithful should be led to take that full, conscious, and active part in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy, and to which the Christian people, “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people” (1 Pet 2:9,4-5) have a right and to which they are bound by reason of their Baptism. *In the restoration and development of the sacred liturgy the full and active participation by all the people is the paramount concern, for it is the primary, indeed the indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit.*<sup>1</sup>

While it is necessary to keep this ideal at the forefront of liturgical reform, there is no denying that the concept of “participation” receives a variety of interpretations in both the realms of theology and of pastoral implementation.<sup>2</sup> It is no easy task to evaluate what constitutes “full, conscious, and active” participation. For example, from the perspective of a cantor, participation might mean to get each member of the worshipping community to sing,

---

<sup>1</sup> *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 14 in Flannery, *The Basic Sixteen Documents*. Emphasis mine. This ideal is described further in Number 30: “To develop active participation, the people should be encouraged to take part by means of acclamations, responses, psalms, antiphons, hymns, as well as by actions, gestures and bodily attitudes. And at the proper time a reverent silence should be observed.”

<sup>2</sup> See for example, Frederick R. McManus, *Liturgical Participation: An Ongoing Assessment*, 2. McManus states: “Like liturgical ‘adaptation’—another issue and another ideal and goal—participation is a key word which may be narrowly or broadly conceived. It may cover many elements of worship, many degrees and levels, many occasions to shore up past progress and to seek creative growth.”

while from the viewpoint of the presider, concern for participation may entail proclaiming the eucharistic prayer in a way that is prayerful and conducive for the assembly's devotion. Furthermore, on a theological level, participation may be looked at from how the liturgy promotes an immediate experience of revelation or from how it leads to a developing sense of belonging in Christ.<sup>3</sup>

In promoting active participation as a major *leitmotiv* of liturgical reform, the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council certainly hoped that the liturgy itself would again become a pattern of life for the Christian community. The shift from "passive" to "active" liturgical involvement was not to be the goal in and of itself, but rather, such participation was intended to foster greater Christian identity and communion with God. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 48 makes clear this aim:

The church, therefore, spares no effort in trying to ensure that, 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 to offer themselves. Through Christ, the Mediator, they should

---

<sup>3</sup> Active participation was a topic Searle considered early on in his academic career. See Searle, "Active Participation," 65, 72. Regarding the diverse ways of interpreting participation, he writes: "[P]articipation can only be authentic when it springs from a sense of belonging. Yet there are different ways and levels of belonging. One may belong sociologically by identification with one's local parish, or psychologically by feeling 'at home' in a certain congregation. At yet another level, one may 'lend' oneself to an event, being caught up in shared activity. Finally, there is a form of participation based on a common awareness of being involved in sacramental behavior; i.e., of being part of a gathering whose very occurrence and whose every act is significant of the profound mystery of God's involvement with his people' (65). Therefore, Searle identifies the real issue for liturgical participation as a theological issue of failing to operate out of the deeper regions of belonging, in which the worshipping community discovers its identity in Christ. He continues: "Active participation is nothing more nor less than the realization and activation of the common life of Christ into which we are initiated by baptism. The right and duty of active participation is the right and duty to discover the immeasurable dimensions of our life together in the Spirit of Christ. It is the right and duty to lose one's life in order to find it in the common life of the one Body" (72).

be drawn day by day into ever more perfect union with God and each other, so that finally God may be all in all.<sup>4</sup>

Clearly, liturgical action, both in its purpose and in its enactment, paves the way for a formative encounter with the divine. Therefore, at the very foundation of the Second Vatican Council's call for the participation of all the faithful in the celebration of the liturgy lies the challenge to learn how to pray as the Body of Christ, a challenge of not simply ceasing private devotion during the liturgy, but of learning how to be formed into a corporate body for worship.

### ***A "Crisis" in Liturgical Renewal***

By the mid-1980s, especially as a result of his work with the Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life, Mark Searle found himself in the circle of scholars and popular writers who were quite critical of the way in which liturgical reform was being implemented in the United States.<sup>5</sup> His fundamental issue was a cultural critique, namely, the growing suspicion

---

<sup>4</sup> *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 48 in Flannery, *The Basic Sixteen Documents*.

<sup>5</sup> See for example M. Francis Mannion, "Liturgy and the Present Crisis of Culture," *Worship* 62 (1988): 98-123. Mannion writes: "If the liturgy is to recover once again its power to transform the social and cultural environments, it will be necessary for the church and those in positions of leadership and influence to confront the deleterious dynamics presently operative in liturgical theology and practice. This cannot, of course, be a purely negative project. While I have been severely critical of the ecclesial and liturgical appropriations of the cultural dynamics identified in this essay, these dynamics should not be confused with some important features of the modern sensibility and of post-conciliar reform" (120). For Mannion, the way forward lies in reconnecting subjective experience with objective discipline: "*The problem is not essentially in the search for an experience of the church that is hospitable, involving, and supportive, but in the tendency to absolutize intimacy as the principal element of authentic Christian community to the effect that the public, formal, and institutional elements of the church are rejected as meaningless and inauthentic*" (121). Emphasis mine. See also ). See also Luis Maldonado, "The Church's Liturgy: Present and Future," in *Toward Vatican III: The Work That Needs to Be Done*, Eds. David Tracy and Hans Küng (New York: The Seabury Press, 1978) 221-237. Maldonado suggests that reform has trimmed away too much ritual symbolism: "In the course of these recent years nostalgia has increased for a liturgy clothed in authentically expressive and beautiful forms. The artistic dimension of worship, so absent in postconciliar liturgies, is today truly missed" (228-229). This essay appears in MSP, C-14: "Since Vatican II." From the perspective of a popular columnist, see John Garvey, "Let Liturgy Be Liturgy: Stop Trying to Put a New Spin on It," *Commonweal* (December 3, 1982): 648-649. In this rather inflammatory editorial, Garvey posits: "The solution is not a return to the old liturgy but rather an appreciation of the fact that we are called by our faith to transformation, something which liturgy ought to assist us in. That means not an affirmation of time, emotion, and language as we ordinarily perceive it, but help in



of ritual behavior in general in an every-increasingly secular society. Again and again, Searle touted the phrase that, for true reform to take place, we must learn to “trust” the liturgy.<sup>6</sup> “That we have lost faith in the efficacy of instituted rites,” posits Searle, “is manifest in the way we commonly regard the liturgy as something that we do for God or ourselves, rather than as something that God (in Christ) does for us.”<sup>7</sup>

It is necessary to frame Searle’s critique within his overall project to develop “pastoral liturgical studies,” for it is the examination of aspects of liturgical reform that have been less than successful that fulfills the “critical” task, the third component of his method.<sup>8</sup> After providing a description of the actual liturgical event (the “empirical” task), and after attempting to understand how the various symbols function in the communication complex

---

seeing those common elements of our lives in depth, and this demands a radical shift in perspective. . . The perfect church service would be one we were almost unaware of; our attention would have been on God” (649). This editorial appears in MSP, H -28: “‘Let Liturgy Be Liturgy’ ? Garvey.”

<sup>6</sup> For example, in 1984, Searle writes: “The only important thing is to trust the liturgy and the presence of the Spirit, allowing them to pray through one” (See Searle, “Images and Worship, 113). In 1991, Searle published an article that incorporated the phrase “trust the ritual.” See Searle, “Trust the Ritual or Face ‘The Triumph of Bad Taste’,” 21. He writes: “It is God’s gift that evokes our response. *That, in the end, is why we have to put our trust in the efficacy of the instituted rites and the ineffable richness of our symbols.* To do otherwise can only be to trivialize them and turn them into human performances. Now *that* is what I would call the triumph of bad taste!” Emphasis mine.

<sup>7</sup> Searle, “Trust the Ritual or Face ‘The Triumph of Bad Taste’,” 19. See also Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973). Regarding the mistrust of ritual, Douglas writes: “One of the gravest problems of our day is the lack of commitment to common symbols. If this were all, there would be little to say. If it were merely a matter of our fragmentation into small groups, each committed to its proper symbolic forms, the case would be simply to understand. But more mysterious is a wide-spread, explicit rejection of rituals as such. Ritual is become a bad word signifying empty conformity. We are witnessing a revolt against formalism, even against form” (19).

<sup>8</sup> See Searle, “New Tasks, New Methods,” 302. He writes: “If the empirical task of pastoral liturgy is to attend to what actually goes on in the rite, and if the hermeneutical task is to reflect upon how the symbolic complex we call liturgy operates, the findings of those two sets of undertakings will continually have to be compared with the historical tradition and with theological claims made for the liturgy.” This is the critical function of pastoral liturgical studies. See also Kevin W. Irwin, “Critiquing Recent Liturgical Critics,” *Worship* 74 (2000): 2-19. Here Irwin echoes Searle’s belief that “critical liturgy” is not simple critique of isolated liturgical forms but rather assessment of liturgical *actio* of the living Church. He writes: “If in fact the present reforms of the liturgy—both in the liturgical books and in actual pastoral experience—fail to serve active participation and full appropriation of what is experienced ritually—then the critical task for liturgical theology is obviously required to deepen what the reform has undertaken. It is too easy and simplistic to revert to the former rites of the medieval church as the way to ritualize our faith life in liturgy. The more difficult task is to assess strengths and weaknesses in the present state of the liturgy and to deepen what has been undertaken” (19).

(the “hermeneutical” task), it then becomes the pastoral theologian’s job to assess whether or not the lived experience of liturgy matches what is said of it both theologically and historically.<sup>9</sup> The “critical” task makes pastoral liturgy somewhat threatening to the status quo, for as Searle writes:

[I]n accepting the gospel as the living criterion of acceptable and unacceptable practice in the church, pastoral liturgy will exercise as critical and prescriptive function. Precisely because of this final critical function, it should be obvious that pastoral liturgical studies cannot lend themselves to the agenda of implementing official liturgical reforms, for its task must include a critical evaluation both of the official reforms and of the mode of implementation.<sup>10</sup>

Therefore, it is important to place the rather vigorous criticisms Searle launches in the last few years of his life in the context of being the capstone of his empirical and hermeneutical research and writings. In other words, his work with the Notre Dame Study and his immersion in the world of symbolic language (especially through his interest in semiotics) served to fulfill tasks one and two of his three-fold method. Now, he believed he had developed a solid platform upon which to broadcast more critically his opinions on the direction of liturgical reform.

Several pieces of writing convey clearly Searle’s belief that liturgical reform was in a state of “crisis.” The first article is found in the November 18, 1988 edition of *Commonweal* and is entitled “Renewing the Liturgy—Again: ‘A’ for the Council, ‘C’ for the Church.” He begins by stating that, twenty-five years after its promulgation, the vision of *Sacrosanctum*

---

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 307. It is Searle’s contention that the Church has suffered from theological claims that have failed to be supported by the actual practice of the worshipping community: “In the first place, the statements of the church concerning the liturgy which were subjected to theological commentary have almost exclusively been the official statements of the church, not the statements of the faithful at large. Secondly, the study of the actual worship life of the church has likewise been largely restricted to the study of the texts employed in worship, to the neglect of nontextual elements. This was inevitable as long as there were no satisfactory methods available to theologians to render the ‘actual worship life’ of the church into a form suitable for study.”

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 304-305.

*Concilium* “is still not widely understood or fully implemented.”<sup>11</sup> Searle once again employs the caution uttered by Romano Guardini to the German bishops in 1964, when he suggested that the centerpiece of reform must be to “relearn a forgotten way of doing things and recapture lost attitudes,” and he writes:

By this, Guardini meant recovering in the church at large a capacity for what he called “the liturgical act” or “liturgical-symbolic” actions: a capacity for uttering and understanding words and gestures in such a way as to recognize them as corporal expressions of spiritual realities; and above all, to recognize in them the reality of Christ’s presence among and to his people. It is probably not unfair to say that, despite the enormous educational effort that accompanies the “new liturgy,” it rarely achieved the depth which Guardini warned was necessary: that of relearning a forgotten way of doing things and recapturing lost attitudes. So the new rites came into use in a church whose people were not attuned to them and whose buildings and music were designed on the basis of a different theology and a different conception of church.<sup>12</sup>

Searle suggests that the very purpose of liturgical reform is about an attitudinal change in the Church; the hope of the Council Fathers was that the way in which the Church prays would serve to change the way in which the Church understands its identity, not only interiorly, but in relationship to the world.<sup>13</sup> Searle describes this necessary restored attitude in the following terms: “[L]iturgical celebration is a participation in the very life and activity of the

---

<sup>11</sup> Searle, “Renewing the Liturgy—Again: ‘A’ for the Council, ‘C’ for the Church,” 617.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 618.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. Searle writes: “The opening paragraph of the *LC* (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy) suggests that to vote for reform was to take a practical step toward realizing the overall purpose of Vatican II, the deepening and broadening of the Christian sense of collective identity and mission. To this end, the council made it clear—even in the somewhat ungainly shape of the document—that it was set on changing not only the way Catholics *did* the liturgy, but the way we *thought* about the liturgy, and thus the way we thought about ourselves as church. If the new liturgy could not presuppose a conversion of mind and heart, it was hoped it might provoke one by calling Catholic Christians back to the basics of their common life in Christ.”

triune God, representing and accomplishing the outreach of God toward creation and return of creation to God in Christ by the action of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>14</sup>

In addition to the failure to reorient the attitude of the Church, Searle argues that this manifests itself as an inability to understand the dynamics of liturgical participation. “In general,” writes Searle, “liturgical practice reveals a widespread failure to grasp the *theological* import of the concept of participation.”<sup>15</sup> This is not to say that the assembly as a whole is not more active in the liturgy than it was prior to the reform initiated by the Second Vatican Council, but rather, this means that this rise in activity tends not to go deeper than the external surface of the ritual performance. Searle maintains:

Thus, liturgical participation is more than just “joining in”: it is first and foremost a conscious and willed participation in the acting out of the relationship of Christ to the Father, expressed in worship of God and the sanctification of human beings, both of which are inseparable dimensions of the Paschal mystery of self-sacrificial submission to the will of God. It is for this reason that the council encouraged all the faithful “to take part by means of acclamations, responses, psalmody, antiphons, and songs, as well as by actions, gestures, and bodily attitudes.” Not that that these things *of themselves* constitute the “active participation” the council had in mind, but that they are intended to “promote” it as effective signs of this inner mystery. *Thus, the “grammar” of the rite, and the texts and actions which it governs, were intended to rehearse the faithful in that mystery which is Christ among us.*<sup>16</sup>

For Searle, the fundamental issue here is the need for a refocusing on the very nature of participation. Historically speaking, this was a component of the aesthetic dimension of the liturgical movement, which in Searle’s assessment “had only limited impact in the English-

---

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 619.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 620. Searle continues: “In part, this may be the result of the very process of introducing changes which, despite the catechetical effort led by Paul VI himself, tended to focus popular attention on the practical aspects of liturgical change rather than on the mystery at the heart of the liturgical event. *The profound spiritual meaning of liturgical participation was overshadowed by the problem of how to get everybody to join in the singing.*” Emphasis mine.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. Emphasis mine.

speaking world.”<sup>17</sup> In his view, the liturgical movement, by and large, prepared Catholics for the fact that change was coming but did not pave the way for understanding how change should be implemented. As a result, Searle identifies a crisis for the Church: “Even now, the fundamental problems of the reform are still with us, and the renewal that the council hoped for remains elusive.”<sup>18</sup>

The failure to understand the dynamics of liturgical participation, in which the assembly moves through the ritual activity in order to contemplate the Paschal Mystery and the presence of Christ in the gathered Church, is amplified by a cultural suspicion of ritual behavior in general.<sup>19</sup> In fact, Searle argues that the liturgy ends up manifesting the triumph

---

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. Searle reinforces his opinion with evidence from the Notre Dame Study: “Research into the liturgical life of American parishes, such as that of the *Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life*, confirms the impression that the liturgical life of the American church is pretty much in the doldrums. Most parishes make some effort with one of their Masses, but Saturday evening Masses and the other Sunday Masses are usually rather soulless affairs. Even at the main Mass, a certain symbolic minimalism seems to reign. Communion continues to be administered quite regularly from the tabernacle, for example, and Communion from the cup is not always available. Gospel processions are virtually unknown. Much of the music selected for singing at Mass appears to be chosen because it is singable rather than because it is suited to its liturgical function.”

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 621. Here Searle suggests that participation can be likened to “contemplation.” See also Searle, *Called to Participate: Theological, Ritual, and Social Perspectives*, 46-67. He concludes: “This chapter has presented a contemplative approach to selected aspects of the liturgy, attempting to explicate what Guardini hinted at when he spoke of the ‘liturgical act’ and of ‘lost attitudes’ and ‘forgotten way of doing things.’ The ‘liturgical act’ is essentially a sacramental mindset, a way of looking and seeing more than meets the eye. It has everything to do with faith, ‘the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen’ (Heb 11:1), brought to bear on any part of the liturgy or on the liturgy as a whole” (66). See also Mary Collins, *Contemplative Participation: Sacrosanctum Concilium Twenty-five Years Later* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1990) 82-83. Collins chooses the term “contemplative participation” in order “to press our understanding beyond what we have commonly understood by the call for full, conscious, and active participation.” She continues: “Contemplatives are attentive to presence. They are present to the mystery within which all life is lived. They are alert to and wait for manifestations of the sacred within the mundane.” Furthermore, she calls for moving beyond the ritual level: “Sometimes in all this activity we have come dangerously close to wearying ourselves with ritual busyness. Yet subtly the ritual engagement—now become more familiar—is drawing the laity into mystery at levels beyond what we initially intended or understood to be possible. *We are moving from self-conscious activity to contemplative participation, rooted in the experience of the mystery of grace.*” Emphasis mine. For a fine study of the cultural suspicion toward ritual behavior, see Adam B. Seligman, Robert P. Weller, Michael J. Puett, and Bennett Simon, *Ritual and Its Consequences: An Essay on the Limits of Sincerity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008). Although written more than fifteen years after Searle’s death, this work carefully details the modern-day suspicion of ritual in favor of “sincere” behavior and speech. For example, the authors contend: “Indeed, the entire world of liberal modernity can be usefully understood in terms of the toposes of sincerity. The centrality of the individual and the

of individualism over corporate contemplation of participation in Christ.<sup>20</sup> He provides the following critique:

Indeed, the freedom of choice built into the revised *Ordo missae* has meant that congregations have experienced an increase in the idiosyncrasies of the presider and whoever else may be in a position to impose their personal tastes on the style of the celebration. It was not the intention of the revisers of the *Ordo* to undermine what Guardini called the “objectivity” of the rite, but that is largely what has happened. *The revised liturgy has proved highly susceptible to the individualism of our culture, rather than becoming, as the promoters of the liturgical movement had hoped, a bulwark against it.*<sup>21</sup>

In light of this critique, Searle maintains that what is needed is not further manipulation of the liturgy to make it resilient against unwanted cultural forces, but rather, what is called for is a widespread program of catechesis aimed at teaching the principles of reform: “The time has come, surely, to relaunch the liturgical movement.”<sup>22</sup> While he acknowledges that a “new” liturgical movement would necessarily seek to solidify the understanding of the most

---

valuation of the private are after all central to the normative program of liberal, enlightened modernity. From this follows modernity’s extremely discursive character, its cultural stress on the unique and singular, and in this country anyway, its privileging of individual choice above repetitive action” (118).

<sup>20</sup> See Searle, “A Place in the Tradition,” 302. He writes: “The Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life, however, suggests that the real rift in American Catholicism is not between pre and post-conciliar attitudes, but between individualistic religion and communal religion.” Searle continues on the following page: “The biggest threat to the Church in America today is not old-fashioned attitudes, but voluntarism: the belief that no one has the right to make demands upon you or teach you or require anything of you that you would rather not do. Its opposite is not blind obedience but a sense of vocation to serve the larger community and to be part of a faith community that serves the world by being obedient servants of Word and Sacrament.”

<sup>21</sup> Searle, “Renewing the Liturgy—Again: ‘A’ for the Council, ‘C’ for the Church,” 621. Emphasis mine. Searle continues by arguing that the contemporary scene even allows for the choice to dismiss the liturgy as the foundation of the Christian life: “A similar lack of appreciation for the ‘givenness’ of the liturgy as the work of Christ at the heart of the church’s life is evident in the neglect of liturgy shown by postconciliar renewal movement. Whether targeted at the individual or working within the parish, they rarely advert to the liturgical life of the church, still less draw their inspiration from it. Another sign of neglect is that most writings on prayer manage to ignore the question of liturgical prayer and of the particular skills it requires.”

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. Searle proposes the involvement of the following groups in the enactment of the movement: “A new liturgical movement would have to look for leadership to bodies such as the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions, the Liturgical Conference, the National Pastoral Musicians, as well as to the various liturgical centers around the country, including the Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy and the International Commission on the English Liturgy. But these groups would have to agree very firmly on the agenda of such a movement and act in concert to promote it.”

basic principles of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*—principles such as participation, the nature of “sacrament,” and the link between the Church and the world—Searle’s fundamental concern is concentration on Guardini’s concept of “the liturgical act.” “The primary task of a new liturgical movement,” Searle posits, “would be the same as that of the old movement: to improve the quality of our common prayer, especially in parishes, so that our liturgies expose us to the transforming fire.”<sup>23</sup>

Turning to a second article that demonstrates his use of the critical task of “pastoral liturgical studies,” the January 1988 issue of *Celebration* contains Searle’s oft-overlooked “Forgotten Truths about Worship.”<sup>24</sup> Although he does not develop the call for a new liturgical movement in this article, he sets out to challenge the notion that prayer in general, and liturgy in particular, needs to be novel and new in order for it to be “authentic.” As Searle contends: “We tend rather to assume that it is our God-given right to pray as we please, or as suits us best.”<sup>25</sup> Thus, Searle sets out to discuss what he calls four interrelated art-forms, or “participatory skills,” that must be learned by assemblies striving to pray “in

---

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. While Searle envisions the liturgical movement enhancing the parish liturgy, he recognizes that it must interact with and incorporate developments in contemporary theology. He writes: “One of the strengths of the old liturgical movement was its close association with the best systematic theology of its time in the Roman Catholic church. Since the council, theology has gone off in a multitude of directions with little apparent connection to the worship life of the church, while liturgical studies have, with a few exceptions, become theologically impoverished. Any revival of the liturgical movement must seek to reopen the dialogue with systematic theology. . . . There is need for a new praxis-based theology of the liturgy, a critical theology with the tools to interpret our own liturgies to us. If the preconiliar movement derived its energy from the recovery of patristic sources, perhaps the new liturgical movement will find its inspiration in the intersection between tradition and contemporary culture as this occurs in the experience of millions of American Christians every Sunday” (622).

<sup>24</sup> Mark Searle, “Forgotten Truths about Worship,” *Celebration* 17 (January 1988): 5-10. The editor introduces the article with the following comment: “*Celebration* members are rightly committed to lively liturgy, but is boredom our greatest enemy? A master liturgist here argues that we must be concerned about more than just dullness” (5).

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. Concerning the issue of authenticity, Searle continues: “Consequently, liturgical prayer often seems inauthentic and impersonal unless it makes room for our particular approach to prayer, whether that be spontaneous, silent or shared.”

Christ and the church.”<sup>26</sup> These skills are: (1) silence, (2) action, (3) speech, and (4) music and song. While exploring these particular topics does not represent a new contribution on Searle’s part, it is important to return to them in the context of this stage in his academic career, when he accentuates the critical function of pastoral liturgy.

Acknowledging that it may appear strange to call silence a “participatory skill,” Searle offers the following defense: “Liturgy, it might be said, is silence accompanied by words and stillness accompanied by gestures.”<sup>27</sup> It must be admitted that, due to the flexibility of spontaneous introductions on the part of the presider, liturgical prayer often suffers from what Searle calls the “tide of verbosity.”<sup>28</sup> Yet Searle writes:

[I]t is from the silent depths of our innermost being that the Spirit rises, and it is into that Spirit-filled depth that the Word enters and there resounds. Thus, at the beginning of any liturgy, or in response to the invitation “Let us pray,” we need to settle down and still the clamor of our preoccupations and distractions, to reach down even beyond the depths of our personal silence into those depths of silence where we are all one. . . . [A]ctive participation, in which the Word of God will pierce our innermost being and the prayer of Christ will surge up from the depths of the Spirit, requires first and foremost a profound self-emptying. This self-emptying is to expose us to the depths of the real self, *so the silence is not a privatistic, individualistic withdrawal from the presence of the community so much as it is a moment of*

---

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 7. The phrase “in Christ and the church,” is central to Searle’s understanding of liturgical prayer and will become even more apparent in subsequent writings on his outlook for the future of liturgical reform. In this article “in Christ and the church” is a subheading, and Searle writes: “Now there are two kinds of prayer and worship in the liturgy. In the first, we act as body of Christ, singing, praying and acting in his name for the glory of God and the sanctification of humanity. This is why most prayers in the liturgy are directed to God through Christ in the unity of the Holy Spirit. But there is another dimension of prayer, when we ourselves as church pray to Christ and acclaim him. Examples include the *Kyrie*, the acclamation of Christ sung as the church assembles and assumes the role of his body; or the *Agnus Dei*, when Christ is acclaimed as God’s gift to us, the one whose sacrificial death made our peace with God. In the liturgy, we tend to go back and forth between the two: as body we address the Father, as bride of Christ we address the Son.”

<sup>27</sup> Searle, “Forgotten Truths about Worship,” 8. See also Joseph Dougherty, “Silence in the Liturgy,” *Worship* 69 (1995): 142-154. Although written shortly after Searle’s death, this article provides a worthwhile description of silence as “language.” For example, Dougherty writes: “Silence betokens, then, the anti-structural elements on the continuum between society and individual, and thus silence enables the individual’s appropriation of the communal. Silence also verifies the individuality of the person and the existence of the Other to whom worship is addressed” (154).

<sup>28</sup> See Searle, “Semper Reformanda: The Opening and Closing Rites of the Mass,” 72.



*recollection in which the community itself is re-collected in a common coming-to-consciousness of the depths at which we are one.*<sup>29</sup>

In a 1982 *Assembly* editorial, Searle outlines six “modalities” of silence that are part of liturgical prayer.<sup>30</sup> Here he concludes: “What all these forms of silence have in common is that they lead us to the point where we discover the limitations of speech and action, that point which is the threshold of mystery.”<sup>31</sup> When examining silence as a liturgical skill to be mastered, it is important to recognize the difference between, on the one hand, doing or saying nothing, and, on the other hand, being captivated by awe. It is this latter “modality” of silence that Searle believes is the “fruit” of rehearsal: “It is not the silence of facing the void, but a silence of encountering Presence: dreadful yet thankful, joyful yet sober, awesome yet somehow reassuring.”<sup>32</sup>

The second “participatory skill” to be practiced is action. Searle acknowledges at the outset: “Liturgy is ritual, action, something to be done.”<sup>33</sup> However, this “something to be

---

<sup>29</sup> Searle, “Forgotten Truths about Worship,” 8. Emphasis mine.

<sup>30</sup> See Mark Searle, “Silence,” *Assembly* 9 (1982): 177, 184. The six “modalities” of silence are as follows: (1) Silence when nothing is happening; (2) The silence of centering; (3) The silence of guilt; (4) The silence of preparation; (5) The silence of communion; and (6) The silence of awe. With regard to the third “modality,” for instance, Searle argues that the liturgical assembly must learn the difference between an individualistic centering and a liturgical centering: “There is a necessary exercise of silence in which the participants, as individuals and as congregation, ‘center’ themselves, allow the inner noise to settle and prepare to put down roots into the deep Self. Very often, such an exercise is conceived of in highly individualistic terms, which would seem to run counter to the communal character of our worship: as if each of us is withdrawing beneath an invisible cowl of private introversion. There is a place for such interior withdrawal, but it is not the liturgy of the Church. Liturgical silence as a centering exercise means a shared silence. . . . In liturgical silence it is the Body which centers itself in the silence, enters into the silence to become aware of itself precisely as Body animated by the one Spirit.”

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 184.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Searle, “Forgotten Truths about Worship,” 8. See Antonio Donghi, *Actions and Words: Symbolic Language and the Liturgy*, Trans. William McDonough and Dominic Serra (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1997). Donghi provides a contemplative examination of ritual actions as language. He writes: “We know that every exterior element of liturgical action has a rapport with an internal vitality that works in the heart of every believer and retranslates itself in diverse actions, making them fruitful so that they may help us grow in the

done” demands that the assembly performs “not functionally but sacramentally”—action must reveal the presence and activity of Christ himself.<sup>34</sup> Searle provides the following illustration to substantiate his point:

St. Augustine said that when the priest says “The Body of Christ” and we answer “Amen,” we are saying “Amen” to what we are. We are what we eat! So the question is: how do we behave so as to manifest to each other in the assembly that together we are the blessed sacrament of Christ’s true presence? We have been taught since childhood how to act with regard to the Eucharistic presence, and perhaps even to the priest as a symbol of Christ. But how do we ritualize our own sacramental identity as a congregation. . . *So the actions of the rite need to be rooted in the silence and stillness that bespeak this mystery and to be performed that it is not I who act or we who act but Christ who acts—sits, stands, walks, embraces, touches, bows—in me and in us all.*<sup>35</sup>

Searle’s underlying principle here is that liturgy is always about the manifestation of Christ and his action in the gathered Church. For example, in a 1985 *Assembly* editorial, Searle studies the kiss of peace and critiques the way in which this ritual action generally fails to embody the greeting of the Risen Lord to his disciples: “It is less a ‘time out’ than ‘eternity in’: an awesome moment when we realize (in both senses of that word) the presence of the mystery of eschatological peace.”<sup>36</sup> Searle’s point is that, given the typical pattern of

---

faith. The theological life that animates our spirit is true when it enfleshes itself in love in all its dimensions; *every action is a personalization of the one ineffable event of salvation*” (ix). Emphasis mine.

<sup>34</sup> Searle, “Forgotten Truths about Worship,” 8. Searle writes: “It has to be tried and practiced. This is true not only of ministerial actions like setting the gifts on the altar, holding the book of the scriptures, breaking bread, pouring water and so forth. It is equally true of the congregational activities: standing, sitting, kneeling, signing the cross, sharing the kiss of peace and so on. Whether we are ministers ministering or simply members of the congregation, our actions are not our own: we are ourselves part of the sacrament of Christ worshipping the Father and serving the people.”

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 9. Emphasis mine.

<sup>36</sup> Mark Searle, “The Kiss of Peace: Ritual Act and Image of the Kingdom,” *Assembly* 11 (1985): 280. On the seriousness of the ritual action, Searle writes: “What is essential, with the handshake now as with the kiss before, is that the manner of its accomplishment should bespeak the seriousness of the event, and that the words accompanying it define the meaning of the act: ‘Peace be with you.’ The biblical-liturgical meaning of the term ‘peace’, the exchange of breath (spirit) symbolism of the mouth-to-mouth kiss, and the liturgical context of

enactment of the kiss of peace, it would be very difficult for most in our assemblies to contemplate the greeting of Christ amongst his gathered disciples. Failure to understand the ritual action stems from a failure to enact the gesture in a way that speaks of “reverence,” or allowing the action to speak for itself.<sup>37</sup>

The third “participatory skill” outlined by Searle is speech. Like the concept of action, speech seems a relatively simple idea. However, Searle makes the point that, in the context of ritual, speech often functions to perform an action; to say something is to do something. For example, repentance is manifested when the words of the penitential rite are expressed. “What is important here,” Searle contends, “is less that we be in a penitential mood or an exultant mood, as the case may be, than that we let the rite carry us and form us, evoking attitudes—rather than expressing feelings—of repentance or gladness.”<sup>38</sup> It is this characteristic of ritual that often gives rise to the charge that ritual is inauthentic, as it does not allow for the individual expression of feelings. However, that is precisely the point: participants in liturgical prayer are required to learn that this type of formal, repetitive, communal activity stirs up attitudes that we may not even recognize as our own. Searle

---

the greeting must control its present day ritualization. *This would seem to preclude the general free-for-all of greetings, huggings, smiles and conversation which sometimes erupts and disrupts the liturgy of the Peace.*” Emphasis mine.

<sup>37</sup> See Searle, “Forgotten Truths about Worship,” 8. The following sentence captures how Searle understands reverence in the liturgy: “Our usual word for this special quality, to demonstrate that this action both is and is not our own, is ‘reverence.’ Jews call it *kavvanah*, which means something like ‘attentiveness.’ In Zen it might be called ‘no-thought,’ because instead of putting oneself into the act, one—as it were—stands aside and allows the act to proceed of itself.” See also Mark Searle, “For the Glory of God: The Scrutiny for the Fifth Sunday of Lent,” *Catechumenate* 10 (1988): 42. Here Searle addresses the act of the elect kneeling during the scrutinies and writes that such a position of “self-abasement” effects an attitude even if that is not the felt response of the elect: “Note that this is not a matter of burdening the elect with guilt: precisely because the knowledge of their enslavement to sin comes in the very moment of their being freed and forgiven, their acknowledgment of guilt can be an occasion of great joy. *But, whatever their feelings, the ritual act of self-abasement conveys an attitude of repentance and of hope, as the elect entrust themselves to the ministry of the church and the power of Christ.*” Emphasis mine.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

writes: “Ultimately, it is not what *we* intend or mean by the words that counts, but what the church means and intends, and we only get to know that by ‘overhearing’ the prayer of Christ and the church.”<sup>39</sup>

The final “participatory skill” Searle outlines in “Forgotten Truths about Worship” is music and song. Although music and song are commonly associated with feelings, they take on a different role in the context of ritual, for their “form is entirely predictable and not at all spontaneous.”<sup>40</sup> Searle contends that music and song function in liturgy to shape our attitude, our worldview:

If we distinguish between feeling as *mood* and feeling as *attitude*, song and ritual both serve to shape attitudes rather than to express moods. One reason this is important is that we are not always responsible for our moods, but we are somewhat responsible for our attitudes. For example, I may not feel in the mood to offer congratulations to someone who deserves congratulating but the ritual murmuring, “Congratulations,” is an act of congratulating that expresses an attitude of goodwill and admiration.<sup>41</sup>

As the data from the Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life readily suggested to Searle, liturgical music and singing remain a huge issue in ongoing reform, not simply in the style and form of the music itself but in enabling worshippers to understand and value the necessary place of music in worship.<sup>42</sup> Searle suggests that its primary function is to call

---

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. See also Mark Searle, “Liturgical Language,” *Assembly* 13 (1986): 337. In this short editorial, Searle describes both the creative and destructive power of the word: “It is from the fabric of speech that we create the world in which we live; through speech that we constantly expand our horizons of knowing; through speech that we act and interact to construct a common world . . . Conversely, carelessness with the word—whether the Word of God or the words of the Church—is like the desecration of a sacrament, preventing by trivialization, shoddiness or irreverence the awesome power of the word to convoke, to bless, to enjoin, to absolve, to reveal, to call to prayer.”

<sup>40</sup> Searle, “Forgotten Truths about Worship,” 10.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> See Searle, “Observations on Parish Liturgy,” 260. Concerning the state of liturgical music, he writes: “The conciliar reforms also heavily favored congregational singing, but the state of sung liturgy in this country often leaves something to be desired. Thirteen percent of the Masses had no music at all, 51% had no organ

individual participants to an attitude of humility and surrender in which they adopt the rhythm of the rite. “The function of the rite,” Searle concludes, “is not so much to express our feelings—though, if it does, that is a bonus—so much as it is to attune us to the deeper reality of the continuing prayer of Christ in the Spirit.”<sup>43</sup>

Perhaps it would be helpful to emphasize the chief attitude underlying these four “participatory skills” that demands the mastery of all participants in liturgical prayer. Quite simply, Searle advocates that worshippers must come to the liturgy with an attitude of surrender. A liturgy in which individual worshippers cling to their own preoccupations and seek to fulfill their own needs is no Christian liturgy at all. Searle writes:

All of us who gather with the assembly need to know that all that is asked of us is that we be open, vulnerable, trusting: hollow reeds through which the Spirit of Christ may make music to God. If so, the liturgy will shape us and the melody will linger on long after it is over, carried into home and marketplace, into the liturgy of life itself.<sup>44</sup>

While some may object to the term “hollow reeds,” which makes participants in liturgy appear to be quite passive in nature, Searle’s emphasis is that openness and emptiness on our part allow God the ability to make music in us.<sup>45</sup>

---

accompaniment, 62% had no cantor, 66% had no choir or music group to lead the congregation. One in four of the parishes visited provided the *Glory and Praise* book, while 40% altogether had some kind of ‘folk’ hymnal. In fact, ‘folk’ was the dominant music of 46% of Masses observed compared with hymns which dominated at only 34% of Masses.”

<sup>43</sup> Searle, “Forgotten Truths about Worship,” 10. See also Bernard Cooke, “The Sacraments as the Continuing Acts of Christ,” in *Readings in Sacramental Theology*, Ed. C. Stephen Sullivan (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1964) 31-52. Cooke writes: “In the task of assimilating his own worshipful attitude to that of Christ in the sacramental actions lies the Christian’s most profound application of the Apostle’s exhortation, ‘Put on Christ Jesus’ (Rom 13:14). . . [T]his human attitude of Christ that expresses both his priesthood and His grace, is itself an instrumental cause effecting the Church’s sacramental act of worship. Through the attitude of sacrificial worship which animates the Christian in his sacramental actions flows Christ’s own attitude, and it is this latter that communicates to our Christian sacramental activity its priestly efficacy” (49-50).

<sup>44</sup> Searle, “Forgotten Truths about Worship,” 10.

<sup>45</sup> What is central here is that members of the assembly must prepare themselves to be self-emptied; this does not happen without being properly disposed. See Austin Fleming, *Preparing for Liturgy: A Theology and Spirituality* (Washington, D.C.: The Pastoral Press, 1985): 31-41. Fleming argues that liturgy “planning” is a

### *Liturgy as a Social Critique*

While Searle's call to relaunch the liturgical movement is undoubtedly rooted in the reestablishment of a contemplative understanding of the nature of ritual (i.e. repetition, formality, patterned behavior), he also saw liturgy as providing a valuable critique on culture that would simultaneously critique the Church in the world. Although Searle had long viewed liturgy as a lens for critique,<sup>46</sup> he easily gleaned further support for his theory by virtue of the findings of the Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life and other studies of American culture in the 1980s. Thus, in 1990, Searle published "Private Religion, Individualistic Society, and Common Worship," which begins with a study of cultural forces and from there assesses their impact upon liturgical practice.<sup>47</sup> Clearly, this essay represents Searle's most concentrated effort to acknowledge an undeniably negative role that culture has upon the performance of the liturgy in the United States. He offers his theory without apology:

We tend to think too much of what the Church might bring to society and too little of what society is already bringing to the Church. We

---

misconstrued project: "Liturgy cannot be planned . . . liturgy must always be prepared: a ministry of preparation of making ready. While *planning* liturgy may be a misguided and frustrating experience it is a relatively easy task when seen against the alternative of *preparing* for worship. . . The materials involved in this art of preparing for worship are simply and profound: faith in God; and appreciation for things whole, true, and beautiful; love of neighbor; and love for that heritage of prayer which is ours as Christians. Like all good art, this liturgical art is not self-interested and is never self-indulgent. It is ever an act of love, a service done for the glory of God and the good of others. Like fine art, this liturgical artistry is *useless*, which is to say that it has not orientation toward productivity; it neither seeks nor expects compensation of any kind, for the doing of the art is its own reward" (38-39).

<sup>46</sup> See for example, Searle, "Liturgy as Critical of Society," MSP, B-16.

<sup>47</sup> See Mark Searle, "Private Religion, Individualistic Society, and Common Worship," in *Liturgy and Spirituality in Context: Perspectives on Prayer and Culture*, Ed. Eleanor Bernstein (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1990): 27-46. From the outset, Searle argues that adapting the liturgy to culture is not so much a matter of choice as it is a basic reality of culture's strong formative role in the worldviews of worshippers. He writes: "[T]he worship community is formed not only by the liturgy and catechesis, but by the larger culture in which its members live and work. In a sense, this makes talk about adapting the liturgy to our culture somewhat otiose: while we have been talking, adaptation has been happening anyway. It might not be too much of an exaggeration to say that the major transformations occurring in our liturgical practice have occurred not as a result of deliberate decision, but by casual contagion and incorporation" (27).

enthusiasm about what new prayers and new liturgical music might do to shape the liturgical assembly, overlooking the fact that culture has gotten there before us, unconsciously shaping the attitudes and language of both the experts and the participants.<sup>48</sup>

Commenting on this observation, Mark Francis writes: “once the liturgy has been opened to a relationship with local culture, the worship of the Church will be changed—not necessarily by Roman dicasteries, national bishops conferences, liturgical experts or committees—but inevitably and often inadvertently by the cultural patterns or *Zeitgeist* of the human context in which it is celebrated.”<sup>49</sup> Thus, Searle’s objective here, as a pastoral liturgist, is to bring to light and to stimulate reflection upon cultural characteristics that make “genuinely public worship” in America a near impossibility.

For example, a primary cultural characteristic Searle wrestles with is the concept of community. He argues that a post-Vatican II project of many parishes is to focus on “building” a sense of community on the local level; however, the negative side of this objective is the narrowing of one’s interests in and outreach to the wider social (global) arena. Furthermore, it fails to acknowledge the community that is already built up in the Christian assembly by virtue of a common baptism in the Lord.<sup>50</sup> Thus, Searle cautions

---

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Mark R. Francis, “Introduction to ‘Private Religion, Individualistic Society, and Common Worship,’” in Anne Koester and Barbara Searle, eds., *Vision: The Scholarly Contributions of Mark Searle to Liturgical Renewal* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2004) 182. Francis continues: “The received liturgical tradition may indeed be formally altered by liturgical authorities in the interests of making it more intelligible, but experience teaches that much of ritual change usually comes about unconsciously and over time initiated by the people at worship. *While Church authorities and liturgical ministers may change texts and other ritual details, the way the liturgy is prepared and how it is experienced has more to do with the often unintended inculturation that comes about as a result of contact with the cultural context itself.*” Emphasis mine.

<sup>50</sup> See Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together: A Discussion of Christian Fellowship*, Trans. John Doberstein (New York: Harper and Row, 1954) 26. Bonhoeffer writes: “One who wants more than what Christ has established does not want Christian brotherhood. He is looking for some extraordinary social experience which he has not found elsewhere; he is bringing muddled and impure desires into Christian brotherhood. Just at this point Christian brotherhood is threatened most often at the very start by the greatest danger of all, the danger of being

against what he calls a nostalgic yearning to bring “a sense of old-fashioned community to modern life,” for as he writes: “We yearn for the homely togetherness and directness of an earlier and simpler age, but our attempts to restore it merely parody it. Behind the cheery informality of our celebrations and our ‘ministers of hospitality,’ the profoundly impersonal quality of our interactions remains untouched.”<sup>51</sup>

If Searle believes that the typical American experience of Catholic worship is a sentimental search for a feeling of community that is made essentially impossible by virtue of the culture, it must be his task to identify elements of society that work against the very nature of liturgy. Incorporating the findings of leading sociologists, he addresses this objective under four headings: (1) religious privatism, (2) massification, (3) individualism, and (4) civil religion. Beginning with the first topic, Searle argues that, unlike European Christianity, which enjoyed a 1500-year symbiotic relationship between the Church and state, America is fashioned upon the attitude of religion being the distinct domain of the individual. Not only do individuals have the right to choose their religion, but the way in which they practice it follows the pattern of a market economy: churches are in competition

---

pointed at its root, the danger of confusing Christian brotherhood with some wishful idea of religious fellowship, of confounding the natural desire of the devout heart for community with the spiritual reality of Christian brotherhood. In Christian brotherhood everything depends upon its being clear right from the beginning, *first, that Christian brotherhood is not an ideal, but a divine reality.*” This insight clearly influenced Searle’s understanding of community building. See Searle, *Called to Participate: Theological, Ritual, and Social Perspectives*, 71-76.

<sup>51</sup> Searle, “Private Religion, Individualistic Society, and Common Worship,” 28-29. Searle bases his critique that nostalgia masks the pursuit for community upon the work of British sociologist Bryan Wilson. See Bryan Wilson, *Religion in Secular Society* (Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books Inc., 1969). Searle quotes page 115: “The Church, then, represents the values of the agrarian or communal pre-industrial society: its forms are moulded from that stage of social development, and it participates in the warmth, stability and fundamental mutual involvements of a type of communal life. That this community is, in the nature of American society, not so much a fossil and a reproduction piece, is less damaging in the eyes of those who have little experience of community life than in the eyes of visiting Europeans. The synthetic nature of the community-orientation of many American Churches is evident to those from more traditional cultures; the personalized gestures of the impersonal society acquire an almost macabre quality for those who have experienced the natural spontaneous operation of rural community life, in which the Church may fit as a part. And yet it seems evident, whether the Church does fulfill genuine functions of this kind or not, men obviously get some, perhaps purely sentimental, satisfactions from pretending that it does.”



for members, and members choose the brand of religion to meet personal needs.<sup>52</sup> “The result,” writes Searle, “is a tendency for Americans to belong to churches, but on their own terms. They come, not to submit to historical tradition and religious discipline in response to God’s call, but for their own personal reasons and to meet their own personal needs.”<sup>53</sup>

However, private religion is not simply derived from a culture that promotes pluralism as a value for religious practice, it also stems from the specialization of social institutions, a phenomenon that Searle labels “massification.” Searle states: “The term ‘massification’ is intended to identify a stage in the evolution of a society where the different social institutions have become so specialized and the ordering of society so complex that the democratic process can no longer work effectively.”<sup>54</sup> What happens in a society that chases after the goal of efficient mass production (and consumption) is that religious values move out of the mainstream into the sphere of the private individual. As Searle writes:

Most generally and most importantly, the premium placed on cost-efficiency and profitability, on functional specialization and expertise creates a society where the dominant values are functional values and where matters of “ultimate concern” are relegated to the private realm. . . The effect, then, of massification is to reinforce the effects of pluralism, making the individual the sole arbiter of ultimate values and thereby undermining the bonds that create genuine community. *What holds us together as a society is not, as in most societies, a common*

---

<sup>52</sup> See Martin Marty, *The Public Church* (New York: Crossroad, 1981): 25. Comparing the American Church to the free market, Marty write: “The drift of religion today is, if anything, moving towards an utterly free market in which little trace of fate, election, or predestination remains.” Searle quotes Marty on page 30 of his “Private Religion, Individualistic Society, and Common Worship.”

<sup>53</sup> Searle, “Private Religion, Individualistic Society, and Common Worship,” 30.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid. Searle employs the thought of Paulo Freire who writes: “In our highly technical world, mass production as an organization of human labor is possibly one of the most potent instruments of man’s massification. By requiring a man to behave mechanically, mass production domesticates him. By separating his activity from the total project, requiring no total critical attitude toward production, it dehumanizes him. By excessively narrowing a man’s specialization, it constricts his horizons, making of him a passive, fearful, naïve being. And therein lies the chief contradiction of mass production: while amplifying man’s sphere of participation it simultaneously distorts this amplification by reducing man’s critical capacity through exaggerated specialization” (*Education for Critical Consciousness*, 34).

*world view, a “sacred cosmos,” but the patterns of production and consumption into which we are socialized by secular education and the seductions of the mass media.*<sup>55</sup>

If the parameters of the “sacred cosmos” are determined on an individual basis, it becomes increasingly difficult for corporate worship to capture the imagination of its participants. For Searle, the attitudes that contribute to the success of a free market economy are precisely the attitudes that run against the grain of Christian worship.

“Individualism” is the third sociological issue that Searle addresses in the essay, and it is indeed a topic he encountered repeatedly in his work with the Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life. Once again incorporating the research of Robert Bellah on the effects of individualism in this country, Searle contends that the Church in modern America has successfully made the Sunday parish liturgy into a “life-style enclave” composed of like-minded people who share similar interests—the Sunday liturgy is neither valued for nor appropriated as the arena for confrontation to realize itself anew as Christ’s body.<sup>56</sup> Defining the impact of individualism, Searle writes:

The wondrous capacity of human beings to adapt to their environment is strikingly displayed in the manner in which modern people have

---

<sup>55</sup> Searle, “Private Religion, Individualistic Society and Common Worship,” 32. Emphasis mine. See also Thomas Luckmann, *The Invisible Religion* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1967): 58-61. Searle takes the notion of “sacred cosmos” from Luckmann, who writes: “The sacred cosmos is part of the world view. It is socially objectivated in the same manner as the world view as a whole, the special symbolic quality of religious representations notwithstanding. This means that the sacred cosmos forms part of the objective social reality without requiring a distinct and specialized institutional basis. As part of the world view the sacred cosmos stands in a relationship with the social structure as a whole. The sacred cosmos permeates the various, more or less clearly differentiated, institutional areas such as kinship, the division of labor and the regulation of the exercise of power. The sacred cosmos determines directly the entire socialization of the individual and is relevant for the total individual biography. To put it differently, religious representations serve to legitimate conduct in the full range of social institutions” (61).

<sup>56</sup> See Robert Bellah, et. al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*, 335. Bellah defines a lifestyle enclave as follows: “A lifestyle enclave is formed by people who share some feature of private life. Members of a lifestyle enclave express their identity through shared patterns of appearance, consumption, and leisure activities, which often serve to differentiate them sharply from those with other lifestyles. They are not interdependent, do not act together politically, and do not share a history. If these things begin to appear, the enclave is on the way to becoming a community. Many of what are called *communities* in America are mixtures of *communities* in our strong sense and *lifestyle enclaves*.”

come to terms with the split between public and private selves and with the removal of questions of ultimate concern from the public to the private forum. Radical individualism is an outlook on life which results from making a virtue of necessity and turning the loss of community into a gain for the self. Radical individualism celebrates the freedom that is now ours to select our own values and priorities without reference to any wider framework of common purpose or beliefs.<sup>57</sup>

Thus, Searle asserts that “radical individualism” produces a “radical incapacity for community” and that the search for community is dependent upon the intersection of particular tastes and needs.<sup>58</sup> In other words, liturgy is understood as simply another commodity that competes with a host of other social opportunities.

This leads Searle to delineate the development of a fourth characteristic of American culture that influences Christian worship, namely the victory of “civil religion.”<sup>59</sup> Bellah and others have demonstrated that the founding fathers of America, while taking great care to separate state from Church, adopted themes and symbols from Christianity to guide the formation of this nation. For example, the Exodus story has been transposed onto American freedom and expansion, whereby Europe is Egypt and American is the promised land; language of covenant serves as the social contract which binds citizens to national fidelity.<sup>60</sup>

---

<sup>57</sup> Searle, “Private Religion, Individualistic Society and Common Worship,” 32.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>59</sup> See Robert N. Bellah, *Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion in a Post-Traditional World* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970): 168-189. Acknowledging that the term “civil religion” was first coined by Rousseau in *The Social Contract*, Bellah suggests that the God of civil religion is quite different from the God of Christianity: “The words and acts of the founding fathers, especially the first few presidents, shaped the form and tone of the civil religion as it has been maintained ever since. Though much is selectively derived from Christianity, this religion is clearly not itself Christianity. . . . The God of the civil religion is not only rather ‘unitarian,’ he is also on the austere side, much more related to order, law, and right than to salvation and love” (175).

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. Bellah quote President Johnson’s inaugural address: “They came here—the exile and the stranger, brave but frightened—to find a place where a man could be his own man. They made a covenant with this land. Conceived in justice, written in liberty, bound in union, it was meant one day to inspire the hopes of all mankind; and it binds us still. If we keep its terms, we shall flourish.”

Searle maintains that the triumph of civil religion in America has resulted in the demise of Christianity's "prophetic voice":

To the degree that it succeeds, church-going Americans fail to discriminate between the religion of nationalism and the Christianity they profess. All become jumbled up together, thereby depriving Christian communities of the distance they need to distinguish between historical Christianity and contemporary American culture. . . . Instead of being resources for the recovery of genuine community, the churches and their liturgies end up peddling "synthetic" community, designed to accommodate people's longing for community but finally incapable of actually engendering community.<sup>61</sup>

It is this blurring of the lines between the symbols and the values of Christianity with civil religion that provides a most difficult dilemma for worship, as the latter may suggest that the society is thoroughly Christianized and firmly rooted in the values of the Gospel. The problem lies in the fact that these values have been removed from the historic community whose identity is utterly dependent upon the person and the message of Jesus Christ.

Thus, Searle offers the following critique: "Religious privatism and massification, radical individualism and civil religion are the divisive forces with which liturgy and catechesis must contend if a genuine community of worship is to be built up."<sup>62</sup>

Consequently, he embarks upon the task of demonstrating how the liturgy in America has not just incorporated elements of the cultural forces but has in many ways lost the ability to tell the Christian story that makes the liturgical assembly a true worshipping body. For example, Searle offers the following description of what are generally considered "meaningful worship experiences" in America:

---

<sup>61</sup> Searle, "Private Religion, Individualistic Society, and Common Worship," 34-35.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 35. He continues: "They [these four forces] are all the more powerful and pervasive because they are not the subject of conscious reflection in most parishes. We go with these forces because we know no other way, so that even the communitarian language and practices of our tradition are reinterpreted, quite unconsciously, to conform to our cultural expectations."

. . . the smoothly orchestrated celebrations of suburbia with their choirs and folk-groups, their “easy-listening” music, their firm handshakes, and their abundance of lay ministers in bright dresses and sharp suits. But for the more radical reactions against the anonymity and impersonalism of our society, we should probably look outside the usual parish setting to Masses celebrated on the living-room floor in religious houses where “Father Mike” wears a stole and all join hands as he improves on the Eucharistic traditions of centuries with a sizable dose of earnest informality; or we might look to youth Masses where the Gospel is reduced to God wanting us to be ourselves and the last vestiges of ritual formality yield before a burning desire for authenticity. Better still, look to the culminating liturgy at experiences of encounter and renewal where deep and extensive sharing over twenty-four hours reaches climax and consummation in a “meaningful worship experience” oblivious both to history and to the future, celebrating the “now.”<sup>63</sup>

The obvious link between these diverse settings for liturgical celebrations is that they all seem to make their primary goal the subjective comfort of the participants; when the liturgy makes the assembly “feel good,” then it is deemed a “meaningful worship experience.” The rather harsh reality is that this popular form of religious experience, while producing feelings of satisfaction, warmth, and solidarity does nothing to strengthen the attitudes that are essential for genuine Christian community. “It gives an evanescent experience of togetherness,” writes Searle, “a passing *frisson* of religious excitement, but it doesn’t impose the constraints of discipline and commitment.”<sup>64</sup>

All of this points to Searle’s overall critique, which he will raise in later works, namely that the pre-Vatican II private Mass has been merely replaced by what he calls “shared celebrations” rather than the recovery of truly “public worship.”<sup>65</sup> In other words,

---

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>65</sup> See for example Searle, *Called to Participate: Theological, Ritual, and Social Perspectives*, 70. He writes: “I would want to pose the challenge as followed: we have moved from *private* Mass (celebrated in public) to *community* celebrations, but how do we get from there to *public* worship? In other words, the pre-Vatican II Eucharistic was celebrated for private intentions; the post-Vatican II Eucharist has tended to be celebrated for

while the vision of the Second Vatican Council entailed the retrieval of the theological importance and the indispensable role of the assembly, the aforementioned cultural forces would stand in the way of making this vision a reality. Searle writes:

The full, active, and conscious participation of the assembled faithful was required; hence the vernacular, the prayers of the faithful, congregational singing, lay ministers, and the rest. All this was permitted, indeed demanded but no legislation or instruction could cure us overnight of our ingrained individualism and privatism. To the degree that liturgical celebrations have been suffused with individualism, they remain *shared celebrations* rather than common prayer. To the degree that we are there for our own private reasons, whether to express our faith or to enjoy singing and praying together, the liturgy is not yet that of a community, but merely an assembly of people all “doing their own thing.” *However impressive or exhilarating it might be, it remains shared therapy; it is not yet public domain.*<sup>66</sup>

In this condemnatory observation, Searle identifies what he considered to be the fundamental task for the critical function of “pastoral liturgical studies,” namely the project of working for the restoration of truly “public worship.” For as Searle contends, liturgy by its very nature “is more than shared celebration meeting private needs: it is an act of civic responsibility, of public duty.”<sup>67</sup>

### ***A “Community of Memory”***

A key sociological term found in Bellah’s work that is influential upon Searle’s writing is “community of memory.”<sup>68</sup> A “community of memory” is built upon the truthful

---

our shared intentions. But how can we learn to celebrate the Eucharist for public intentions?” Searle’s point is that the celebration of the liturgy may be less “private” than before the Council, but our attitude about the nature of the liturgy and its purpose, largely due to American culture, continues to be private and individualistic.

<sup>66</sup> Searle, “Private Religion, Individualistic Society, and Common Worship,” 37. Emphasis mine.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>68</sup> See Bellah, et. al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*, 152-155. For another study on the way in which memory functions in a collective body see Paul Connerton, *How Societies*

telling of stories that provide a common identity; these stories can be both joyful and tragic, comforting and dangerous.<sup>69</sup> In Bellah's words: "They carry a context of meaning that can allow us to connect our aspirations for ourselves and those closest to us with the aspirations of a larger whole and see our own efforts as being, in part, contributions to a common good."<sup>70</sup> Continuing on a more prescriptive route in his "Private Religion, Individualistic Society and Common Worship," Searle writes of this united effort as being a matter of "vocation":

The recovery of truly public worship is not something that can be achieved by liturgy-planning committees alone. It requires of us all a conversion of outlook and of language, a re-conceiving of the role of the parish and of the Christian community, and a reformulation by each of us of our Christian identity in terms of public vocation rather than private choice.<sup>71</sup>

---

*Remember* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1989). In introducing the notion of social memory, Connerton writes: "It is an implicit rule that participants in any social order must presuppose a shared memory. To the extent that their memories of a society's past diverge, to that extent its members can share neither experiences nor assumptions" (3).

<sup>69</sup> See Bernard J. Lee and Michael A. Cowan, *Dangerous Memories: House Churches and Our American Story* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1986). The authors introduce the work in the following terms: "Something with earthquake potential has been rumbling through the Roman Catholic world for a generation now. Some dangerous things are being remembered: that all baptized women and men are responsible for the life of the Christian community; that all social structures—intimate ones and immense ones, civil ones and ecclesial ones—are put under requirement by the Gospel; that the world truly can be reconstructed into the People of God; that the reconstructions are glorious after the pain, doubt, fear and struggle, but not during the remaking. These are dangerous memories, and they are shaking some foundations" (1). Searle references this work on page 40 of "Private Religion, Individualistic Society, and Common Worship," when he writes about a common vocation: "At diocesan and parish levels such thorough-going efforts to discern our common vocation to be the Church in a specific social context have been less common, but the *comunidades de base* in Central and Latin America have offered an influential model. At their best, these and other forms of so-called 'intentional community' consists of relatively small groupings of people mutually committed to one another, sharing a critical awareness of and commitment to the cultural, political and economic systems of their society, in continuous and lively contact with other similar communities, and faithfully attentive to the Christian character of their common life."

<sup>70</sup> Bellah, et. al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*, 153. Searle applies this to the liturgical experience of the local parish and writes: "Can our parish liturgies carry a context of meaning that would connect us with the aspirations of the rest of humanity instead of cutting us from them? . . . Can we recover a sense of baptismal vocation, personal and collective, to live as prophets, priests, and servants in the society where we have been placed?" (Searle, "Private Religion, Individualistic Society, and Common Worship," 39).

<sup>71</sup> Searle, "Private Religion, Individualistic Society, and Common Worship," 40. Searle is dependent upon Karl Rahner's concept of the "liturgy of the world." See Rahner, "Secular Life and the Sacraments: The Mass and

Incorporating Karl Rahner's notion of the "liturgy of the world," Searle argues that the Church is a "community of memory" not merely to keep alive the story of Christ's life, death, and resurrection, but also to celebrate the liturgy in such a way as it demonstrates the way in which the Paschal Mystery is the story of the created world.<sup>72</sup> In other words, such a perspective on liturgy alters the very purpose of celebrating: participation in liturgy moves beyond personal and inwardly-focused intentions outwards to the yearning of the world.

Thus, Searle believes that the Church has the means of countering (or critiquing) the growth of individualism experienced at the religious level by fostering liturgical celebration that takes seriously the "liturgy of the world." "To overcome the cultural momentum towards religious individualism," writes Searle, "we would need forms of worship which actually cultivated such awareness of the 'liturgy of the world'."<sup>73</sup> Although this development may require new forms, Searle believes that the Catholic liturgy contains the essential elements necessary to make truly public worship a reality. Thus, he speculates:

Liturgies celebrated as public worship will not be celebrated for the sake of togetherness nor for private intentions. They would be characterized by a certain fixity and solemnity, an objectivity which would constitute an invitation to us to enter in and be shaped by the ritual process. Congregations will not be whisked in and out in forty-five minutes, and missalettes will probably be less in evidence. The

---

the World," 267. He writes: "The world and its history is the terrible and sublime liturgy, breathing death and sacrifice, that God celebrates for himself and allows to be held throughout the free history of men, a history which he himself sustains through the sovereign disposition of his grace. Throughout the whole length and breadth of this colossal history of birth and death, a history on the one hand full of superficiality, folly, inadequacy and hate—and all these "crucify"—a history on the other hand, composed of silent submission, responsibility unto death, mortality and joy, heights and sudden falls: throughout all this there takes place the *liturgy of the world*." Emphasis original. See footnote 95 of Chapter 3 above.

<sup>72</sup> See Searle, "Private Religion, Individualistic Society, and Common Worship," 41. Searle writes: "The liturgy of Christ's life and death is the culmination of that liturgy (the 'liturgy of the world'), and it is that liturgy and its redemptive culmination that we celebrate in the liturgy of the Church. The Church is a community of memory, then, because it is called to remember and celebrate not only the memory of Christ but the whole 'colossal history of birth and death' which Christ assumed and redeemed when he became one of us."

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 42.



proclamation of the scriptural Word would be taken more seriously than it presently is, being heard as a Word addressed more to the community for the sake of the world than to the individuals for their private consolation. In the homily, monologue will yield to dialogue as the Word of God establishes an agenda for the examination of social issues not only during but before and after the liturgy itself. Inspired by the Word, the congregation will become once again a “community of memory,” remembering especially the things that our culture forgets: the radical equality of all human beings before God and the centrality in the Christian economy of those—like women and children, the unemployed, the handicapped, the sick, the dying, and the unsuccessful—whom society relegates to the margins.<sup>74</sup>

It is important to underscore the fact that Searle is not simply suggesting more socially-conscious ways of celebrating the Eucharist; he is calling wholeheartedly for a renewed outlook on vocation: liturgical celebration is inseparable from the way in which Christians are situated in the world.<sup>75</sup> Searle proclaims boldly: “Precisely that awareness that we, as

---

<sup>74</sup> Ibid. Much of this Searle repeats on pages 79-80 of *Called to Participate: Theological, Ritual, and Social Perspectives*, although in the later work, he expands on several of the examples, specifically by inserting the liturgical actions of the prayer of the faithful and the collection of gifts. Searle writes: “Liturgies celebrated by communities of memory as public worship would not be celebrated for the sake of togetherness, nor for private intentions. On the contrary, they would be marked by an awareness of the larger world as represented and spoken for in this assembly. They would be characterized by a certain gravity and fixity, presenting themselves as an objective undertaking into which we are invited to enter and to which we are invited to submit, rather than as a series of quasi-performances by presiders, readers, preachers, and musicians before a captive audience. Assemblies would not be whisked in and out in forty-five minutes. The proclamation of the scriptural word would be taken seriously, being heard and proclaimed as a word addressed to the assembly for the sake of the world, rather than to individual believers for their personal consolation. The prayers of the faithful would become a serious act of intervening with God on behalf of the peoples of the world and of all who suffer and are in need. The collection and the presentation of gifts would not be confined to a ceremonial presentation of envelopes, hosts and wine, the one going not further than the business office, the others no further than the altar. Rather, the collection would be for the good of the poor, wherever they may be in the world, and only the minimum necessary would be skimmed off to maintain the liturgical and catechetical mission of the Church. Even the Eucharist itself would be a celebration of the generosity of God to *all* humanity of all places and times. In short, in prayer and in praise, in taking up the collection and breaking the bread, the community would never be able to think of itself except as a community of memory that knows no barriers of time and space.”

<sup>75</sup> Searle has a long description of his understanding of vocation on page 43: “Because it is a ‘community of memory,’ the local church will call to mind not only the sins of the world and the failings of individuals but its own collective collusion in those sins so that the celebration of penance will be a genuinely communitarian exercise in prayer, fasting, and examination of community conscience. Marriage will be celebrated not as a personal troth between a man and woman alone but as an ecclesial vocation sanctioned and blessed by the community to bear witness to God’s faithful love in the Church and in society. Liturgical ministries will be more closely associated than they now are with community service: ministers of the Word with study and teaching of our tradition and with prophetic analysis of contemporary situations; Eucharistic ministry with care of the sick and with provision for the hungry at home and abroad; the ministry of hospitality with caring for the

Church, are for the world will make boundaries once again important, defining the community over against a culture it must repudiate.”<sup>76</sup>

What Searle is not suggesting is the deliberate concentration on the work of “building community,” but rather, his position is that regular celebration of the liturgy, if engaged at a deep level of symbolic communication and reflection, will serve to counter the forces of individualism and depersonalization that threaten culture and Church alike.<sup>77</sup> In a 1990 interview that appeared in *The Summit: Journal of the Liturgical Commission*, Searle would go so far as to equate a disordered liturgy with a Church that is struggling to find its place in the world. He asserts:

I think the Church is in danger of getting overwhelmed by the lack of order that exists liturgically round the world. My sabbatical in the Netherlands and recent American experience leads me to say that any bright idea that comes along is being tried. No longer can we say, in unpacking a liturgy, this is what we do and this is why we do it, because the whole memory of the church that did anything in an orderly way has disappeared! Our liturgy needs order to enable the assembly to get behind the words and gestures. Good liturgy is achieved when the assembly “leans into” the prayer, when they “overhear” the liturgy.<sup>78</sup>

---

homeless, visiting the imprisoned, and welcoming the alien and the stranger. Daily prayer will assume renewed importance in the lives of individuals and communities as an exercise of the priesthood of Jesus Christ on behalf of the world.”

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. Searle continues by defending the idea of service to the world through the clear identification of boundaries: “Water and oil, exorcism and blessing will mark those boundaries more sharply, not because we are withdrawing from the world but because, as a community, we are more clear sighted about who we are. Conversely, within the community, awareness of and concern for the larger society will result in common prayer that is not afraid to be specific and does not hide its lack of commitment behind pious generalities” (43-44).

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. Searle states: “Above all, the weekly celebration of the Eucharist will serve as a weekly renewal of the community’s baptismal covenant for the service of God’s kingdom in the world, while the observance of the Lord’s day will be itself a celebration of our freedom from the impersonal and depersonalizing forces that dominate our post-industrial culture. It will be a day for meeting and remembering, for celebrating and hope: in short, a day for community.”

<sup>78</sup> Joe Doolan, “A Conversation with Mark Searle,” *The Summit: Journal of the Liturgical Commission* 17:3 (September 1990): 7. Throughout this interview, Searle speaks of the liturgy in terms of rehearsal. First he states: “I don’t know how you get at the problems without a sustained mystagogy accompanied by an emphasis upon discipline. You have to learn the manners of the table, just as at home; the manners of the home and the

This is precisely why the term “community of memory” resonates with Searle’s perspective on liturgical prayer; a community united by and concentrated upon its memory commits itself to surrender individuality for the sake of the larger story. A “community of memory” does not invent the story but rather lives into the story, connects experience to the story, and appropriates this story as its very identity; concomitantly, memory of who it is causes a community to look outward to the world. “The emergence of such a public Church,” contends Searle, “is the precondition for public worship and our only antidote to the debilitating effects of privatism, individualism, and massification.”<sup>79</sup>

### ***The Americanization of Participation***

In a similar vein, addressing the 1989 national meeting of the Diocesan Liturgical Commissions held in Pittsburgh—an address which was subsequently published as part of a collection of essays entitled *Liturgy: Active Participation in the Divine Life*—Searle employs his recent experience of a sabbatical year in The Netherlands to reflect upon the topic of “culture” and participation.<sup>80</sup> In this paper, Searle exhibits what could be labeled alarming concern about the degree to which culture has unwittingly reshaped the Roman liturgy. His underlying critical tone cannot be masked, as he writes:

---

society, as well as the customs of the Christian family are learned.” Next he states: “Today the Catechumens should be trained in the practice of prayer . . . The psalms are the vehicle for formation in prayer. I think it is very hard to pray a liturgy if you have not been formed in the prayer of the psalms. The psalms form you in a prayer that is not your own.” Finally, Searle returns to the idea of table manners: “Our aim in liturgy is to practice the manners of the table until we share the banquet with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.”

<sup>79</sup> Searle, “Private Religion, Individualistic Society, and Common Worship,” 45.

<sup>80</sup> See Mark Searle, “Culture,” in *Liturgy: Active Participation in the Divine Life*, Ed. James P. Moroney, (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1991): 27-52. Regarding the influence of his time abroad, Searle writes: “Having just returned from a year in Europe, week by week attending Mass not only in a different language but in a different style, depending on the country, I have been aware of how much the Roman liturgy has already been enculturated both in Europe and in America” (28).

The effect of traveling overseas . . . has been to make me realize that the liturgy as celebrated in the average American parish church is no longer the Roman liturgy: Catholic certainly, but no longer Roman. Studying the genesis of the reformed Order of Mass has made me recognize that what happens in our churches on Sunday mornings is not so much what the *Consilium* had in mind as something that has come to assume many of the characteristic features of the surrounding culture. Without benefit of preliminary study or special hearings, without any decision by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, the liturgy has been enculturated. We have made it our own. It is this unheralded and largely unwitting enculturation that I would like to propose for your reflection: the way active participation has already been Americanized.<sup>81</sup>

Searle does not object to the work of those who argue that the liturgy must incorporate elements of the culture in which it is celebrated, but he contends that the topic of “unconscious cultural assimilation” has rarely gained the requisite attention it deserves. In fact, his fundamental apprehension is that Catholics in America have been so culturally formed that they are simply unable to see clearly the problem. “Precisely because our culture is the framework in and through which we view the world,” proposes Searle, “it is extremely difficult for us to detect our own cultural biases. Because culture consists of the values and horizons we take for granted, we forget that it is there, shaping and distorting the way we see and think and act.”<sup>82</sup> Thus, participation in liturgy has become thoroughly “Americanized.”

However, Searle’s objection goes beyond the criticism that the influence of American culture has infiltrated the Church and the celebration of its liturgy; his concern is that liturgical renewal has been misused as a license for recreating worship in our own image and

---

<sup>81</sup> Ibid. See also Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1969). This work undoubtedly influences Searle’s interpretation of cultural developments of “secularization” in the United States, a term which Berger defines as “the process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institution and symbols” (107). Searle writes of Berger’s contribution: “Peter Berger, in particular, argued that the characteristic problems facing religion in America and in the whole of modern Western society—‘secularization, pluralization, subjectivization’—would become those of every country and every tradition” (Searle, “Culture,” 48).

<sup>82</sup> Searle, “Culture,” 35-36.

likeness. As a consequence, how one participates in liturgy becomes purely a matter of choice, choice made not according to liturgical theology but rather according to personal and trendy likes and dislikes. Searle argues:

Precisely because of the importance of such cultural presuppositions, we really ought to stop talking as if all our liturgical practice were simply a more-or-less adequate implementation of Vatican II. We have not merely implemented Vatican II and the postconciliar reforms; we have, as a people, interpreted them. For better or worse our liturgy has become enculturated. We have made it our own, and it mirrors back to us in a thousand miniscule details the strengths and the weaknesses, the beauty and the ugliness, of our collective soul.<sup>83</sup>

Because American culture has influenced communal identity and has necessarily played a role in forming the way we belong to the Church, Searle believes that the concept of “participation” in an American context simply cannot be taken for granted. For the most part, “participation” in this country comes with little or no responsibility. In Searle’s words: “Participation is a high value in our culture, but it is second to the yet higher values of being free *not* to participate and being free to participate on one’s own terms.”<sup>84</sup>

As previously discussed, Searle fears that “participation,” in the context of the American Church, suffers from a lack of ritual integrity, preferring to follow the lines of

---

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 37. Later on, Searle makes a more impassioned statement about the nature of enculturation in the American Church: “Enculturation has taken place and it is us. The gospel, after all, is implanted not in institutions but in the people who make up the institutions. We are no longer Italian Americans or German Americans or Irish Americans; we are American Catholics, for the most part white middle-class suburbanites. The hyphenated Catholics are those who have still not made it, who are still not entirely assimilated into the dominant culture: the Hispanic-American Catholics, the Black-American Catholics, the Native-American Catholics, and so on” (39).

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 40-41. Searle provides the following striking example to substantiate his point: “Listening to the radio one morning recently, I heard a perfect illustration of what I mean. An announcement was made about a harvest festival being planned by a local church. Harvest festivals, as anyone knows, are events in which rural communities gather to give thanks to God for a successful harvest. This one, however, was open to all—at six dollars a head. So, from bringing the fruits of the harvest to share or give away in a celebration of gratitude, the format had changed to a pay-as-you-eat meal. Given the number of non-farmers now living in the country, it is perhaps understandable that a community meal might entail some people making financial contributions, but it was the last line of the notice that really struck me: ‘Take-outs are available.’ Such are the changing expectations associated with the idea of ‘participation.’”

informality: informality in the style of the presider; informality in dress and posture; informality in church design. He points to Richard Sennett's concept of the "ideology of intimacy," which is the conviction that social relationships must be marked by a comfortable familiarity; strangers must appear to be friends.<sup>85</sup> In the liturgical setting, this desire for forced intimacy goes hand in hand with the trait of informality and produces a form of participation that lacks real responsibility. Regarding his observations of this phenomenon, Searle writes:

The breakdown of traditional forms of community has given us the freedom to which we are accustomed, but it also has its price, and that price is that one lives in a world overwhelmingly populated by strangers. Television, as its name implies, serves both to overcome distance and maintain it. The people on the TV screen . . . can enter our homes without threatening our privacy or requiring us to put ourselves out. They look into our eyes and smile and chat away like old familiar friends—from Johnny Carson to the weatherman to your local car dealer. . . In any case, we need to ask ourselves whether the participation that eye contact is intended to foster is the same kind of participation that is demanded by the nature of the liturgy.<sup>86</sup>

---

<sup>85</sup> See Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977): 259. Here Sennett describes what he means by "ideology of intimacy": "The reigning belief today is that closeness between persons is a moral good. The reigning aspiration today is to develop individual personality through experiences of closeness and warmth with others. The reigning myth today is that the evils of society can all be understood as the evils of impersonality, alienation, and coldness. The sum of these three is an ideology of intimacy: social relationships of all kinds are real, believable, and authentic the closer they approach the inner psychological concerns of each person. This ideology transmutes political categories into psychological categories. This ideology of intimacy defines the humanitarian spirit of a society without gods; warmth is our god." See also M. Francis Mannion, *Masterworks of God: Essays in Liturgical Theory and Practice* (Chicago: HillenbrandBooks, 2004): 94. Regarding pursuit of intimacy as a foundation for Christian community, Mannion writes: "The problem is not essentially in the search for an experience of the church that is hospitable, involving, and supportive, but in the tendency to absolutize intimacy as the principal element of authentic Christian community to the effect that the public, formal, and institutional elements of the church are rejected as meaningless and inauthentic."

<sup>86</sup> Searle, "Culture," 42. See also Parker J. Palmer, *The Company of Strangers: Christians and the Renewal of America's Public Life*. (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1983): 56-70. In this chapter, entitled "A Spirituality of Public Life," Palmer argues that forced intimacy threatens community and that an authentic understanding of hospitality based on the relationship between strangers will support public life. He writes: "The value of relations between strangers is hard to see in an age so dominated by the norms of intimacy. . . The insistence on intimacy undermines the public life, for relations in public will never have that kind of duration and depth. But neither can relations in public remain suspicious and hostile if public life is to flourish. The Christian call to hospitality supports authentic public life, for the hospitable person knows how to relate to the stranger without demanding that the stranger reveal his or her self. This is what Jesus called for—hospitality to the sick and the hungry and the imprisoned without demanding that they become our friends or

Thus, Searle wishes to relocate the starting point for the concept of liturgical participation. For him, the participation “demanded by the nature of the liturgy” begins not with human choice but in God’s sharing divine life with us. Searle writes: “We are related to God not as being alone with the Alone but as forming a new collectivity, one born not of the will of the flesh nor of human choosing but of God.”<sup>87</sup>

Thus, for Searle, probing the depth of liturgical participation demands following a three-point “trajectory”: 1) ritual action, 2) character, and 3) grace.<sup>88</sup> At the primary level of ritual action, Searle identifies participation in terms of “*appropriate*” engagement with one’s particular role in the corporate activity; it simply means a high level of investment in whatever is called for by the rite.<sup>89</sup> The second level, corresponding to the sacramental notion of “character,” is participation in the priesthood of Christ. “Everyone who is baptized,” contends Searle, “has the right and duty to share Christ’s priestly work, a work of self-sacrifice as well as of praise, a work of silent obedience to God’s word as well as joyful

---

grateful allies, but hospitality in simple recognition of our unity with them, a unity which is both human and divine” (68-69).

<sup>87</sup> Searle, “Culture,” 43. Searle continues by explaining the importance of Christ’s role in this participation: “[T]he opportunity to participate in the divine life was opened for us by the Word made flesh and the human form that participation in the divine life takes has been definitively established for us in the paradigmatic life and obedience unto death of the Son of God. . . . The Spirit of holiness, the Spirit whose dominion in our lives constitutes our participation in the life of God, is the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit whose finality is to transform us as individuals and as a people into the likeness of the crucified and exalted Christ” (44).

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 45. Searle writes: “We have spoken of grace, character, and ritual action, each of which calls for a specific form of participation. If we reverse the order, we can identify the trajectory to be followed in participating in the liturgy.”

<sup>89</sup> Ibid. Searle’s description of this first level of the “trajectory” is helpful and succinct: “At the first level, that of sight and sound, of movement and gesture, ‘active participation’ means being engaged in some *appropriate* way in the ritual act. The ritual act is a collective undertaking, so not everyone participates in the same way. There are different roles, and even with the same role there are times for song and times for silence, times to move and times to desist from moving. There are even times when the appropriate mode of participation is to look on in silence.” Obviously, the key word in this explanation of ritual action is “appropriate”—performing the prescribed thing, at the right time, in the best manner. See also Bernard Cooke, *The Future of the Eucharist: How a New Self-Awareness Among Catholics Is Changing the Way They Believe and Worship* (New York: Paulist Press, 1997) 48-54. Although written several years after Searle’s death, this chapter provides a positive appraisal of ritual and the way in which it is able to transform participants.

response.”<sup>90</sup> In other words, moving along the trajectory from ritual action to character means that contemplative entrance into the liturgy results in the awareness that individuality is overshadowed by being inserted into Body of Christ. Searle writes:

There is “a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance . . . a time to keep silence and a time to speak” (Eccl 3:4, 7). The rite provides for all these moods and integrates them into the worship of God in Christ. So the goal of active participation is achieved not when the faithful cease to be silent spectators and become vociferous singers but when they sing, watch, speak, gesture, with the consciousness that it is all done *in Christ* to the glory of God. We do *not* own the liturgy. It is *not* our work. It is Christ’s liturgy and it is our privilege to participate in it. We need to express and foster that awareness in the way we celebrate.<sup>91</sup>

However, beyond even self-surrender to Christ’s Body and participating in his priestly work, is the third level of the trajectory, namely “grace,” or union with God. Searle normally refers to the ultimate goal of liturgical participation as “participation in divine life.” He writes that participation in Christ’s work of self-offering “is meant to be the expression in human, historical form of the relationship of the Son to the Father as this is constituted by the Holy Spirit.”<sup>92</sup> Important here is the tangibility of this participation in divine life: it is not

---

<sup>90</sup> Searle, “Culture,” 45-46.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 46. In *Called to Participate*, Searle elaborates on what it means to call the worshipping Church the Body of Christ, most specifically returning to his earlier work on baptism and the nature of faith. Employing James Fowler’s definition of faith as “leaning into life,” Searle contends that liturgy is all about participants learning (“rehearsing”) how to lean into the life of Christ, his self-sacrifice. Searle writes: “The faith of the Church, therefore, is not just what it professes to believe. It is, fundamentally, its characteristic way of ‘leaning into life.’ The faith of the Church is more than any doctrine, more than anything the Church can say. Ultimately, it is what the Church does in obedience to Christ and in conformity to the pattern of his own life, death, and resurrection. In brief, the faith of the Church is the faith of Christ: it is that existential subordination of itself to God which is the fruit of assimilating the Spirit of Christ and thus reproducing in this historical collective that same mind which was in Christ Jesus. Christ’s own obedience of faith is the rock on which the Church is built, beginning with the apostles whose deaths so closely imitated that of their Master. From then until now, the Church has found and continues to find its identity in its commitment to discovering and submitting to God’s will and to carrying it out in the world. In this way, the Church, in being obedient to Christ, participates in Christ’s obedience to God” (Searle, *Called to Participate*, 35-36).

<sup>92</sup> Searle, “Culture,” 46. See also Mark Searle, “The Effects of Baptism,” *Catechumenate* 12:4 (1990): 22. Here Searle discusses the relationship between “character” and “grace” in the sacrament of baptism: “If it were only one’s inner life with God that counted, sacraments would be nothing more than private ‘means of grace,’



something isolated to an eschatological hope, but rather, it takes the form of flesh and blood in our human relationships and in our practice of love.<sup>93</sup>

At the end of his reflection on “culture,” Searle provides a diagnosis for the future of liturgical participation. Chief among his five critiques is his belief that liturgy must counter American endorsement of individualism and privatization of religious practice. Since this critique underscores Searle’s entire outlook at how ongoing liturgical reform must proceed, it is worth quoting in full:

*The issue of participation is wider than getting people to join in the singing.* It is commonly said that our culture is characterized by pluralism, individualism, the privatization of religion, and the ideology of intimacy. Of these, the root characteristic is undoubtedly pluralism. Our culture differs from other, older cultures by its lack of homogeneity. This is simply not going to go away. Individualism and the privatization of religion are the ways human beings have been trying to cope with the rise of mass society with its impersonalism and lack of cultural consensus. However, they represent a first and not very successful response. Individualism and privatization are not only bad for liturgy and for religion, they are bad for humanity. Thus, the search for modes of social participation appropriate to postindustrial mass society is something that includes but goes beyond participation in the liturgy to include participation in the broader life of the Church and in the life of society.<sup>94</sup>

---

supports for an ongoing interior life. But just as character implies grace, so grace implies character. In other words, a person’s relationship to God is always in Christ and in the church, and it seeks expression in the social role identified with *character*: an ecclesial vocation to participate in Christ’s work of mediating between God and humanity, in publicly acknowledging the name of God in worship and in bringing the gifts of God to the world for which they are destined.”

<sup>93</sup> See Searle, *Called to Participate*, 38. He writes: “Ultimately then, full, conscious, and active participation in the liturgy of the Church means nothing less than full, conscious, active participation in the life of grace, lived and manifested individually and collectively, as union with God and communion with all humanity.”

<sup>94</sup> Searle, “Culture,” 47. Emphasis original. The remaining four “tentative remarks” Searle makes are summarized as follows: (1) the need to break stereotypes of God [Searle writes: “Every image of God is a false image if it fails to point beyond itself to the God beyond images, beyond words, beyond telling, to the God beyond the God of the Christians, beyond the god of patriarchy or the goddess of the feminists to the God who dwells in unapproachable light.”—page 48]; (2) liturgy is not about capturing God but about being in the presence of mystery [Searle states: “Liturgy is about coming into the presence of the Ultimate, of that which matters most. It is a crime and a heresy to trivialize it as we do. What we need above all is reverence: reverence in speech, movement, posture. . . . The most urgent need in our liturgies is to let God be God and to return the focus of our attention away from missalettes and altar servers, away from guitarists and presiders, back to God. And we do that best not by talking about it but by the way our liturgies are conducted.”—pages

Once again, this provides Searle the opportunity to call for a new liturgical movement, one that would realistically confront the prevailing cultural trends of the age. And for this to happen, Searle contends that the liturgy must be able to “speak for itself;” participation must correspond to rehearsal of the shape and the rhythm of the liturgy, something that transcends the personality of the community. Searle concludes: “I believe that this vision was lost sight of at Vatican II and the time has come to revive it. The time has come to relaunch the liturgical movement.”<sup>95</sup>

However, very much to his credit, Searle recognized that it was impossible to even take a basic understanding of ritual behavior (the first level of liturgical participation) for granted. Thus, in a 1991 essay, entitled “Trust the Ritual or Face ‘the Triumph of Bad Taste’,” it is Searle’s agenda to counter social rejection of ritual and to increase trust in established ritual forms.<sup>96</sup> “As a culture,” Searle contends, “we tend to be distrustful of

---

48-49]; (3) the need to reform liturgical music [Searle offers here a personal opinion that he will repeat in subsequent writings: “I personally believe that we will need much stricter control over liturgical music and that we will need, moreover, to develop a style of music and a way of singing that is unique to the Church’s liturgy and not part of our car-radio repertoire: a music that *as music* turns us to confront God, in Christ, by the Spirit who sings through us.”—page 49]; and (4) the need to broaden the field of liturgical practice [Searle writes: “Whatever happened to morning and evening prayer, to evening devotions and novenas, to festivals and rogation days, to vigils and Benediction? . . . If we lose these opportunities and focus everything on the Eucharist and sacraments, we may end up being unable to know the difference between the culture of the ages and the culture of the liturgy.”—page 50].

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 51. See also Lawrence J. Madden, “A New Liturgical Movement,” *America* 117 (September 10, 1994): 16-19. Madden acknowledges Searle’s call for a revival of the liturgical movement, and he himself comments: “We also need a new liturgical movement because even though the liturgy is clearly a precious gift to the church, a gift to be cherished, this gift of the renewed liturgy has been a complicated one for the church at large to receive. Some six years ago the late Mark Searle called for such a movement. However, not much happened. I suspect one reason was that not many people, including those in liturgical ministry, fully understood what he was describing when he spoke of various levels of participation. I also suspect that most efforts in the pastoral field were focusing on getting liturgical ministers to do the rites well by improving the space for liturgy, improving the musical prayer, the proclamation, the preaching and so on. A massive effort of this kind of education is still desperately needed” (17). Madden continues by echoing both Searle and Romano Guardini and states that the most difficult challenge of a new liturgical movement is that “full participation in the liturgy is much more than saying prayers or singing or processing. It is conscious participation in the mystery that is the church” (19).

<sup>96</sup> See Searle, “Trust the Ritual or Face ‘The Triumph of Bad Taste’,” 19-21. At the outset, Searle writes: “One of the more serious issues raised by Thomas Day (*Why Catholics Can’t Sing: The Culture of Catholicism and*

‘rituals.’ We exalt spontaneity, creativity, individuality, and innovation, but we often relapse, for lack of energy, into the fixed, routine, collective, and predictable.”<sup>97</sup> Thus, what stands to be overturned is the widespread suspicion that ritual forms stem from a “lack of energy” rather than from complete reliance upon how God is acting upon the human community.<sup>98</sup> Searle expresses this dilemma in terms of the need for a heightened sense of “sacramentality”:

The issue of de-ritualization, then, is not a question of good or bad taste. It is not a question of whether or not you like the priest altering the rite to say “Good morning” or “Haverniceday” or whether you think the St. Louis Jesuits do a better or worse job than the Solemes Benedictines. *The issue is one of sacramentality: How is this congregation to act like the Body of Christ? How are we to sing so that it is Another who sings and prays in us? How is the presider to preside in such a way that his personality is effaced by the presence of Christ?* The point about ritual is that, unlike creative, innovative, attention-grabbing performances, it cannot be taken at face value. Ritual is a way of paying attention. Ritual words, songs, movements, and actions direct attention away from themselves to that which they mean: Christ among us.<sup>99</sup>

Searle argues that a dulled sense of sacramentality in terms of liturgical participation goes hand in hand with the way in which the Church participates in the surrounding culture.<sup>100</sup>

---

*the Triumph of Bad Taste*, 1990) is the one that he calls ‘de-ritualization’ or the ‘sincere and calculated disrespect for the beauty of liturgy forms.’ It is a pity that he had to introduce the word ‘beauty’ here, for that suggests a concern for ritual that is primarily aesthetic, whereas I believe that what is at stake is not merely good or bad taste, but the very nature of the liturgy itself” (19).

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid. Searle writes: “We are profoundly aware of the humanness of the liturgy, but dubious about its divine dimension.”

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 20. Emphasis mine.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid. Searle writes: “This is the dilemma of the church today. Culturally, we are a people whose relationship to the larger community is the opposite of traditional Catholicism: culturally, we find ourselves first and then look for community, instead of finding ourselves in community. In this country, the dividing line between believer and nonbeliever, between Christian and non-Christian, between Catholic and non-Catholic is simply inoperable most of the time. We eat the same food, watch the same shows, respond to the same ads. We have little sense of boundaries, so we have little need of rituals.”

For Searle, what is at stake is the survival of Catholic culture, and a preeminent means of its survival is the promotion of the Church's ritual forms.<sup>101</sup> He concludes: "Then we will be more appreciative of the need to maintain a style of ritual music, ritual architecture, ritual speech and gesture that helps us identify ourselves over against the larger culture."<sup>102</sup> In this way, liturgy will play a critical role by calling attention to the need, in a pluralistic culture, for meaningful boundaries that identify the vocation of the Christian community in its relationship to the world. In other words, true respect for and participation in the ritual behavior of the Catholic Church, in all its forms, aids the Church's self-identity and helps it to appropriate its priestly mission of "representing Christ to the world and the world to God."<sup>103</sup>

***Searle's Final Manuscript: "The Evidence of Things Not Seen"***

In the summer of 1990 (May 15-July 22), Searle embarked on a six-week lecture tour of Australia and New Zealand, a trip that provided him the opportunity to organize and articulate his thoughts on a new liturgical movement in a sustained manner on an international stage.<sup>104</sup> It is certainly true that Searle's reputation as an accomplished writer

---

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 20-21. He states: "But the fact of the matter is that the Christian Tradition cannot survive without ritual, for that Tradition is more than doctrines and beliefs; it is first and foremost a way of life, a way of defining ourselves in the world in continuity over time. The church cannot survive without ritual because its identity is tied up with its collective vocation to be a sign/sacrament of something other than itself and because the church has to be prior in every way to those whose vocation it is to compose it. And in the end, I doubt that God can survive without ritual, at least as *our* God, because without public ritual this God of all the earth will become the private, intimate, personal God of each individual and will cease to be a public God at all."

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 21. In addition, Searle underscores the necessary boundaries that rituals help to create and sustain, boundaries which make the Gospel credible: "In light of that conscious self-differentiation from the larger culture, boundaries will be re-established, and attention will be paid to the points at which those boundaries are crossed. This is already happening with the restored catechumenate and the order of penance, developments that make no sense in a society that boasts of its impatience with boundaries and its distaste for ritual."

<sup>103</sup> Searle, *Called to Participate: Theological, Ritual, and Social Perspectives*, 31.

<sup>104</sup> See Mark Searle, "Liturgy Seminar: List of Presentations," MSP, Unprocessed. See also Mark Searle, "Liturgy Seminar: Topics for Reflection," MSP, Unprocessed. These represent the substantial content of what

and an engaging speaker had become well-known by the late-1980s, as a survey of his work in addition to his role as a full time professor in the Department of Theology at Notre Dame demonstrates.<sup>105</sup> Furthermore, while national and international attention on the speaking circuit offered Searle the exposure he needed to launch his vision for liturgical participation, it unquestionably would be the manuscript he completed on February 9, 1991, that would serve as the *magnum opus* of his career as a scholar and a liturgical reformer. Although Searle himself would not live to see the publication of his final accomplishment, and while it would appear under a much different title than he had imagined, his assessment of the future of the Church's agenda of liturgical reform is contained clearly within the pages of *Called to Participate: Theological, Ritual, and Social Perspectives*.<sup>106</sup>

In one of his last public speaking engagements—the Mullen Lecture given in Cleveland, Ohio in April of 1991—Searle worked out a summation of the material he was preparing for his book on liturgical participation, which he entitled *The Evidence of Things*

---

Searle wished to cover during his international lecture tour. The lists of presentations and proposed topics for reflection have been reproduced in full in Appendix VII: *Australia/New Zealand Lecture Tour*.

<sup>105</sup> During an interview with Barbara Searle on April 16, 2009, an examination of Mark Searle's academic appointment books profited the following dates: Searle gave his talk on "Culture" at the annual gathering of the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions in Pittsburgh on October 11, 1989 (See Footnote 72 above). He attended the annual meetings of the North American Academy of Liturgy and the Southwest Liturgical Conference in January of 1990. Furthermore, Searle was the keynote speaker at the gathering of the Association of Liturgical Ministers in Minneapolis on the 16-17 of February, 1990, and he returned to Minneapolis on January 12<sup>th</sup> of 1991 to follow up on his seminar the year before. That summer, Searle toured Australia and New Zealand from May 15 until June 22. On October 13, 1990, Searle spoke in Chicago on the topic of children in the assembly. Finally, during a gathering at St. Mary's in Cleveland from April 21-23, 1991, Searle gave the Mullen Lecture. The title of his talk, *The Evidence of Things Not Seen*, became the title of the manuscript he was working on at the time of his death.

<sup>106</sup> The title of Searle's original manuscript bears the title *The Evidence of Things Unseen: Reflections on the Nature of Liturgical Participation*. Searle originally composed eight chapters for this work: (1) Crossroads, (2) Liturgy in the Modern World, (3) Participation, (4) The Liturgical Act, (5) The Sense of the Sacred, (6) The Word, (7) The Language of Liturgy, and (8) Public Worship. See also the following review of the published work: Kathleen Hughes, "Review of *Called to Participate: Theological, Ritual, and Social Perspectives*," *Worship* 81 (2007): 90-92. Hughes concludes her review: "Mark Searle used to say that every liturgy is a dress rehearsal for the great end time banquet. In the earthly liturgy we rehearse the vision and the values of the reign of God and we do it again and again until we get it right, until our pilgrimage is complete and we find ourselves at the heavenly banquet. Mark has taken his place at the table, but not before providing in this 'last will and testament' a contemporary liturgical spirituality for those who would follow" (92).

*Not Seen*. Examining the material found in the script for his lecture, it is clear that Searle desires liturgical reform to shift to a focus on the restoration of “sacramentality” within praxis. He writes:

If the Vatican II reforms have still to realize their full potential it is surely because we have not yet learned to ritualize, and thus to operationalize, belief in Christ’s presence in the congregation and in the Word. If anything, we have seen some measure of undermining of the sacramentality of the priest and of the sacraments, with no corresponding increase in the sacramentalizing of assembly and Word. Too often, I think, the way we celebrate our liturgies reflect a narcissistic preoccupation with ourselves, whether it be the short quiet Mass, or the cute baptism, or the catalogue wedding, or the folksy family Mass. *Whether conservative or liberal, they lack the tension inherent in sacramentality: the tension between the divine and the human, the this worldly and the other worldly, the contemplative and the active—a tension in which, according to Vatican II, the invisible, the otherworldly, the contemplative is to have the upper hand, lest the signs cease to function as signs.*<sup>107</sup>

Thus, Searle’s concern simply stated is that, in attempts to be relevant to the human community, the enactment of the liturgy often misses the mark of bearing the weight as the “outward and visible sign of the invisible liturgy offered by Christ.”<sup>108</sup> In other words, Searle suggests that too much emphasis has been placed on the communication that takes place between the presider and the people, “but the only communication that is essential is

---

<sup>107</sup> Mark Searle, “The Evidence of Things Not Seen,” MSP, Folder “New Chapter IV,” 8-9. Emphasis mine. The title of the talk is drawn from page 13: “We might have been more careful about some of the things we have done with the reformed rites had we been moved and motivated by the conviction that these rites are merely *the evidence of things not seen*. Liturgy is more than meets the eye or the ear: what is important about it is precisely that which is unsaid, unspoken, unseen. We might have had a more sacramental quality to our liturgy if we had taken the sacramentality of the whole rite—of time and place, of speech and song, of movement and gesture—more seriously.” Emphasis mine.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

the communication between Christ and his people, and between the whole Christ and God.”<sup>109</sup>

But how is such an enigmatic form of communication realized? In his lecture, Searle answers this question with four proposals for liturgical celebration that are reproduced somewhat differently in the posthumous editing that produced *Called to Participate*. The first suggestion Searle offers for getting to the deeper levels of ritual is “a ritual that does not draw attention to itself.”<sup>110</sup> Essentially, he contends that a healthy sense of reverence, in which the assembly is led beyond itself to be attentive to Christ acting in its midst must replace the trend of “oohing and ahing” at the performance of liturgy itself, for as Searle states:

Something rather profound must have happened, then, whenever rituals that were intended to direct attention to things that matter become themselves the objection of attention. . . Rituals that are introduced into the liturgy to entertain or educate the people can only with difficulty become “liturgical acts” in the sense of being truly sacramental. The baptism of a baby where the focus is on the baby and the congregation oohs and aahs over its cuteness and everyone claps at the end is hard to recognize as a sacrament of the child’s immersion in the paschal mystery. This is a very difficult question: how do we prevent liturgy from sliding into entertainment? How do we get beyond performance to prayer? How do we let the mystery shine through? We have tried having the presider talk us through the rite and we have tried using banners to tell us that “We are an Easter people and Alleluia is our song.” But . . . it is how we do what we do that is supremely important.<sup>111</sup>

---

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 15-16. Searle continues: “For this communication to occur successfully, it is necessary, as the Constitution also recognized, not only that the signs be well presented, but, to quote ‘in order that the sacred liturgy may produce its full effect it is necessary that the faithful come to it with proper dispositions . . .’”

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 16. Searle writes: “That is why things that matter, things like births, marriages and death, international treaties, the operations of the justice system, and the transmission of power tend to be given ritual form. *Ritual serves to focus our attention on the things that matter most in life.*” Emphasis mine.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 16-17.

Thus, Searle suggests that the way to preventing the ritual from drawing attention to itself is simply by enacting the rites as prescribed in the liturgical books—those things often considered by presiders as detriments to celebration—with care and reverence, “so that attention is focused not on the presider or minister or members of the congregation, but on the Christ who is the real agent of the rite.”<sup>112</sup>

The second suggestion Searle makes in an attempt to “translate these theological convictions into practice” is related to the first and points to the need for increased formality in liturgy; he calls this point “ritual anonymity.”<sup>113</sup> Searle argues that what is at stake here is the very nature of the gathered Body of Christ, meaning that once the assembly has gathered for worship, it is Christ who acts in the liturgy not individual personalities.<sup>114</sup> He writes:

---

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 17. See also Pedro Tena, “The Liturgical Assembly and Its President,” in *Liturgy: Self-Expression of the Church*, Concilium 72, Ed. Herman Schmidt (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972) 52-53. Tena suggests that the presider “must keep a close watch on himself, to ensure that he does not impose his own purpose on the community . . . The president cannot view his intervention in the assembly as the simple unfolding of his personal, charismatic impulses, even if this would enrich the spirituality of the congregation; nor can he regard himself as the organizer of a spectacle open to all who are interested. The president is responsible for seeing that an assembly remains true to itself.”

<sup>113</sup> Searle, “The Evidence of Things Not Seen,” 17. He writes: “One way of making it clear that there is more going on here than meets the eye is by making the ritual as formal as possible and avoiding any sort of speech or behavior that would trivialize the action or break the spell of sacred solemnity.” He goes on to comment that one of the “most unfortunate developments” of post-conciliar liturgical reform has been the attention placed on the presider: “In the old rite, he never spoke to the congregation except in ritual dialogue and the same was true in the original draft of the ‘new Mass’: there was no room for personal introductions, jovial comments on the weather, comic asides and all the rest that so disfigure our present practice. The problem with such bad habits is that they do precisely the opposite of what they are intended to do. *They are intended to draw the people into the action: They have the effect, however, of constantly pulling us up short at the threshold of the invisible, calling us back to the mundane, the trivial, the superficial*” (17-18). See also Urban T. Holmes, “The Priest as Enchanter,” in *To Be a Priest: Perspectives on Vocation and Ordination*, Eds. Robert E. Terwilliger and Urban T. Holmes (New York: The Seabury Press, 1975): 173-181. In this short essay, Holmes counters the notion of priest as professional actor by suggesting that his primary role is to lure people deeper into mystery. Thus, he states simply: “The enchanter is a man of the twilight, that characteristic coloring of known-and-yet-unknown, where the mystery of God and the longing of the human spirit meet in the light of revelation” (180).

<sup>114</sup> Searle, “The Evidence of Things Not Seen,” 18. Once again, Searle argues that the presider’s personality can often get in the way of participation, and so he ruminates on specific examples: “I wonder whether, to counter this trend and to keep attention focused where it belongs, we ought not eliminate all ‘free speech’ in the liturgy, replacing it with a fixed formula or with silence. I am thinking particularly of moments like the introduction to the Mass and the introduction to the prayers of the faithful, where informality can often shatter the mood. In the same vein, we might mention the tendency of some celebrants to chat their way through baptisms, marriages and Holy Week liturgies as if they were training to be voice-over commentators.”



In most religions, including our own, it is customary for those playing sacred roles to vest in ways which diminish their personal presence and wrap them in their liturgical role. We do not go as far as some native American and African rituals which provide the chief actors with masks, but the vesture is a sort of mask. . . It is our identity in Christ that matters: not whether we are male or female, Jew or Greek, slave or free, married or single, or whatever. *Our personality may be significant, as these social distinctions may be important, in other contexts; but in the liturgy we are all anonymous; or better, we all have the same name, the name of Christ.*<sup>115</sup>

“Ritual anonymity,” for Searle, means that liturgy calls for a suspension of individual will; the very nature of the liturgy calls for participants to surrender to the Body of Christ. “I am not advocating,” contends Searle, “that we all ignore one another and treat one another as strangers: it is just that once the liturgy has begun, personal introduction and familiar folksy remarks are out of place.”<sup>116</sup>

Searle’s third suggestion for improvement, again connected to the issue of drawing attention away from the rite itself, is in the realm of liturgical music. As the Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life suggested, music is the one of the most highly critiqued elements of the liturgy. Searle believes that the reformed Mass has moved too far away from the ideal of a sung liturgy and that music is interpreted as being merely tangential to the

---

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 18-19. Emphasis mine.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 19. See also Mary Collins, “Obstacles to Liturgical Creativity,” in *Liturgy: A Creative Tradition*, Eds. Mary Collins and David Power (New York: The Seabury Press, 1983): 19-26. Here Collins lays out a theology for liturgical innovation, based upon *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 23. However, she also provides theological rationale for caution regarding personal creativity within the enactment of the liturgy: “All liturgy is the Church’s symbolic enactment of the mystery of Christ and the Church. It is theologically sound to celebrate the mystery of salvation using forms which assert the dawning reign of God in human history in all its particularity. But a peculiar creativity, that of the Christian believer, is required to maintain evangelical tension within liturgical assemblies so that they are not merely mimetic of human achievement but a manifestation of what the reign of God promises (SC 2). Because the irruption of the reign of God in history is dangerous, genuine liturgical creativity cannot help but be potentially so” (23).

essence of worship.<sup>117</sup> Writing against the flexibility afforded to music planners, Searle states:

There are several drawbacks to this practice, but to my mind the most significant is this: That to the degree that what we sing at mass is arbitrarily chosen, to that degree it become dissociated from the fixed liturgical order of which it is meant to be a part. This, in turn, means that the musical dimension, which is such an important part of the people's liturgy, is rendered non-liturgical, a mere frill, an aesthetic add-on to the liturgy itself: the choir and people sing during the liturgy, but most of what they sing are not liturgical texts. Here again we are still reaping the effects, it seems to me, of regarding the priest's part of the liturgy as essential and the people's part as an optional extra, "mere ceremonies."<sup>118</sup>

Searle's call for a "fixed repertoire" must not be confused with a desire to eliminate liturgical inculturation; rather, his suggestion is that, at least on a local level, the assembly must truly know and understand the music that are asked to sing—to truly appreciate the role music plays ritually.<sup>119</sup> "So this is my third recommendation," Searle summarizes, "to work for a

---

<sup>117</sup> See Searle, "The Evidence of Things Not Seen," 19. He states: "My suggestion here is that we need music that does not draw attention to itself or function as a mere accompaniment to the rite. *We need to sing the liturgy and for that we need a fixed repertory and a style of music that is unique to sung prayer.*" Emphasis mine.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 20. See also Joseph Gelineau, "The Role of Sacred Music," in *The Church and the Liturgy*, Concilium 2 (New York: Paulist Press, 1964) 59. Gelineau writes: "The chant of the liturgical assembly is therefore not for the faithful a purely exterior rite. Nor is it simply an exercise in the art of music. Nor can it be reduced to a mere psychological or social support for personal or communal prayer, a support to be used or dispensed with at will. It is one of those signs of 'man's sanctification' and the Church's 'public worship' (Art. 7) by which 'the priestly office of Jesus Christ' is performed in the liturgy."

<sup>119</sup> Searle, "The Evidence of Things Not Seen," 20-21. Searle contends: "[I]t would be entirely in keeping with the letter and the spirit of the reform for each parish to stabilize its repertoire. . . . Even at the parish level, it is possible to sing the psalms assigned in the *Graduale Simplex*, or at least to assign a given hymn exclusively to a given Sunday of the year. . . . It would make it easier on parishes if the diocese would establish a fixed liturgy for marriages and funerals, instead of tolerating the practice of allowing the often unevangelized to pick their favorite (and not always religious) pieces. This would put an end to the sort of nonsense that we all too often tolerate in the name of 'participation,' especially at weddings and funerals." Then, Searle provides the following comical anecdote: "I am thinking of the funeral in Connecticut of a prominent Irish lawyer who had served the diocese well over the years, but had not felt it incumbent upon him to attend Mass all that often. At the big funeral the diocese celebrated for him, his family was invited to plan the liturgy and it was they who chose to have a crooner sing at the Offertory 'I did it my way.' So much for a liturgy that claims to be the act of Christ in the Church!"

sung liturgy and to remove the element of whimsy by working to establish a stable liturgical repertoire for the whole church year.”<sup>120</sup>

The fourth suggestion that Searle makes for the need to attend to the symbolic communication of the liturgy is that an assessment of the way in which time and space are approached is necessary for the worshipping community. Does the space in which worship takes place truly correspond to the “meaning of liturgy”? What is the “symbolic importance” about the time(s) when worship takes place? On these two dimensions, Searle offers the following reflections:

On space, for example: we might ask whether the place where the people gather to be the Body of Christ works for or against that sacramental principle. Is it a place that suggests that God dwells here in his people, or is it more like an auditorium? Can we really expect a liturgy shaped by the fourfold presence of Christ to work in a space designed to manifest Christ’s presence only in priest and sacrament? In the matter of time, we need to recognize the importance of choosing the right time for celebration. We could ask, for example, whether the Saturday evening Mass experiment has worked to strengthen people’s sense of Sunday: or what it says about the central mystery of our redemption when we try to fit Easter Vigils into the convenient time-slot between supper and the nine-o’clock news.<sup>121</sup>

In other words, things like space and time, which do not use words to communicate, have great influence upon the imagination and are formative of a community’s attitude. To employ Searle’s words: “What we need to realize is that our practice is generally more eloquent than our words, and that people’s faith is shaped by their expectations and their expectations are shaped by the care or lack of care with which we celebrate the holy mysteries.”<sup>122</sup>

---

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 21-22.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 22.

In the end, Searle suggests that what is most important in the work of accentuating the role of symbolic communication is the need to once again stress the vocational (or obligatory) nature of celebrating the liturgy, thereby restoring the understanding of liturgy as a “public work.”<sup>123</sup> Thus, for Searle, liturgical reform must always be focused outwardly, meaning that its goal is never ritual improvement or modification for the sake of the rite but for Christ’s mission of the world’s salvation. In this regard, he upholds the obligatory nature of the Sunday assembly for those baptized into the life and work of Christ. He writes:

It is our privilege and our duty; less a matter of choice than of vocation. We were quite right to speak about the Sunday mass obligation, for the worship of God and the vicarious representation of all humanity before God is an obligation incumbent upon us all in virtue of our baptism. The liturgy is the *opus dei*, the work of God; it is the *divinum officium*, or divine duty, an office to be carried out. It is a task laid upon us as members of the Church, a post we cannot forsake. *In the end, then, liturgy is not an option, but a duty; not a favor we do to God, but the work of God in which we are privileged to participate; not something we put on for the faithful, but something Christ has instituted for us to carry out in memory of him; not something we look to merely for our own spiritual advantage, but a work that God has initiated for the salvation of the world.*<sup>124</sup>

In the end, Searle believes that the success of the liturgical movement points to re-instilling in the Catholic community the art of learning “the obedient surrender of faith.”<sup>125</sup> In other words, the liturgy sacramentalizes the faith of Jesus Christ when its actions, words, and song exhibit the attitude of surrender, when it becomes something that participants live into rather than control.

---

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 24. Searle writes: “Finally, it seems to me important to recover an ancient conception of the liturgy as *leitourgia*, as a public work. *The liturgy is the work of our salvation undertaken by Christ to the glory of God.*” Emphasis mine.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 24-25. Emphasis mine.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 25. Searle writes: “In the end it comes down to faith and faithfulness. Not to belief, simply but to the obedient surrender of faith; for it is in that moment of surrender that the risk is validated and faith appears indeed in actual form as the ‘substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen.’”

It is interesting to observe that in a very real sense Searle's very project of preparing his manuscript became an exercise in surrender. Diagnosed with cancer on June 5, 1991, Searle found himself confronted with his own mortality as he sought to revise *The Evidence of Things Not Seen* and to secure interest in publishing his work. In fact, for the last year of his life, attending to his health and preparing for his family's future occupied most of Searle's time and the bulk of his limited energy.<sup>126</sup> Thus, it would fall to Searle's wife, Barbara, to take responsibility of seeing to it that her late husband's theology of liturgical participation be put into print in book form. Barbara Searle writes:

Mark Searle was working on this manuscript during his illness and approaching death (+1992). Although his creative process usually consisted of extensive reading, copious note taking, and a long period of preoccupation and incubation, culminating in the production of a nearly perfect first draft, this manuscript was different. The illness had affected his cognitive processing, and his writing was marked by free association; he included ideas and quotations of seemingly everything that had been important in his approach to liturgy. The final text sounded like parts of St. John's Gospel—passionate but repetitive. Even though I had promised him on his deathbed that I would see to getting this manuscript published, I entertained the thought of breaking that promise when I finally began the editing process. There was surely a book there, but it was a book within a book, and nearly half became like the marble Michaelangelo chipped away to reveal an underlying form. What emerged in the end was something of Mark Searle's last will and testament for the praying Church. *Called to Participate* is what he would have wanted us to know and live.<sup>127</sup>

Clearly, Searle's final plea to the Church is to make the next step of liturgical reform one of deepening "participation" which begins in ritualizing "the obedient surrender of faith." As Searle writes: "No one can fruitfully participate in the liturgy without a minimum of faith or trusting self-surrender and thus without some measure of Christ's self-abandonment to the

---

<sup>126</sup> See pages 11-12 of the Introduction.

<sup>127</sup> See Barbara Searle, "Foreword," in *Called to Participate*, vii.

One who alone could save him out of death.”<sup>128</sup> Perhaps, providentially, Searle was gifted through his illness with the opportunity to rehearse in his body the liturgy he loved so much, and to understand somatically the rigor and the commitment of obedient self-surrender.<sup>129</sup>

While an important contribution of *Called to Participate* is Searle’s succinct, theological portrayal of liturgical participation as a progressive movement from participation in ritual to participation in Christ’s priestly ministry to participation in divine life,<sup>130</sup> what is unique here is his articulation of the “contemplative” and the “public” dimensions of liturgy as inseparably joined.<sup>131</sup> With regard to the first dimension, Searle contends that liturgy is “deep silence,” and that corporate contemplation occurs when the Body of Christ is formed by the attitudes it rehearses in the liturgical celebration.<sup>132</sup> Key here is the understanding that contemplation is not “getting in touch with one’s real feelings,” but rather is the result of

---

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>129</sup> This is definitely his intellectual outlook as he writes on page 40 of *Called to Participate*: “To know the holiness of God is to know our own unholiness as finite, guilty creatures, called ultimately to struggle, to suffer, and to die. Against this painful recognition, we protest our good intentions, our respectfulness, our good works, clinging to the tattered illusions of self-worth. But in the end there is death, the limit that shadows and underlines all other limitations: death, where we lose everything we have left to lose. *Liturgy would deliver us from this futile and self-defeating campaign of self-justification by offering us an alternative: that of dropping the illusions we cling to, rehearsing the trust that will enable us to let go in the end to life itself and to surrender ourselves one last time into the hands of the living God.*” Emphasis mine.

<sup>130</sup> See Searle, *Called to Participate*, 15-45. See also Searle, “Culture,” 45-47.

<sup>131</sup> See Peter E. Fink, “Public and Private Moments in Christian Prayer,” *Worship* 58 (1984): 482-499. In this essay, Fink first lays out the classic tension that exists between contemplative and public prayer and then seeks to demonstrate how the two are necessarily related. He writes: “[A]ny thought that ritual prayer precludes the possibility of personal space where people can dwell with the needs and desires and deep realities of their own personal journeys simply ignores the inner rhythms and dynamics of Christian ritual prayer, and the needs of people who themselves makes liturgy out of ritual text. Entrance into liturgy to that extent is the fullness of the ‘full and active participation’ called for by Vatican II” (496).

<sup>132</sup> See Searle, *Called to Participate*, 57.

being shaped by the attitudes of the liturgy to which the assembly surrenders.<sup>133</sup> Searle writes:

Often it is hard to distinguish attitudes and feelings, especially since feelings are not infrequently tied to basic attitudes. But it is finally our attitudes that make us who we are. Our attitudes represent the way our lives are pointed, the more or less habitual ways of thinking, feeling, and acting that shape and color our lives and make us the persons we are. . . Similarly with liturgy. If we only went to church when we felt like it, we would probably cease feeling like it rather soon. If we only knelt when everyone in the assembly felt humble, kneeling would never happen. If only those who felt connected to the rest of the assembly could exchange a gesture of peace, we would have a very different experience of the communion rite. *But liturgy is not an expression of emotions; it is a rehearsal of attitudes.* . . . Liturgy will not leave us on an emotional high because that is not its purpose. But regular, persevering participation and growing familiarity with liturgy's images and gestures will eventually shape our attitudes, our thoughts, and even our feelings.<sup>134</sup>

Furthermore, the attitudes that the liturgy rehearses are precisely the attitudes of Christ: the liturgy rehearses Christ's attitude of obedience; the liturgy rehearses Christ's attitude of mercy; the liturgy rehearses Christ's attitude of surrender.<sup>135</sup> "Through conforming to the

---

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 60-61. Opposing those who would argue that contemplation is connected to feeling, Searle writes: "Truthfulness, it seems to be suggested, can only be observed in a spontaneous expression of emotion or in a personally formulated reporting of one's inner thoughts, beliefs, and sentiments: like leaping into the air on winning the lottery or bursting into tears when one is distraught. Getting in touch with one's real feelings is obviously a worthwhile objective and the ability to acknowledge and express one's feelings is clearly desirable. There are occasions when such expressions are appropriate and many more occasions when they are not. *The problem with liturgy is that while it may on occasion be cathartic, it does not set out to be so.* For one thing, there is simply no way of guaranteeing that everyone is going to feel the same way on any given occasion or at any given point in the liturgy. More importantly, there is something more basic at work in the context of liturgy than feeling, and that is *attitude*." Emphasis mine.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 61-62. Emphasis mine.

<sup>135</sup> See Theodore L. Westow, *The Variety of Catholic Attitudes* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1963) 10. Here Westow provides an excellent portray of "attitudes"; he writes: "Attitudes are concrete things. They determine our actions, our outlook, not only personally but also communally. Individuals and whole societies derive their color and significance from the contemporary attitude. The attitude, that elusive, often subconscious, but vitally important element in the concrete human make-up, is therefore a historical thing. History is but the understanding of the phases of human evolution, of the moral and psychological attitudes of men and women toward other men and women, toward themselves, toward God, in any given period."

constraints of the rite, we de-center ourselves, momentarily abandon our claim to autonomy, so that our bodies might become epiphanies of Christ in our midst.”<sup>136</sup>

It is in the surrender to corporate contemplation that the assembly simultaneously moves to a second dimension of liturgy, namely the “public” dimension of liturgy and the ultimate goal toward which liturgical participation points—union with God.<sup>137</sup> While this position may be theologically sound, the question is: how does this occur in the context of a living, worshipping assembly? Searle’s answer: by rehearsing the attitudes of Christ. The more participants in liturgy embrace Christ’s outlook on the world, the more they come to understand their role in Christ’s mission (liturgically and socially). Simply stated: the assembly sacramentalizes Christ’s mission to the world and his offering to the Father, or in Searle’s more erudite language:

The assembly, as a realization of the mystery of communion, is an efficacious sign of union with God and of the unity of humankind, for it shares in the mediatorial work of Christ. In the liturgy we as a people represent all our fellow human beings before God, and invoke God’s blessing upon the whole of humanity. *Thus, the liturgy of the Church cannot be separated from its social mission—at least as long as its liturgy is truly the act of a priestly people and as long as its*

---

<sup>136</sup> Searle, *Called to Participate*, 62. Christian attitudes might be likened to the “mind of Christ.” Earlier Searle writes: “But it is always the head that prays, its prayer welling up from the depths of the heart of Christ, which is the heart of all humanity. That ‘welling-up’ of prayer is what we call ‘the Spirit,’ the Spirit at work in us with Christ and through him, with God. That is why no prayer of ours can reach God unless we have that mind that was in Christ Jesus: unless our prayer is not only joined to his but is in fact *his* prayer welling up in us through our openness to his Spirit.”

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 68. On the inseparable link between the “contemplative” and the “public” dimensions of liturgy, Searle writes: “The premise of this work is that it is possible to develop a fuller, more conscious, and more active participation by moving in two directions at once: toward a more contemplative approach *and* toward greater social awareness. We need to develop the inwardness of our liturgy, as well as its outwardness. Both are important. If we develop only the inward and contemplative dimension of liturgy . . . there is the danger of not fully sounding its depths, in which case we may simply end up with an introverted, privatized style of liturgy. On the other hand, we have a healthy tradition of social activism in the Church that sometimes seems to offer an alternative to the contemplative tradition to liturgy. But if we let that alone shape our approach to liturgy, we run the risk of turning it into a platform for social and political issues, accentuating the verbal and communitarian aspects of the rite, and perhaps minimizing the more formal and deeper dimensions of the rituals that belong to the rite.”



*social mission is rooted in its sacramental nature, i.e., in the Church's own attachment to Christ through submission to the Spirit.*<sup>138</sup>

Searle is essentially suggesting that we need to relearn why it is that we pray the liturgy; it is not primarily for ourselves, but rather, “we must learn to pray the prayer of the liturgy with the voice of the whole Church” for the good of the world’s salvation.<sup>139</sup> Thus, he turns to several examples of how the liturgy is prayed that support his position. For example, prescribed prayer and the psalms allow us “to pray beyond ourselves, on behalf of the stranger half a world away or in the county jail, on behalf of those who at this moment lie dying, suffering violence, or even leaping for joy.”<sup>140</sup> Searle also draws upon the general intercessions and the eucharistic prayer to demonstrate that liturgy recalls not “tribal history but global history, the history of humanity as read as the history of God.”<sup>141</sup>

As Searle ends his final reflection on liturgical participation, he reiterates his conviction that what is at stake is the very nature of liturgy. Individualistic pursuits and preferences placed upon participation in liturgy, now ratified by the triumph of individualism

---

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid. Searle writes: “Whenever we celebrate the liturgy, therefore, it must not be for our own benefit so much as an exercise of our vocation to represent humanity before God.”

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 82. Searle goes on to suggest that prescribed prayer and the psalms may not express our present emotions but they shape our outlook (attitudes) in being connected to the larger world: “Which of us on any given day can be sure of being able to identify on the basis of our own personal experience or as an expression of our own current mood with many of the sentiments express is the psalms? Can we expect a concordance of words and personal feelings? Does that make the praying of the psalms unauthentic? Not at all—as long as we allow the words of the psalm to guide our minds and hearts into a prayer that is alien, the prayer of Another, in whom all the joys and griefs of all the ages are taken up as his prayer to the one who is God of heaven and earth, God of all the ages.”

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 83.

within American culture, simply must be replaced by self-surrender lived as vocation.<sup>142</sup>

Searle writes:

Out of the sense of being a priestly people, a community of memory, a people who will not forget or escape into fantasy, arises a sense of solidarity with the rest of humanity, and especially with those who suffer, those who are powerless, and those who feel most keenly in their own flesh or their own spirit the terrible liturgy of the world. The liturgy requires of us a setting aside of the quest for personal satisfaction; it demands self-abnegation, self-emptying, self-forgetfulness, so that our emptiness may be filled with the memory of Christ and with the fullness of his Spirit, in whom we know we are one with God's people. Outside the liturgy, participation in the work of Christ continues in the form of solidarity with the suffering. . . In the liturgy we join our prayers with their, put their prayers into words. A priestly people. A people who can offer in memory the sacrifice of the whole, Christ, the passion of Jesus and the passion of the poor, the "little one's" of our generation.<sup>143</sup>

Thus, the "contemplative" dimension and the "public" dimension of Christian liturgical worship go hand in hand; there is no separating the epiphany of Christ in the midst of his assembly from the mission of Christ to heal the broken of this world. To participate in the "depth dimensions" of liturgical prayer is to participate in Christ's work of redemption.<sup>144</sup>

---

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 84. Searle writes: "A priestly people. We do not stand around the altar simply for our own benefit but because it is our vocation to stand before God on behalf of the world. Over and over again, the liturgy confronts us with reminders of that wider connection and resists our desire to privatize, to control, to narrow the ambit of God's grace. By the very nature of its being symbolic, the liturgy is also ambivalent. It is so easy, so natural to think of the liturgy of the word as a service of instruction or edification and nothing more, to make the assembly an occasion of belongingness, to shut out the world and indulge in cozy self-delusion."

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>144</sup> See Anne Koester, "Afterword," in *Called to Participate*, 88. Koester writes: "As Mark Searle points out, Christians have a responsibility to turn towards the world and to participate in the work of bringing about a more just, a more compassionate society. The Church's liturgy, according to Mark Searle, shapes attitudes intended to help us carry out this responsibility. Mark Searle had a remarkable ability to appropriate to present times what is core to Christian worship, and at the same time, he impels us into the future. The legacy he leaves to us is not to be underestimated, for it is nothing less than an exhortation to plumb the depth dimension of the Church's liturgy for the sake of ourselves and for the sake of the world."

## **Conclusion**

In bringing his life's work and his heart's passion to a conclusion in the summons to the Church to inaugurate a new liturgical movement focused on the skills of participation and the attitudes of Christ, Searle suggested that we are at a "crossroads." For him, the present state of liturgical reform had undermined the very "authority" of the liturgy: "Instead of being an objective, communitarian rehearsal of our common identity, it becomes at times a stage for displays of individualism and subjectivism."<sup>145</sup> Thus, Searle believed the proper way to negotiate this crossroads is to resurrect commitment to the liturgy as an objective discipline rather than engaging in it as subjective satisfaction. In his words:

Perhaps instead of asking what will engage the assembly, we could begin to ask what the liturgy demands. Instead of asserting our ownership of the liturgy, we might ask how we can surrender to Christ's prayer and work. Instead of asking what we should choose to sing, perhaps we could start imaging how we might sing in such a way that it is no longer we who sing, but Christ who sings in us. We stand at a crossroads. We must decide which way to go. Shall we continue to think of the liturgy as something to be adapted to our needs and tastes? Or move toward a liturgy that in its objectivity and givenness transcends the individuals who participate in it, lifting them up to engage in something far beyond their ability to create or even imagine?<sup>146</sup>

Searle's call for objectivity in the liturgy was directed to priest presiders and assembly participants alike; the liturgy of Christ's self-offering to the Father is the patterned and prescribed domain of the Church. While the Church's *ordo* is less than perfect and must be open to the age, Searle believed that the enactment of the liturgy is neither the stage on which to experiment nor the platform on which to assert creativity. For Searle, the liturgy is always

---

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 12. Searle continues: "As such it loses its authority and is there for us to make what we want of it."

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 13-14.

about learning to surrender the self to the prayer of the Body; the mastery of this lesson requires committed discipline and regular rehearsal.

Although the final works of Searle's academic career may exhibit a rather harsh tone regarding the possibilities for ongoing reform of the liturgy, he believed his voice needed to take on a prophetic edge. His love of the liturgy demanded that he call the Church to maintain faithfully a "community of memory" and that he challenge Christians at every level to understand "vocation" in terms of the world's salvation. His desire was to put into motion a liturgical movement that would get the liturgy into the bones of worshippers rather than one that would stimulate fleeting emotions and feelings. As Searle questions:

Should we accommodate the liturgy to ourselves, encouraging a subjective approach to liturgy or engage in understanding the liturgy, regarding it in a more objective way? Perhaps we have had to work a number of things out of our systems to discover the shallowness of some of our earlier understandings and expectations, emerging with a real hunger for the life of the Spirit mediated by the liturgy, a life of the Spirit meant to change the face of the earth.<sup>147</sup>

Indeed, perhaps the Church still struggles to "work a number of things out of our systems," yet Searle's call to take the work of liturgical reform to a deeper level than simply trying to get "everyone to join in" continues to ring loud and true. In the end, for Mark Searle, everything about liturgical prayer must point to "the evidence of things not seen," to Christ surrendering his Body to God's merciful love.

---

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 13.

## Conclusion

This study of Mark Searle and his corpus of writings has been organized according to three particular stages of his academic career. Part One focused largely on his early works, especially his analysis of Christian initiation with his special interest in the promotion of infant baptism, as well as his effort to reinforce the connection between liturgy and justice. Part Two introduced Searle's method for "pastoral liturgical studies," originating in his work with the Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life, as a supplement to traditional historical and theological approaches to the study of liturgy. Part Three began with Searle's sabbatical in The Netherlands, where he labored to fine-tune his knowledge of the science of Semiotics, an academic quest that coalesced with his subsequent call for a new liturgical movement rooted in the advancement of participation as a skill to be learned and mastered.

A common thread throughout these three stages is Searle's articulation of liturgy as the "rehearsal of Christian attitudes." From his earliest writings, Searle emphasizes the belief that well-rehearsed ritual practice shapes the foundational worldview, or core attitudes, of those truly invested in celebration. As Searle wrote early on in his academic career: "It is, then, chiefly by assembling together and celebrating its faith that the Christian community retains its sense of identity, keeps its faith alive, continues to be a community of believers."<sup>1</sup> Searle would become more and more convinced throughout the remainder of his abbreviated professional life that the Christian community was in danger of losing its identity precisely because liturgical forms were being tampered with in a manner that did not respect the

---

<sup>1</sup> Searle, "The Church Celebrates Her Faith," 6.

dynamics of corporate, ritual rehearsal. Thus, he was convinced that the very success of liturgical reform hinged upon the Church's ability to restore confidence in ritual practice in general.

Yet, Searle judged that the restoration of trust in established ritual forms that allow the Christian community to rehearse the attitudes of Christ would be especially difficult within the American culture that so prized individualism as the "blood" that pumps through its veins. "We enthuse about what new prayers and new liturgical music might do to shape the liturgical assembly," wrote Searle in 1990, "overlooking the fact that culture has gotten there before us, unconsciously shaping the attitudes and language of both experts and the participants."<sup>2</sup> Searle observed that skewed, contemporary liturgical practices were failing to lead participants away from the attitude of individualism, as participation in the liturgy continued to be valued for personal and private gain rather than as the fulfillment of a vocation "to stand before God on behalf of the world."<sup>3</sup> This does not mean that liturgy has become irrelevant. In fact, for Searle, just the opposite is true; the liturgy, if approached contemplatively—knowing how to "move from the visible to the invisible, from the human to the divine, from the signifier to the signified"<sup>4</sup>—provides the community with the tools for living prophetic Christian lives in the midst of materialism, greed, and self-promotion. By relearning the skills of "full, conscious, and active" liturgical participation, we commit to

---

<sup>2</sup> Searle, "Private Religion, Individualistic Society, and Common Worship," 27.

<sup>3</sup> See Searle, *Called to Participate: Theological, Ritual, and Social Perspectives*, 84. See also page 31, where Searle writes: "Thus baptism creates for those being baptized a new set of relationships to Christ, to the Church, and to the world. Anyone who is baptized, then, assumes the responsibility of taking part in representing God to the world and the world to God because this is the work of Christ that has passed over into the liturgy."

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 44. Quite simply, for Searle, to participate in the liturgy is to move to the "deeper" levels which is an act of contemplation—from participating in the *rite* to participating in the *priestly work of Christ* to participating in the *trinitarian life of God*.

memory that “we stand before God and that to do so is to stand before the Mystery, to stand on the edge of an abyss, on the edge of language, on the edge of knowing.”<sup>5</sup>

***A Corpus of Breadth: From Scholarly Media to Sacred Mystagogia***

An important discovery in this exploration of Mark Searle’s writings, organized around his understanding of liturgy as the “rehearsal of Christian attitudes,” is the vast and diverse array of his published work. Searle’s contribution to the field of liturgical studies is partly a result of the fact that he was not limited to one specialty in the field—i.e. Christian initiation—by which he would make his mark in the realm of the academy; rather, he was well-versed in a broad spectrum of interdisciplinary interests—i.e. Semiotics and ritual studies—and readily articulated them for both liturgical experts and those devoted to the pastoral implementation of liturgical reform.<sup>6</sup> In her acceptance of the Michael Mathis award for her late-husband in 1993, Barbara Searle states:

We desperately needed to hear what he had to say, to hear him speak of the tradition which ought not to be dispensed with lightly. We needed to hear him say that there were treasures in our heritage that could meet the needs of peoples searching for meaning the contemporary world. We needed to see his brilliant intellect and his faithful heart and his concern for ordinary Christian experience interact, producing books and articles and tapes, innumerable lectures and classes and conversations. We needed his critical stance probing our cultural assumptions in liturgical practice. We needed his wit and his wisdom, his passion and his perseverance in the cause of liturgical renewal. *Mark’s intellectual history of these years can be seen in his bibliography, how he moved easily between the rigors of the academy with its need to define a scope and methodology for this new science of*

---

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 39. Searle continues to describe the contemplative nature of liturgical prayer in this fashion: “To pray is to hurl words into the vast infinity of the silent mystery of God, but often we rattle them off as if we were shelling peas, and they come pinging back to us, failing to penetrate beyond the sphere of our self-absorption. We know we have prayed only when we cannot remember what we were saying, when the nakedness of our exposure to God or the urgency of the spirit of prayer makes our spirit leap in God’s Spirit and transcend what we can contain in words.”

<sup>6</sup> See Appendix VIII: *Guide to Mark Searle’s Files*.

*pastoral liturgy, and the demands of an authentic contemporary mystagogia.*<sup>7</sup>

For her own part, Barbara Searle remains deeply edified by her husband's willingness to serve the Church not only through scholarly addresses delivered to liturgical academies but also through the medium of homilies delivered at parish retreats and editorials in *Assembly* directed to those in the "trenches" of liturgical reform. While Searle's unique and lasting niche in the liturgical world might well be his concern for the assembly and his vision for a study of liturgy stemming from this vantage-point, it is only too clear that this contribution flows from a well-rounded knowledge of the history and theology of Christian liturgy.

Furthermore, in both his technical works on topics such as communications theory and Semiotics as well as his publications geared for readers untrained in the field of liturgical studies, Mark Searle desired to help his diverse audiences "see" what liturgy is all about. Perhaps this should not be surprising for a man who wrote his licentiate thesis on the great mystagogue, Cyril of Jerusalem. The following quote from Searle's *Liturgy Made Simple* substantiates the suggestion that his was a mystagogical approach aimed at leading worshippers to new insight and greater depth:

Before discussing the details of specific rites, it might be helpful to establish a coherent picture of the liturgy of the Church. We hardly need to be told what the liturgy is, because we already know. It is rather like the man who was asked whether he believed in infant baptism. "No," he answered, "I've seen it." But the problem is this: when he saw baptism, what did he see? There is an old and familiar story about four blind men who were introduced to an elephant. Later, as they discussed their experience, they violently disagreed about what they had encountered. An elephant, claimed the first man, who had put his arms around the elephant's leg, is a kind of tree: a very large kind of tree is what an elephant is. No, argued the second man, an elephant is a kind of snake with a very coarse skin and a strange, soft mouth. He had, of course grasped the elephant's trunk. The third man

---

<sup>7</sup> Barbara Searle, "Acceptance Speech Given in Response to the Presentation of the Michael Mathis Award to Mark Searle, Posthumously, June 17, 1993," 2. Emphasis mine.



had felt the elephant's ear and swore black and blue that an elephant was a sail on a ship. The fourth man, who had grabbed the elephant's tail was utterly convinced that an elephant was a piece of old rope. . . . Similarly, people have very different and quite conflicting views on liturgy.<sup>8</sup>

Searle's study would expose him to different views on the meaning and the relevance of liturgy, but all along he held firm to his conviction that there is an objective reality that must be revered and to which the Church must submit. Thus, Searle's contribution as a modern-day mystagogue can be found in his conviction that liturgical formation does not begin by telling the assembly what it must believe about liturgy but rather by taking seriously and respectfully the assembly's preconceived understanding(s) of liturgical worship.<sup>9</sup>

### ***A Methodical Career: The Framework for "Pastoral Liturgical Studies"***

While Mark Searle could easily have made a career out of his work in the area of Christian initiation, particularly infant baptism, he soon devoted the bulk of his efforts to the promotion of liturgical reform. He made his views and concerns known in print as early as 1982, when he published his "Reflections on Liturgical Reform" in *Worship*. "One has the sense," argued Searle, "that in half an hour all that has come about in the space of twenty years could be cleared away and the old order restored. It has not died, it has not even faded away. It merely sleeps."<sup>10</sup> An old order asleep was something that troubled Searle greatly; liturgical renewal, he believed, was failing to shake the Church to ongoing conversion in

---

<sup>8</sup> Searle, *Liturgy Made Simple*, 11.

<sup>9</sup> See Searle, "New Tasks, New Methods: The Emergence of Pastoral Liturgical Studies," 295. He writes: "The proper starting point for pastoral liturgical studies is the liturgical activity of the whole assembled community. It is concerned to study the various forms and degrees of engagement exemplified by all the participants, to analyze the claims made for such participation by the participants themselves as well as by the church's authorities and by theologians, and to identify whatever discrepancies may be occurring between what the rites and texts are supposed to communicate and what they may actually be communicating."

<sup>10</sup> Searle, "Reflections on Liturgical Reform," 412.

Christ.<sup>11</sup> Searle's observations that liturgical renewal was not reaching the level of the heart—the place where lasting commitments are made and where allegiances are formed—led him to the conviction that the way in which liturgy is studied must be redirected if the practice of liturgy is to endure. His proposal was to engage the contributions and methods of the social sciences and to develop “pastoral liturgical studies” aimed at probing the questions and circumstances surrounding a Christian faithful (including clergy) that has failed, for the most part, to interiorize the fruits of liturgical reform.

Thus, beginning with his association with the Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life in 1983 and continuing with his work with the Social Sciences study group of the North American Academy of Liturgy, Searle began to collect the empirical data that substantiated his observations about the state of renewal, especially as lived in the United States. For example, he became utterly convinced that American culture was a primary culprit in jeopardizing the success of liturgical renewal; dominant American themes such as individualism and privatization revealed themselves in liturgical practices that were self-absorbed and anathema to the sacramentalizing of the Body of Christ. The approach Searle would take to combat this threat would be both academic and pastoral. On the one hand, he wanted to strengthen the methodology of liturgical studies for scholars and practitioners alike, and on the other hand, he wanted to give people in the pews the necessary tools to participate fully, consciously, and actively.

Thus, in his vice-presidential address to the annual gathering of the North American Academy of Liturgy, Searle strove to unite the “pastoral” and the “academic” dimensions of

---

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. He writes: “Surveys claims to show that the overwhelming majority of Catholics pronounce themselves in favor of the reforms, but it is hard to know what that means. Liturgical change has meant so many things to so many parishes, to so many people. *It made be little more than a code word for a low-tremor earthquake which shook the pictures off the wall, caused a momentary thrill of anxiety, provoked a short-lived storm of commentary and gossip, but left the foundations intact in most parts of the country.*” Emphasis mine.

liturgical studies with a new methodology that takes its starting point from the assembled community rather than from history and theology. Regarding his approach, Searle wrote:

It is concerned to study the various forms and degrees of engagement exemplified by all the participants, to analyze the claims made for such participation by the participants themselves as well as by the Church's authorities and by theologians, and to identify whatever discrepancies may be occurring between what the rites and texts are supposed to communicate and what they may actually be communicating. . . It is precisely to protect the worship life of the church from ill-advised experimentation and unhelpful advice that the development of scholarly research under the umbrella of pastoral liturgical studies is so important.<sup>12</sup>

The major contribution Searle made, with regard to this “new” methodology, was the emphasis he placed on the application of the human sciences to liturgical studies. It was not the case that using these academic disciplines in liturgical research was revolutionary in the early 1980s, but rather, what was unique with Searle was his belief that the pursuit of knowledge begins with praxis—the assembly’s experience of worship—rather than with historical and theological norms.

Interestingly enough, the unfolding of Searle’s own academic career actually serves as a model for his threefold methodology of “pastoral liturgical studies”—the empirical task, the hermeneutical task, and the critical task. To begin with, in the early 1980s, Searle immersed himself in the practice of learning how to collect empirical data. He labored to practice the art of a “participant observer,” and his files bear witness to the fact that he was intrigued by surveys and instruments designed to measure how assemblies participate (or not) in liturgical prayer. “People’s attitudes, outlooks, lifestyles and behavior are all open to investigation,” Searle contended, “as are also their understanding of what liturgy is for, the motives with which they participate, and the account they give of the place it has in their

---

<sup>12</sup> Searle, “New Tasks, New Methods: The Emergence of Pastoral Liturgical Studies,” 295-296.

lives.”<sup>13</sup> Thus, for Searle, the real importance of empirical research could be found in its attempt to get at what contributes to or prohibits the assembly from participating at “deep” levels.<sup>14</sup>

So if the early-to-mid 1980s can be roughly rendered as years when Searle devoted the bulk of his efforts to calling for the need for fine-tuning skills for the collection of empirical data, the late-1980s saw him turn his attention to developing his competencies for the hermeneutical task. Searle defined this objective as “the study of how the symbolic words and gestures of the liturgy operate when they engage the believing community.”<sup>15</sup> With this in mind, it must be stated that Searle demonstrated a competence in symbols and metaphors early on in his academic career. However, it is in his decision to spend a sabbatical year studying the science of Semiotics in The Netherlands that Searle identified his unique and passionate contribution to the hermeneutical dimension of “pastoral liturgical studies.”<sup>16</sup> Searle believed that his immersion in Semiotics would help the Church better

---

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 299.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. Searle states that “it might be worth remarking again that the attempt to describe what goes on in liturgy must include not only what happens at the altar or in the pulpit, but also what is going on from the perspective of the congregation and what is happening to them. We are far too glib in making theological claims about what the liturgy is or does. Yet, if those claims have any substance to them, they can be verified. Grace cannot be measured with any precision, of course, but grace, like fleeting events, leaves its mark on people’s lives and that mark is available to the investigator as in the shadow of nuclear war.”

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 300.

<sup>16</sup> See Joncas, “Introduction to *Fons Vitae*: A Case Study in the Use of Liturgy as a Theological Source,” 205-207. Joncas writes: “While it was perfectly legitimate in Searle’s view to learn how human beings had worshiped in the past (historical liturgical studies) and to move beyond description of past events to their putative normative character for present worshipers (theological liturgical studies), his scholarly interest increasingly became the actual behavior of contemporary worshipers examined not anecdotally but with academic rigor (pastoral liturgical studies). . . Having gained some insight into the value the human sciences could bring to liturgical studies, Mark Searle turned to yet another academic discipline—semiotics—as a possible conversation partner with pastoral liturgical studies. . . He recognized that earlier forms of liturgical studies had concentrated almost totally on the texts of worship (their historical development and theological content) without recognizing that the meaning of these texts can be reinforced, interacted with, or subverted by other codes operating in the same event (e.g., the ritual performance of a Eucharistic prayer in which alternation

understand the credibility of symbolic communication. “It is by attention to form rather than to content,” wrote Searle, “that pastoral liturgy will contribute to the liturgy’s ability to communicate effectively as both expressive of the faith of the community and formative of it.”<sup>17</sup>

After returning from his sabbatical, Searle not only concentrated both on demonstrating the relevance of Semiotics applied to liturgy, but he began his campaign to re-launch the liturgical movement. It is the latter agenda that can be seen as the embodiment of what Searle understood as the critical task of “pastoral liturgical studies.” Because the work of the Second Vatican Council made impossible the ongoing denial of pluralistic societies and other religious perspectives, Searle believed that it was necessary to relearn the demands of liturgical participation and the subsequent impact this would have on participation in society. Put very simply, Searle stated that “pastoral liturgical studies will have to undertake a critical evaluation of contemporary culture.”<sup>18</sup> Thus, for Searle, the critical function of liturgy, while it would necessarily be turned towards the limitations of the liturgy itself, is primarily a turning toward the traits of culture that make the liturgy as provided by the Church seem either irrelevant or compartmentalized. Furthermore, he wrote: “[T]he assembling and ritual performance of the local church is the human, visible, this-worldly dimension of the sign-sacrament Church and that full, conscious and active participation occurs when we so engage in the ritual celebrated as to become engaged in the divine,

---

of speech and signing may highlight certain texts and downplay others, ritual gestures during the Institution Narrative may dramatize the actions of the Last Supper thus removing the text from a prayer address to God the Father to a drama performed for the congregation-as-audience, or having the clergy stand while the laity kneel during most of the recitation of the prayer constrains the meaning of ‘We thank you for counting us worthy to stand in your altar and serve you.’).

<sup>17</sup> Searle, “New Tasks, New Methods: The Emergence of Pastoral Liturgical Studies,” 302.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 303.

invisible life of the world-to-come.”<sup>19</sup> In other words, the sacramentality of worship constantly provides a substantive critique of the way in which liturgy is celebrated as well as the way in which the world falls short of participating in the fullness of divine life.

Thus, the trajectory of Searle’s academic tenure subscribes rather neatly to his method laid out for “pastoral liturgical studies.” First, he took seriously the need to learn from sociologists and anthropologists the delicate work of designing empirical instruments as well as the difficult task of interpreting the collected data. Second, Searle developed his own set of tools for the hermeneutical task of interpretation by learning the language of Semiotics. Finally, he raised his voice in challenging the Church to inaugurate a liturgical movement that would critique cultural forces by teaching worshippers how to “relearn a forgotten way of doing things and recapture lost attitudes.”<sup>20</sup>

### ***An Imperative, Present-Day Contribution: The Future of Liturgical Participation***

Mark Searle left his beloved homeland of England in the fall of 1975 chasing after the dream that there was indeed a land out in the world that was ripe and eager for the implementation of the ideals of liturgical reform as envisioned by the Second Vatican Council.<sup>21</sup> He certainly was not blind to the tremendous and potentially destructive influence that values of American culture played in relationship to communal worship. As early as ten years after the close of the Council, Searle would see the American Church in danger of falling into the error of equating “reform” with “experimentation.” He believed the

---

<sup>19</sup> Searle, *Called to Participate: Theological, Ritual, and Social Perspectives*, 17.

<sup>20</sup> Guardini, “A Letter from Romano Guardini,” 237.

<sup>21</sup> See Introduction, page 6. Here Barbara Searle makes the following statement about her husband: “He had been deeply moved by the American Church’s response to the Council’s mandate for liturgical renewal; he sensed there was great promise here.”

corrective for this temptation was in relearning the very nature of liturgical participation. As he wrote in 1979:

Participation in the liturgy is not a matter of everyone doing the same things and singing the same songs: it is a matter of being able to transcend the superficial limitations of our narrow individualism in order to find our deeper and truer identity “in Christ” and in the Body of Christ, which is the Church. The meditative reading or hearing of the Scriptures, the encounter with Christ in prayer, the involvement with an actual congregation in a liturgical assembly not only require such contemplative self-emptying, but they actually promote it. *After centuries of individualism, and after a decade or more of liturgical experimentation, perhaps we are now at the point where the contemplative character of the Church’s common prayer and celebration can once again be recognized. If so, the liturgy might once again be able to help us learn what it is to live and pray “in Christ.”*<sup>22</sup>

Searle’s recognition here of “centuries of individualism” addresses the individualistic nature of the Roman liturgy before the work of the Council, but he would quickly learn of a further layer of entrenched individualism that is imprinted upon the celebration of the liturgy in the influence of American culture. As Searle observed in his interpretation of the empirical data from the Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life, “American Catholics are in process of becoming more characteristically American than characteristically Catholic.”<sup>23</sup>

Therefore, Searle believed the Church to be at a crossroads whereby individual worshippers would simply be free to determine the parameters of participation or they would embrace a form of participation more demanding, one requiring the surrender of ego and will to the corporate work of the Body of Christ. Searle believed intensely in the potentiality of the latter direction to lead the Church to a renewed understanding of liturgy as a

---

<sup>22</sup> Searle, “Prayer: Alone or with Others?,” 20.

<sup>23</sup> Searle, “The Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life,” 333.

contemplative exercise of being caught up in the love between the Father and the Son. As he wrote in his 1988 “Renewing the Liturgy—Again. ‘A’ for the Council, ‘C’ for the Church”:

(Liturgical Participation) is first and foremost a conscious and willed participation in the acting out of the relationship of Christ to the Father, expressed in worship of God and the sanctification of human beings, both of which are inseparable dimensions of the Paschal mystery of self-sacrificial submission to the will of God. It is for this reason that the council encouraged all the faithful “to take part by means of acclamations, responses, psalmody, antiphons, and songs, as well as by actions, gestures, and bodily attitudes.” Not that these things *of themselves* constitute the “active participation” the council had in mind, but that they are intended to “promote” it (par. 30) as effective signs of this inner mystery.<sup>24</sup>

Or, likewise, as Searle wrote in his final work:

[T]here is something more basic at work in the context of liturgy than feeling and that is *attitude*. . . . Often it is hard to distinguish attitudes and feelings, especially since feelings are not infrequently tied to basic attitudes. But it is finally our attitudes that make us who we are. *Our attitudes represent the way our lives are pointed, the more or less habitual ways of thinking, feeling, and acting that shape and color our lives and make us the persons we are.* . . . [R]egular persevering participation and growing familiarity with liturgy’s images and gestures will eventually shape our attitudes, our thoughts, and even our feelings. . . . Through conforming to the constraints of the rite, we de-center ourselves, momentarily abandon our claim to autonomy, so that our bodies might become epiphanies of Christ in our midst.<sup>25</sup>

Thus, Searle argued that the liturgy contains attitudes that are strong enough to counter culture. The attitudes of the liturgy, the attitudes of Christ himself (for example: obedience, surrender, reverence, humility) are to be learned and rehearsed with careful discipline over and over so that they form Christians anew. In fact, his entire vision for liturgical

---

<sup>24</sup> Searle, “Renewing the Liturgy—Again,” 620.

<sup>25</sup> Searle, *Called to Participate: Theological, Ritual, and Social Perspectives*, 61-62. Emphasis mine.



participation rests on the understanding of liturgical prayer as corporate rehearsal for the Body of Christ rather than upon the individual quest for the accumulation of grace.<sup>26</sup>

### ***A Death of Willing Surrender: Searle's Final "Liturgical" Rehearsal***

What has been argued, and hopefully substantiated in this work, is that it is the lens Searle chose of labeling liturgy as the "rehearsal of Christian attitudes" that unified his understanding of the need to study the liturgy from a "pastoral" perspective, meaning from the starting point of the assembly's ability (or inability) to participate in celebration. As stated throughout this project, Searle would argue again and again that "full, conscious, and active" participation in the liturgy—the centerpiece of Vatican II liturgical renewal—requires relearning "lost attitudes," the attitudes of Christ that have been overshadowed by the dominant attitudes of culture.

However, it is quite possible that Searle's best, and final, attempt at demonstrating what this recapturing of the attitudes found in the liturgy came not so much in the form of his writing but in the way in which he lived out the final year of his life after being diagnosed with cancer in June of 1991. As Barbara Searle testified in her speech to receive the 1993 Michael Mathis Award in her late husband's honor, his last days were spent learning the art of Christian surrender. To her audience of liturgical scholars, she states:

Many of you are familiar with Mark's idea that liturgy is a rehearsal for death, for the ultimate surrender to the living God. We witnessed in Mark in the fourteen months of his illness a real connection between what he had always said and how he lived. He spent time daily in

---

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 39-40. Searle writes: "Assembling for the liturgy, celebrating the hours and sacraments of the Church, is a calculated act of self-exposure at the edge of abyss. *The role of the sacraments is not to deliver God to us, not to package the One whom the world cannot contain, not to 'confer' grace, but to deliver us to the place where God can be God for us.*" Emphasis mine.

contemplative prayer, but it was at the liturgy that he was most sustained in his journey into the unknown.<sup>27</sup>

With diminished energy, an inability to control the body as he once had, and a growing level of pain, Searle patterned his final days on the pattern of the Paschal Mystery and refused to succumb to despair or complaint; instead, he seemed to embody a contemplative cheerfulness.<sup>28</sup> He came to believe in his body the words he himself wrote near the outset of his academic career: “The ‘sting’ and ‘victory of death lie in death’s ability to take our life against our will and hence to defeat us. If, on the other hand, we were to learn from the celebration of the paschal mystery to surrender our lives totally to God in Christ, the death of the Christian would be but the further and final rehearsal of a pattern learnt in life and

---

<sup>27</sup> Barbara Searle, “Acceptance Speech Given in Response to the Presentation of the Michael Mathis Award to Mark Searle, Posthumously, June 17, 1993,” 3. Earlier she connects Searle’s emphasis on liturgical “contemplation” to the movement into eternal life: “If there is one word which could sum up Mark Searle’s approach to liturgy and by which I think he would like to be remembered it is the word ‘contemplative.’ This cuts across such potentially irrelevant distinctions as ‘monastic’ and ‘parochial,’ ‘clerical’ and ‘lay,’ ‘introvert’ and ‘extrovert,’ ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine,’ ‘adult’ and ‘child.’ All are called, he asserted, in their baptismal vocation to live the life of faith, to delve beneath the surface of human activity, to enter into the Christian mystery and learn to pray as Christ prayed, to pass over with him to new life. Participation in the assembly of the Church is the birthright of the baptized and a foretaste of our heavenly existence” (2-3).

<sup>28</sup> See Paul Searle, *Searle Family History*, 63-64. Searle’s father, Paul, recounts how his son took “delight” in his final day of sitting in the family flower garden, looking over the cornfields, listening to him read the Passion of St. Matthew’s Gospel. Furthermore, he describes the scene of Searle’s final evening: “Barbara and her children, Mary and Helen, Mum and Dad, prayed and sang hymns in the evening, and all were amazed to hear Mark joining in, in good voice: ‘Praise to the holiest in the height.’ When Fr. Bob Kreig came with Holy Communion, all received, and afterwards everyone, including the children, had a small glass of wine. Mark relished a good Californian red, and when he had finished said: ‘I shall not drink wine again until I drink it in the Kingdom,’ clearly remembering the words of Our Lord at the Last Supper. To his mother he reached out and said: ‘You are wonderful’” (63). See also Robert Kreig, “Homily for the Funeral Mass of Professor Mark Searle,” August 19, 1992, MSP, Loose Collection. On the Wednesday before his death three days later, Kreig, Searle’s friend of seventeen years, sat beside his hospital bed and read of Christ as “the Living Bread” from St. John’s Gospel. Kreig writes: “When we finished the text, two things became clear. One about Mark, and the other about God. Mark has longed for the fullness of life since his earliest years. He has yearned since his birth for life and for the source of all life. This desire for God moved and directed Mark on his journey of fifty-one years. . . For him, an ordinary meal anticipated the heavenly feast on the bread of life. . . At the same time, something became evident about God. Mark’s illness was not God’s doing. God did not will Mark’s cancer and death, rather God has willed that Mark come to the fullness of life. . . Moreover, God sustained Mark and strengthens us so that while an illness may destroy our earthly bodies and disrupt our families, it will not break us. It will not ultimately poison our souls, our inner spirits, for God refuses to lose anyone who has know life. Cancer was victorious over Mark’s body, but it did not conquer Mark.”

practiced over and over again in a lifetime of liturgical participation.”<sup>29</sup> For his own part, Searle’s attitude towards his impending death clearly bore witnesses to a real rehearsal of surrender (modeled on the liturgy) and the accompanying movement into mystery. In other words, the pattern of his dying must be considered inseparable from the words of his scholarly contribution to the work of liturgical renewal.<sup>30</sup>

Mark Searle’s body is buried at Riverview Cemetery in South Bend, Indiana. The headstone chosen by Barbara Searle is a three-foot stone spiral that culminates in a circular opening in the center. Inscribed in the monument are words from Searle’s *Christening: The Making of Christians*:

THE PILGRIMAGE OF FAITH IS NOT A JOURNEY  
IN A STRAIGHT LINE, WITH DEATH WAITING AT THE END,  
BUT A KIND OF SPIRAL THROUGH WHICH PROGRESS IS MADE ONLY  
IN SUCCESSIVELY DEEPER EXPERIENCES OF DEATH AND REBIRTH.

What Searle asserts regarding the life of faith is true as well of the liturgical forms that animate and express this faith: the goal of all liturgy is communal surrender to the God who draws the world into union with himself. Participation in liturgy is an exercise in being “spiraled” into God, thereby rehearsing over and over again the skills of living God’s kingdom both now and for all eternity.

---

<sup>29</sup> Mark Searle, “On Death and Dying” (Editorial), *Assembly* 5:5 (1979): 49. Furthermore, he writes: “The liturgy does not instruct us about themes; it rather shapes and disciplines us in a style of life, that of conformity to the dead and risen Christ.”

<sup>30</sup> See Searle, *Called to Participate: Theological, Ritual, and Social Perspectives*, 40. Here Searle speaks of liturgical participation in terms of rehearsing the attitude of “trust.” He writes: “To know the holiness of God is to know our own unholiness as finite, guilty creatures, called ultimately to struggle, to suffer, and to die. Against this painful recognition, we protest our good intentions, our respectfulness, our good works, clinging to the tattered illusions of self-worth. But in the end there is death, the limit that shadows and underlines all other limitations: death, where we lose everything we have left to lose. *Liturgy would deliver us from this futile and self-defeating campaign of self-justification by offering us an alternative: that of dropping the illusions we cling to, rehearsing the trust that will enable us to let go in the end of to life itself and to surrender ourselves one last time into the hands of the living God.*” Emphasis mine.

## Appendix 1

### ***Mark Searle's Chronological Bibliography (1966-2006)*<sup>1</sup>**

#### **1966**

"The Sacraments of Initiation in the Catechesis of St. Cyril of Jerusalem, Thesina ad gradum licentiatum consequendum, Pontifical Athanaeum Antonianum, Facultas Sacrae Theologiae, Rome.

#### **1968**

"An Alternative Order for the Holy Communion in the Church of England (1967): Arbeit zum Erwerb des Diploms am Liturgischen Institut," Trier.

"The Communion Service of the Church of England, with particular reference to the experimental Order for Holy Communion, 1967: a study in 'comprehensive liturgy.' A dissertation submitted to the Theological Faculty of Trier for the Doctorate in Sacred Theology," Trier.

#### **1969**

Review of *The Church is Mission*, by Edna McDonagh et al. *Clergy Review* 54:12, 992-994.

#### **1970**

"The Eucharistic Prayers," *The Way* (supp. N. 11) 89-92.

Review of *We Who Serve: A Basic Council Theme and Its Biblical Foundations*, by Augustine Cardinal Bea. *Clergy Review* 55:5, 405-407.

#### **1972**

"The Word in the World," *Life and Worship* 41:1, 1-8.

"Liturgy for Holidaymakers," *Christian Celebration* (Summer) 14-16.

#### **1973**

"History of Penance." In *Three Talks on Liturgy*. Ed. Harold Winstone. London: Thomas More Center.

"What Is the Point of Liturgy?" *Christian Celebration* (Summer) 26-27.

"An End of Retreat Service," *Christian Celebration* (Autumn) 18-24.

"General Absolution," *Christian Celebration* (Winter) 27-29.

---

<sup>1</sup> This bibliography appears in Koester and Searle, *Vision: The Scholarly Contributions of Mark Searle to Liturgical Renewal*, 259-267. The final entry was published after the publication of *Vision*.

**1974**

*Stations of the Cross*. Bristol, England: Clifton Cathedral.

*Eight Talks on Liturgy* (Private circulation).

"The Church Celebrates Her Faith," *Life and Worship* 43:3, 3-12.

**1975**

"Penance." In *Pastoral Liturgy*. Ed. Harold Winstone, 189-213. London: Collins.

"Penance Today." In *Penance: A Pastoral Presentation*, 3-11. London: Catholic Truth Society.

"The New Rite of Penance: A Report by John Robson and Mark Searle." *Southwark Liturgy Bulletin*, no. 17, 11-18.

**1977**

"Eucharist and Renewal through History," *Liturgy* 1:3, 4-19.

"The Mass as a Living Tradition." *Southwark Liturgy Bulletin*, no. 24, 15-23.

**1978**

*Christening: The Making of Christians*. Southend-on-Sea, England: Kevin Mahew.

In *Assembly*

"The Act of Communion: A Commentary," 4:4, 6-7.

"The Washing of the Feet," 4:5, 14-16.

"Sunday: Noblesse Oblige" (Editorial), 5:2, 25.

"The Day of Rest in a Changing Church," 5:2, 30-32.

"The Cup of His Blood" (Editorial), 5:3, 33.

"The Tradition We Have Received," 5:3, 38-40.

**1979**

"Prayer: Alone or with Others?" *Centerlines* 1:5, 19-20.

In *Assembly*

"The Word of the Lord" (Editorial), 5:4, 41.

"On Death and Dying" (Editorial), 5:5, 49.

"The Sacraments of Faith," 5:5, 54-55.

"Liturgy and Social Action" (Editorial), 6:1, 57.

"Contributing to the Collection," 6:1, 62-64.

"Active Participation" (Editorial), 6:2, 65, 72.

"Liturgical Gestures" (Editorial) 6:3, 73, 80.

"Genuflecting," 6:3, 74.

"Kneeling," 6:3, 74.

"Sign of the Cross," 6:3, 75.

"Keeping Silence," 6:3, 76.

"Communing," 6:3, 79.

"Bowing," 6:3, 79.

**1980**

"Serving the Lord with Justice." In *Liturgy and Social Justice*. Ed. Mark Searle, 13-35. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press.

*Christening: The Making of Christians*, rev. ed. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press.  
*Ministry and Celebration*. La Crosse, WI: Diocesan Liturgical Office.  
*Basic Liturgy* (Four Talks). Kansas City: NCR Cassettes (Oral version of *Liturgy Made Simple*. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1981).  
 “The Journey of Conversion,” *Worship* 54:1, 35-55.  
 “The Christian Community, Evangelized and Evangelizing,” *Emmanuel* 86:10, 556-562; 86:11, 609-618.

In *Assembly*

“The Three Days of Easter” (Editorial), 6:4, 81.  
 “Holy Thursday: Opening of the Paschal Feast,” 6:4, 82-83, 88.  
 “Parish: Place for Worship” (Editorial), 6:4, 89.  
 “Advent” (Editorial), 7:1, 97.  
 “The Spirit of Advent,” 7:1, 100-101.  
 “The Homily” (Editorial), 7:2, 105.  
 “Below the Pulpit: The Lay Contribution to the Homily,” 7:2, 110-112.

## 1981

*Liturgy Made Simple*. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press.  
 “Introduction,” *Parish: A Place for Worship*. Ed. Mark Searle, 5-10. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press.  
 “Liturgy as Metaphor,” *Worship* 55:2, 98-120. (Reprinted in *Notre Dame English Journal* 13:4, 185-206).  
 “The Pedagogical Function of the Liturgy,” *Worship* 55:4, 332-359.  
 “Diaconate and Diakonia: Crisis in the Contemporary Church,” *Diaconal Quarterly* 7:4, 16-31. (Reprinted in *A Diaconal Reader*. Washington, D.C.: National Conference of Catholic Bishops [1985] 93-107).  
 “Conversion and Initiation into Faith Growth,” *Christian Initiation Resources*. Vol. 1. *Precatechumenate*, 65-74. New York: Sadlier.  
 “Attending [to] the Liturgy,” *New Catholic World* 224:1342, 156-160.

In *Assembly*

“Ritual Dialogue” (Editorial), 7:3, 113, 120.  
 “Lord, Have Mercy,” 7:3, 114.  
 “May the Lord Accept the Sacrifice . . .,” 7:3, 116.  
 “Peace Be With You,” 7:3, 118.  
 “(Inter)communion,” 7:4, 121-122, 128.  
 “Rites of Communion,” 7:4, 126-127.  
 “Keeping Sunday” (Editorial), 7:5, 129.  
 “Sunday Observed: Vignettes from the Tradition,” 7:5, 130-131, 136.  
 “Liturgical Objects” (Editorial), 8:1, 137, 144.  
 “Bell,” 8:1, 138.  
 “Chair,” 8:1, 139.  
 “Oil and Chrism,” 8:1, 141.  
 “Bread and Wine,” 8:1, 143.  
 “The Saints” (Editorial), 8:2, 145.  
 “The Saints in the Liturgy,” 8:2, 150-152.

## 1982

- "Introduction" and "The Shape of the Future: A Liturgist's Vision." In *Sunday Morning: A Time for Worship*. Ed. Mark Searle, 7-9 and 129-153. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press.
- "Reflections on Liturgical Reform," *Worship* 56:5, 411-430.
- "The Narrative Quality of Christian Liturgy," *Chicago Studies* 21:1, 73-84.
- "On the Art of Lifting Up the Heart: Liturgical Prayer Today," *Studies in Formative Spirituality* 3:3, 399-410.
- "On Gesture," *Liturgy* 80, 13:1, 3-7. (Reprinted in *Worship and Ministry* 82:2, 10-17 and *Liturgy* 7:2 [1985] 49-59.
- "Welcome Your Children Newborn of Water . . ." *Pastoral Music* 6:4, 16-19. (Reprinted in *Pastoral Music in Practice*, vol. 3, *Initiation and Its Seasons*. Ed. Virgil Funk, 3-9. Washington, D.C.: The Pastoral Press).
- "The R.C.I.A. and Infant Baptism: A Response to Ray Kemp," *Worship* 56:4, 327-332.
- In *Assembly*
- "The Joy of Lent" (Editorial), 8:3, 153.
- "The Spirit of Lent," 8:3, 158-159.
- "Mary" (Editorial), 8:4, 161.
- "Mary, Seat of Wisdom," 8:4, 166-168.
- "Households of Faith" (Editorial), 8:5, 169.
- "Silence" (Editorial), 9:1, 177, 184.
- "The Child and the Liturgy" (Editorial), 9:2, 185.
- "Childhood and the Reign of God: Reflections on Infant Baptism," 9:2, 186-187, 192.

## 1983

- "Liturgy: Function and Goal in Christianity." In *Spirituality and Prayer: Jewish and Christian Understanding*. Eds. L. Klenicki and G. Huck, 82-105. New York: Paulist Press.
- "Liturgy as a Pastoral Hermeneutic." In *Theological Education Key Resources*, vol. 4, *Pastoral Theology and Ministry*. Eds. D.F. Beisswenger and D.C. McCarthy, 140-150. Association for Theological Field Education.
- "Symbol: A Bibliography." With John A. Melloh. In *Symbol: The Language of Liturgy*. Ed. John B. Ryan, 70-72. Washington, D.C.: Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions.
- "New Tasks, New Methods: The Emergence of Pastoral Liturgical Studies," *Worship* 57:4, 291-308.
- "Confirmation: The State of the Question," *Hosanna* 1:2, 4-11. (Reprinted in *Church* 1:4 [1985] 15-22).
- "Assembly: Remembering the People of God," *Pastoral Music* 7:6, 14-19. (Reprinted in *Pastoral Music in Practice*, vol. 6, *The Singing Assembly*. Ed. Virgil Funk, 3-16. Washington, D.C.: The Pastoral Press).
- "The Liturgy of the Cantor." *Liturgy* 80 14:3, 2-5; 14:4, 5-7.
- In *Assembly*
- "The Days of Pentecost" (Editorial), 9:3, 193.
- "Mystagogy: Reflecting on the Easter Experience," 9:3, 196-198.
- "Of Pasch and Pentecost" 9:3, 199-200.
- "Marriage" (Editorial), 9:4, 201.

- "Marriage: Sacrament of Faith," 9:4, 202-203, 208.
- "Liturgical Renewal" (Editorial), 9:5, 209.
- "Reconciliation" (Editorial), 10:1, 217.
- "A Time for Repentance," 10:1, 222-224.
- "Church Building" (Editorial), 10:2, 225.
- "Sacred Places," 10:2, 226-228.

## 1984

- "Sunday: The Heart of the Liturgical Year." In *The Church Gives Thanks and Praise*. Ed. L.J. Johnson. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 13-36.
- "Faith and Sacraments in the Conversion Process: A Theological Approach." In *Conversion and the Catechumenate*. Ed. Robert D. Duggan. New York: Paulist Press, 64-84.
- "Images and Worship," *The Way* 24:2, 103-114.
- "The Ministry of the Word" (Parts I and II). In *Proceedings of the 1984 Clergy Convention of the Archdiocese of Portland, Oregon*, 3-14.
- "The Uses of Liturgical Language," *Liturgy* 4:4, 15-19. (Reprinted in *The Landscape of Praise: Readings in Liturgical Renewal*. Ed. Blair Meeks. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996).
- "The RCIA in the United States," *Southwark Liturgy Bulletin*, no. 49, 11-18.
- "A Sermon for Epiphany," *Worship* 58:342-345.
- "Christian Liturgy and Communications Theory," *Media Development* 31:3, 4-6.
- In *Assembly*
  - "The Rites of Death" (Editorial), 10:3, 233.
  - "Sacrifice" (Editorial), 10:4, 241.
  - "Liturgy and Religious Education" (Editorial), 10:5, 249.
  - "Perspectives on Liturgy and Religious Education," 10:5, 250-252.
  - "The Introductory Rites" (Editorial), 11:1, 258-259.
  - "Collecting and Recollecting," 11:1, 258-259.
- Review of *Nuptial Blessing: A Study of Christian Marriage Rites*, by Kenneth Stevenson. *Worship* 58:1, 72-75.
- Review of *Unsearchable Riches: The Symbolic Nature of the Liturgy*, by David Power. *Worship* 58:5, 451-453.

## 1985

- The Celebration of Liturgy in the Parishes*. With David C. Leege. Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life, n. 5. Notre Dame, IN: The University of Notre Dame.
- Of Piety and Planning: Liturgy, the Parishioners and the Professionals*. With David C. Leege. Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life, n. 6. Notre Dame, IN: The University of Notre Dame.
- "Observations on Parish Liturgy," *New Catholic World* (November/December) 258-263.
- In *Assembly*
  - "The Kiss of Peace: Ritual Act and Image of the Kingdom," 11:3, 276-280.
  - "... at whose command we celebrate this Eucharist ...," 11:4, 284.
  - "... He showed the depth of his love ...," 11:4, 285.
  - "... Lord, may this sacrifice advance the peace of the whole world ...," 11:4, 287.
  - "A Place in the Tradition," 12:1, 301-303.



"A Meditation on All Saints and All Souls," 12:2, 308-309.

"Ritual and Music: A Theory of Liturgy and Implications for Music," 12:3, 314-317.

(Reprinted in *Church* 2:3 [1986] 48-52; Reprinted in *Pastoral Music* 11:3 [1987] 13-18).

## 1986

"The Parish at Worship." In *The Parish in Transition*. Ed. David Byers, 73-88; panel discussion, 88-96. Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference.

"The Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life," *Worship* 60:4, 312-333

"Issues in Christian Initiation: The Uses and Abuses of the R.C.I.A.," *Living Light* 22:3, 199-214.

"The Mass in the Parish," *The Furrow* 37:10, 615-622.

"Growing Through Celebration," *Music and Liturgy* 12:4, 110-118.

"Participation and Prayer," *Music and Liturgy* 12:5, 145-154.

"Not the Final Word," *Pastoral Music* 10:6, 44-45.

In *Assembly*

"Liturgical Language," 13:1, 337.

"The Feast of the Holy Family: Toward a Paschal Celebration," 13:2, 348-349.

## 1987

"Infant Baptism Reconsidered." In *Alternative Futures for Worship*, vol. 2, *Baptism and Confirmation*. Ed. Mark Searle, 15-54. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 192 pp.

(Reprinted in *Living Water, Sealing Spirit: Readings on Christian Initiation*. Ed.

Maxwell E. Johnson, 365-409. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1995).

"Rites of Christian Initiation." In *Between and Between. Masculine and Feminine Patterns of Initiation*. Eds. Louise C. Mahdi et al., 457-470. LaSalle, IL: Open Court.

"Initiation and the Liturgical Year," *Catechumenate* 9:5, 13-19; 9:6, 13-19.

"Pastoral Liturgy," *Music and Liturgy* 13:1, 7-18.

In *Assembly*

"The Spirit of the Liturgy: A Workshop," 13:5, 372-373.

"Confirmation and the Church," 14:1, 377, 383-384.

Review of *Una liturgia per l'uomo: La liturgia pastorale e i suoi compiti*, edited by P. Visentin, et al. *Worship* 61:6, 557-560.

## 1988

"Renewing the Liturgy—Again. 'A' for the Council, 'C' for the Church," *Commonweal* (November 18) 617-622.

"Forgotten Truths about Worship," *Celebration* 17:1, 5-10.

"For the Glory of God. The Scrutiny of the Fifth Sunday in Lent," *Catechumenate* 10:1, 40-47. (Reprinted in *Commentaries on the Rite for the Christian Initiation of Adults*. Ed. James W. Wilde, 61-72. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications).

Review of *Beyond the Text: A Holistic Approach to Liturgy*, by Lawrence Hoffman. *Worship* 62:5, 472-475.

## 1990

- “*Semper Reformanda*: The Opening and Concluding Rites of the Roman Mass.” In *Shaping English Liturgy. Studies in Honor of Archbishop Denis Hurley*. Eds. Peter Finn and James Schellman, 53-92. Washington, D.C.: The Pastoral Press.
- The Church Speaks About Sacraments With Children. Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance*. With commentary by Mark Searle. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications.
- “Private Religion, Individualistic Society, and Common Worship.” In *Liturgy and Spirituality in Context. Perspectives on Prayer and Culture*. Ed. Eleanor Bernstein, 27-46. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press.
- “A Priestly People” (video). In *The Dynamic Parish Series* by the Institute for Pastoral and Social Ministry. Notre Dame, IN: The University of Notre Dame.
- “The Effects of Baptism,” *Catechumenate* 12:4, 15-22.
- “God Writes Straight in Crooked Lines: Part I. The Inner Process: Conversion,” *Catechumenate* 12:6, 2-9.

## 1991

- “Culture.” In *Liturgy: Active Participation in the Divine Life*. Ed. James P. Moroney, 27-52. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press.
- “Tussen enonce en enonciatie: naar een semiotik van gebedsteksten.” In ‘*Gelukkig de mens*’ *Opstellen over psalmen. Exegese en semiotik aangeboden aan Nico Tromp*. Eds. P. Beentjes et al., 193-221. Kampen, The Netherlands: J.H. Kok (Trans. from the English, “Between Utterance and Enunciation: Toward a Semiotics of Prayer Texts,” by Magda Misset-van de Weg).
- “*Fons Vitae*: A Case Study of the Use of Liturgy as a Theological Source.” In *Fountain of Life*. Ed. Gerard Austin, 217-242. Washington, D.C.: The Pastoral Press.
- “Liturgy and Catholic Social Doctrine.” In *The Future of the Catholic Church in America. Major Papers of the Virgil Michel Symposium*. Eds. John Roach et al., 43-73. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press.
- “Two Liturgical Traditions: Looking to the Future.” In *The Changing Face of Jewish and Christian Worship in North America*. Eds. Paul F. Bradshaw and Lawrence A. Hoffman, 221-243. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
- “Liturgy and Social Ethics: An Annotated Bibliography,” *Studia Liturgica* 21:2, 220-235.
- “God Writes Straight in Crooked Lines, Part II. The Social Process: Initiation,” *Catechumenate* 13:1, 2-12.
- “God Writes Straight in Crooked Lines, Part III. The Ritual Process: Liturgies of the RCIA,” *Catechumenate* 13:2, 11-20.
- “Trust the Ritual or Face ‘The Triumph of Bad Taste,’” *Pastoral Music* 15:6, 19-21.
- Review of *Ritual Criticism*, by Ronald Grimes, *Worship* 65:4, 376-378.

## 1992

- Documents of the Marriage Liturgy*. With Kenneth W. Stevenson. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press.
- “Semiotic Analysis of Roman Eucharistic Prayer II.” In *Gratias Agamus: Studien zum Eucharistischen Hochgebet für Balthasar Fischer*. Eds. Andreas Heinz and Heinrich Rennings, 469-487. Freiburg, Germany: Herder.

“Children in the Assembly of the Church.” In *Children in the Assembly of the Church*. Eds. Eleanor Bernstein and John Brooks-Leonard, 30-50. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications.

“Preface: The Religious Potential of the Church.” In *The Religious Potential of the Child*. Ed. Sofia Cavalletti, 3-12. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications.

“Ritual.” In *The Study of Liturgy*, rev. ed. Ed. Cheslyn Jones et al., 51-58. London: SPCK. Foreword to *A Place for Baptism* by Regina Kuehn, iv-vi. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications.

“An Imperfect Step Forward: A Response to Lectionary-Based Catechesis,” *Church* (Summer) 48-49.

Review of *The Monk’s Tale. A Biography of Godfrey Diekmann, OSB*, by H. Kathleen Hughes. *New Theology Review* 5:1, 112-114.

### **1993**

*Semiotics and Church Architecture*. With Gerard Lukken. Kampen, The Netherlands: Kok Pharos Publishing House.

“From Gossips to Compadres: A Note on the Role of Godparents in the Roman Rite for the Baptism of Children,” *Studia Anselmiana* 110, 473-484.

### **1995**

“Benediction,” “Cabrol, Fernand, OSB,” “Communion Service,” “Elevation,” “High Church,” “International Commission on English in the Liturgy,” “Liturgical Movement,” “Low Church,” “Neophyte,” “Paraliturgy,” “Paschal Candle,” “Prime,” “Rogation Days,” “Sanctorale,” “Temporale” and “Terce.” In *The HarperCollins Encyclopedia of Catholicism*. Ed. Richard P. McBrien. New York: HarperCollins.

### **2006**

*Called to Participate: Theological, Ritual, and Social Perspectives*. Eds. Barbara Searle and Anne Y. Koester. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2006.

## Appendix 2

### ***“Pastoral Liturgy” Course Syllabi*** **Summer 1980 and Fall 1985<sup>2</sup>**

(Summer 1980)

Theo 566

PASTORAL LITURGY

1. Introduction:  
Expectations.  
Dei Verbum: a theological basis for a human sciences approach to study of liturgy.
2. Models:  
Max Black and Ian Ramsey on use of models.  
This course an exercise in use of models for liturgy study  
Liturgical rites as models of the paschal mystery.
3. Communications Theory:  
A communications model and liturgical applications  
Functions of communication  
Self-involving and performative language (Austin/Evans)
4. Linguistics:  
History of linguistics and liturgical studies  
Principles of modern linguistics – primacy of event over system; description vs. prescription; diachronic vs. synchronic; paradigm and syntagm. (Saussure)
5. Semiology:  
Examples of non-verbal codes: application of linguistic principles.  
Functional and symbolic actions  
Sign and symbol. (Barthes/Guiraud/Fawcett)
6. Symbolization:  
Social dimensions of symbol: Durkheim  
Psychological dimensions of symbol: Freud/Jung.
7. Sociology of Knowledge:  
Paulo Freire and the “culture of silence”  
Parallels in the church  
New models for liturgy and catechesis
8. Review questions:  
Criteria for evaluation of liturgical celebrations  
Problem of liturgical participation by liturgists

---

<sup>2</sup> The different fonts used in the presentation of these two syllabi are an attempt to approximate those chosen by Searle.

Theology 566: PASTORAL LITURGY  
Fall 1985  
Mark Searle

AIM: To introduce students, through a combination of projects, reading, lectures and discussions, to some of the tasks of the pastoral liturgist as one who fosters critical praxis of the liturgical life of the local church.

#### COURSE OUTLINE

Introduction: Theological foundations. Methodology of course.

#### Part One: Empirical - What Is Going On?

Reading: Ronald Grimes, Beginnings in Ritual Studies (Parts I & II)  
Project: Observation(s) of a specific liturgical rite.  
Lectures: Objective vs. participatory knowing  
Discussions: Reports on observation exercises in light of reading and lectures.

#### Part Two: Hermeneutical - What Does It All Mean?

Reading: David Power, Unsearchable Riches: The Symbolic Nature of Liturgy  
Project: either -- identify Christian and American myths and the way they may interact in liturgy  
or -- if the first project revealed a discrepancy between what the text/rubrics call for and what was actually said/done, reflect upon the way the actual meaning of the rite differs from the attended meaning.  
Lectures: Language, symbol, narrativity.  
Discussions: Reports on the projects in light of reading and lectures.

#### Part Three: Critical - Who Is Doing What to Whom and How?

Reading: Paulo Freire, Cultural Action for Freedom  
Project: Case study of how power is exercised in/through liturgical celebration  
Lectures: Explicit vs. implicit meanings and agendas  
Discussions: Reports on case studies in light of readings and lectures.

#### Part Four: Prayer - Is It Possible to Participate in Liturgical Prayer?

Reading: Jakob Petuchowski, Understanding Jewish Prayer  
Project: Review of Petuchowski's book in light of the course.  
Lectures: Ascesis of liturgical prayer.  
Discussions: Identification of and reflection upon problems facing liturgical participation today.

#### Review of Course

Suggestions for further reading will be offered in connection with the lectures presented in each section.

## Appendix 3

### *Instruments for Interpreting Liturgical Data*

#### 1985 Memo to the “Ritual-Language-Action: Social Sciences” Study Group<sup>3</sup>

Dear Colleague:

I’m writing this letter to bring you up to date on the plans for our group’s research project for the coming year and to urge you to get the work underway as soon as you can.

A small committee consisting of Peggy Kelleher, Jim Lopresti, Mark Searle and myself met immediately after our last session in Philadelphia to pull together the ideas expressed by the group and to map out a strategy for the year ahead.

Let me first give a summary reading of the group’s ideas, as a reminder for those of you who were there and as a framework of reference for those who could not make it. The strong feeling of the group was to continue and build on the past year’s experience of doing field research. Both those who did more extensive participant observation and those who heard the reports or did briefer observations of their own found their appetites whetted for more. At the same time there was a strong feeling that this year’s project should not be limited to a simple repetition of what we did last year, but that it should advance our data gathering skills and techniques and move us into the next phase, that of interpreting the data. There was less unanimity on whether to continue working on the rite of final commendation and farewell of the funeral liturgy or move into other areas, such as the Christian seder, which was brought to the Academy’s attention this year as problematic to Jewish-Christian relations, or some common rite which might be observed by the whole group during the convention itself.

In light of the above, the committee reached these decisions:

---

<sup>3</sup> This memo, prepared for the “Ritual-Language-Action: Social Sciences” study group of the NAAL, was provided by Margaret Mary Kelleher, who writes in an email correspondence dated December 18, 2009: “At the final session of the study group at the 1984 NAAL meeting, Mary Collins, Jim Lopresti, Mark and I agreed to design an instrument which all the members of the group would use to gather data on a common ritual in preparation for the 1985 meeting. We were initially planning to base it on the work of Ronald Grimes but ended up deciding to use the theory and method I had constructed in my dissertation as the basis for the group’s project. We decided to focus our observations on the Rite of Final Commendation and Farewell, and I put a six page instrument together which was sent out to the group. . . . At the 1985 meeting we decided to continue to do field research. Gil Ost diek, Mark Searle, Jim Lopresti and I met after the last session of our meeting in Philadelphia and set our strategy for the 1986 meeting. We encouraged people to continue to engage in participant observation either in funerals or in Christian seders since that topic came up in discussion.” The above memo reflects Ost diek’s account of the discussion at the 1985 meeting and plans for the 1986 meeting.

1. Group members are to do field research as participant observers, using the set of questions developed for last year's project to gather data (questions enclosed for your convenience). Members who were not able to do the field research last year are urged to join in this year's project.
2. The funeral rite will remain a common object of our research. Members, especially those who can only do one or a limited number of observations, are also encouraged to research the Christian seder.
3. Members are encouraged to expand the project in any of several ways:

By extending the observation to other portions of the funeral rites.

By developing specific areas of the research method for your own situations. Peggy and Jim have agreed to serve as personal consultants for you in this regard. Please call on them for help! Their addresses and phone numbers are on the enclosed list.

By enlisting other participants as co-researchers. Jim and Peggy have prepared a parallel set of questions to be used in interviewing these co-observers (enclosed).

4. Reporting on the fieldwork is to be done in writing and circulated in advance of next year's convention, to facilitate our discussion. Reports on the Christian seder are due May 25<sup>th</sup>, for possible use within the Academy by the Committee on Liturgy and Jewish-Christian Relations. Reports on the funeral rite are due November 20<sup>th</sup>.
5. There will be extended discussion on the next phase of the method, that of interpretation, at the convention. Mark will be prepared to help us ask the right questions from the perspective of the social sciences and the art of interpretation (we labeled this a "propedeutic to hermeneutic" or "opening up the can of worms").

I'd like to close with a personal word of thanks to all of you, especially to the field researchers, for your contributions to the Philadelphia discussions. My apologies to Dick Rutherford for not reserving time for his report; we'll be able to include it next year. Finally, I ask all of you to take part in this year's field research project even if you're not able to do a lot, and I thank in advance for your help in our group's work.

Wishing you peace,

Gilbert Ostdiek, O.F.M.

## PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION OF WORSHIP IN LOCAL CHURCHES<sup>4</sup>

- A. Denomination  
 % of seats filled  
 Number of other services held that day
- B. % of men... women... children under 15 years...  
 Average age of congregation  
 Social class: a. wealthy b. comfortable c. struggling d. poor e. mixed  
 Racial composition: Caucasian ...% Black ...% Hispanic ...%  
 Specific ethnic groups  
 Compare, if relevant, the congregation described in B with the neighborhood in which the church is located.
- C. The interior of the church has the overall characteristics of  
 a. a meeting room b. a theatre (actors/spectators)  
 c. a public assembly room d. a sacred shrine
- It is the kind of place where you would/would not feel like taking your coat off?  
 It is the kind of place which inspires silence?
- What sort of contact, if any, did you have with members of the congregation before the service began?
- D. The degree of congregational participation in terms of
- |                       |   |   |   |   |   |
|-----------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| physical movement     | I | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| vocal involvement     | I | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| devotional engagement | I | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| mutual interaction    | I | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
- E. The role of the clergy/leadership in terms of
- |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| overall dominance of the event         | I | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| clear separation from the congregation | I | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| reliance on personal charism           | I | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| reliance on official role              | I | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
- F. How would you rate the sermon in terms of
- |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| its importance in the service          | I | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| its ability to hold attention          | I | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| its relevance to daily life            | I | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| its political implications             | I | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| its critique of the congregation       | I | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| its fidelity to orthodoxy              | I | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| its use of Scripture                   | I | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| its reflection of biblical scholarship | I | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

---

<sup>4</sup> This document is found in Searle Files F2: "Course Outlines and Bibliographies." The font used is an attempt to replicate the one chosen by Searle. Although there is no date on this document, it is in mimeograph form, and thus, likely would have preceded the 1985 document that follows.



- G. How would you rate this service overall in terms of
- |                   |   |   |   |   |   |
|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| numinosity        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| ritualism         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Americanism, etc. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| paternalism       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| religious fervor  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| religious depth   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| counter-culture   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| social bonding    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
- H. What was your dominant feeling about being part of this service?  
What other feelings were aroused?

### INTERPRETATION OF LITURGICAL DATA

Once the data is collected by observation, it should normally be supplemented with the research of additional data in the following steps:

1. Interviewing participants as co-informants: why certain choices were made in the ritual performance; what certain symbolic objects/gestures meant; how different people understand their different roles. These and other questions arise out of the observation, to clarify what was going on.
2. Study of the official text of the rite and official documents associated with it to identify: sequence of events; meanings offered for ritual symbols; roles established by the rite; restrictions on use of the rite; identification of ritual goals.
3. Study of theological commentaries: what meanings do they associate with symbols and ritual performance?
4. Research into context of the rite:
  - Historical: what changes have occurred in the structure of the rite, in meanings attributed to it, roles given in it, rubrics and discipline associated with it, etc.
  - Synchronic: how is this rite related to other rites in the liturgical system? What elements of this rite occur in other rituals? With what continuity or discontinuity of meaning?
  - Composition of the assembly: questions concerning the socio-cultural background of the participants, the religious background of the congregation, the role of participants in planning the rite, any changes that may have occurred in the way this assembly has been performing the rite.

Many of these questions you can answer from your own background and study; others cannot be gone into for lack of time and opportunity. So we will move on to interpretation, conscious that not all the data required for adequate interpretation is available to us.

#### Questions for interpreting the ritual performance:

NB: The goal is to identify the public meaning manifested by the ritual performance. We are not asking what it might mean to individuals.

1. What information does the ritual performance give to members of the assembly about their role or identity? (verbal/nonverbal)
2. What common beliefs, values, commitments are displayed by the ritual symbols?

---

<sup>5</sup> This document is found in Searle Files C17: "Ritual Studies Instruments." The font used is an attempt to replicate the one chosen by Searle.

3. What ecclesial self-image is displayed in the rite?
4. What potential meanings are hidden or suppressed in the performance of the rite?
5. What new meanings does the ritual performance create?
6. What hypotheses would you advance to account for these new meanings? What historical or cultural influences might be at work here?
7. How is this interpretation influenced by your own cultural, religious and theological background?

## LITURGICAL OBSERVATION INSTRUMENT<sup>6</sup>

TASK: To "read" a liturgical celebration, i.e. to identify what is going on in it and then to interpret the (public) meaning manifested in the ritual performance with a view, finally, to evaluating what meaning found in the rite-as-performed in comparison with other normative meanings.

Thus there are three stages: a. collecting the data; b. interpreting the data; c. evaluating the data. For the moment, the exercise is simply to collect the data. The temptation to interpret and/or evaluate should be resisted at this stage.

METHOD: A particular method is a series of questions used to convert the unknown to the known. The series of questions is necessarily open-ended, not closed. This means they are provisional and must be reviewed, deleted, refined and supplemented as the exercise goes on.

Ronald Grimes (Beginnings, ch.2) offers a much more extensive collection of questions. It might be useful for each group to review Grimes' questions and to decide whether to include any of them to flesh out the shorter questionnaire given here. The questions below will guide you through the rite. Grimes' questions will help you see more than you might have thought to look for. Be clear about your reasons for including or not including questions as the process goes on.

This exercise must be undertaken in groups. Recognizing and identifying problems of "objectivity" are fully 50% of the purpose of the exercise!

PROCEDURE: The observation group should hold a preliminary meeting a. to decide on a time and place for observation;  
b. to review the two sets of questions.  
Then the group should observe a ritual. Observers should assume positions in different parts of the Church. Notes should not be taken. Using the group's questionnaire, they should write up their answers to the questions immediately after the observation (preferably alone, then in a group).

---

<sup>6</sup> This document is found in Searle Files C17: "Ritual Studies Instruments." The font used is an attempt to replicate the one chosen by Searle. Although this handout may be attributed to Searle, the questions found in the section entitled "Questions for Gathering Data on Ritual Performance" come directly from a memo prepared by Margaret Mary Kelleher in preparation for the 1985 NAAL meeting. Thus, this instrument reflects the work of the "Ritual-Language-Action: Social Sciences" study group as a whole.

A minimum of three observations should be undertaken; this will improve the quality of the observation report and also help refine understanding of the problems involved.

Each group member should write a brief record of their own experience of this process, in terms of thoughts, feelings, questions, reactions relative both to the observation itself and to the overall group process.

#### QUESTIONS FOR GATHERING DATA ON RITUAL PERFORMANCE

[NB. These questions should be answered on the basis of what you saw, not on the basis of previous knowledge, questioning of the congregation, etc.]

#### RITUAL STRUCTURE

What is the sequence of events as you observed them?  
Were there any definable segments (changes of scene, actors, time)?  
Were there any variations in this sequence in successive observations?  
Who or what was responsible for these alterations?  
What is the larger sequence of which your observed sequence was a component?

#### RITUAL SUBJECTS

What is the general composition of this assembly (number, age, sex, race, etc.)?  
How does the assembly occupy the space (scattered, grouped, packed)?  
What roles are exercised in (each segment of) this rite?  
What did you observe about the relationship of the role-player to the assembly at large? (Indications?)  
Did any of the role-players break frame (step out of role)?  
What other distinctions between participants did you notice?  
How are such roles and distinctions "marked"?  
What moods/emotions appear to be expressed by those present? (Indications?)  
What are your own impressions, feelings, reactions as you participate in and observe this rite?

#### RITUAL SYMBOLS

Place:       Where does the rite take place?  
              How is the space organized? (Diagram may be helpful)  
              What boundaries are established between outside and inside, within the interior itself?  
              How are the boundaries marked?  
              How are the boundaries crossed? By whom?  
              Are light, color, decoration used to organize the space?

Time:

What indications of, or references to, time occur in the rite?  
Differentiate categories of time (e.g. 10 am, 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Epiphany, last Sunday, in the days of Jesus, today).

Symbolic Objects:

What symbolic objects occur in the rite?  
Are they decorative? (e.g. a cross on a wall, ignored)  
instrumental? (e.g. vestments, thurible)  
focal? (Bible, altar, etc. which become focus of attention)  
When is this object seen?  
what is actually seen (color, shape, size, movement)?  
who touches it?  
what does it feel like?  
what is done with it?  
what is said about it (hymns, prayer, sermon, other)/  
what images are offered in association with it?

Symbolic Actions:

What symbolic actions appear in the rite?  
who does them?  
when are they done?  
what is said about such actions in prayer, song, sermon, etc?  
what images are offered in association with them?

Words and Music:

Who sings? what do they sing? when?  
Who speaks? what do they say? (fixed? Improvised?) when?  
What kind(s) of music is/are heard? when?  
What kinds of silence occur? when?  
What dominant image(s) surface in the songs/chants/words/ of the rite?

Relationships:

What relationships are established in the rite  
between participants? (some? all? groups?)  
between participants and God?  
between participants and those absent?  
between persons and objects?  
between persons and actions?  
between objects and actions?  
How are these relationships established?  
What symbols appear to play a dominant role in the rite?  
What symbols play a secondary role?  
Which subjects (see above) play dominant roles? How?  
What variations did you observe from observation to observation with regard to ritual symbols (subject, objects, actions, formulae)?  
Have you any way of knowing who was responsible for these variations?

Are there any other data you wish to record?

METHOD FOR ANALYSIS OF RITUALS

For observation and write-up, see guidelines.

Note use of video: observation is wide-angled, selective  
Video is narrow, records everything

Keep levels of analysis distinct: know what you are looking for.  
Look for pertinent oppositions at every level.

I. INITIAL SURVEY OF STRUCTURE OF RITE

Aim: To develop a working hypothesis on how the rite is structured into segments, phases, or mini-rituals.

## 1. SPACE:

Ritual space vs. non-ritual space  
Differentiations within ritual space  
Boundaries, demarcations, barriers (physical/visual)  
Location: relationship of subspaces to each other  
e.g. left/right, front/back, above/below  
embedded/embedding  
Orientation: direction in which space faces  
e.g. forwards/backwards, upwards/downwards  
side-by-side/opposed, centripetal/centrifugal  
Use of color, light (natural/artificial), shapes to  
differentiate spaces or privilege certain areas  
Furnishings as "poles" governing activities in each area

## 2. TIME:

Ritual time vs. non-ritual time (before/after,  
proximate/remote)  
What time is it? (hour/day/season/year/occasion)  
Sequence of rite: phases/repetitions/parallels  
How do lower-level units (micro-rituals) contribute to  
higher-level units or processes?

## 3. ACTORS:

Persons: What oppositions are pertinent in defining  
roles? (e.g. gender, age, vesture, insignias,  
proxemics, location, speech-roles. . .)  
Objects: What objects are featured in the rite? Who has  
contact with them? How? In what order?

> SEGMENTATION OF THE RITE (provisional)

II. SIGNIFYING FORM

For each segment:

1. Identify the languages/codes employed (speech, movement,  
gesture, song, colors, objects, etc.)

2. Which is the dominant code? How is it patterned/formalized to intensify the experience?
3. How do the other codes relate to the dominant one? Diagram the "score."
4. Which actors, if any, manipulate these codes?
5. What changes occur between the beginning and the end of this phase? (alterations in location or proxemics; transfer of information or of objects.)
- [6. Which parts/elements are invariant/canonical and which change according to the circumstances?]

### III. SIGNIFIED CONTENT

For each segment:

1. What is being done (to say is to do) in this phase? How do you know?
2. What "cosmology" (concrete figures/abstract themes) is invoked/embodyed? Look first at what is said/sung, but also at the other codes. What oppositions come into play (natural/supernatural, life/death, male/female, public/private, inside/outside, here/not here, now/not now).
3. What "narrative" do participants tell themselves? Look for references to past/present/future, immediate/remote. (Myths fragmented in ritual)
4. What values are embraced/affirmed/rejected?
5. Where are power/authority located in the rite? How?
6. Instances of polyvalence/condensation/fusion of meaning?

### IV. FORM AND CONTENT

What is accomplished by the rite as a whole, and how do the different segments/phases contribute to the meaning of the whole?

How does the form of the rite convey its meanings?

What "loose ends" are you left with (elements that seem to be mere "noise", without meaning)?

### V. LITURGICAL REFLECTION

How does this rite compare to other Christian rites?

What constitutes "participation"?

How is authority established and exercised in the rite?

### VI. THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

How do the meanings conveyed by the rite compare with those derived from other sources (e.g. professed theology of the participants?) With other theologies? Evidence of cultural influence? Of polemics?



## Appendix 4

### *Proposals for Notre Dame's Center for Pastoral Liturgy*

#### MEMORANDUM<sup>7</sup>

To: Mgr Joseph Gremillion                      Date: March 15, 1984  
From: Mark Searle                                  Subject: Center for Pastoral Liturgy

1. Liturgy Faculty: I have consulted those members of the liturgy faculty currently on campus, but without much to report. They feel out of touch with what is going on at the CPL: its operations do not really impinge upon them except insofar as CPL staff have been teaching in the liturgy program. While the center was founded from the Dept of Theology, by Aidan Kavanagh, its direction since John Gallen has been primarily in service of the non-University community, by way of education and popularization. Furthermore, until recently, we had to invite workshop faculty from outside the university faculty because university regulations prohibited our paying University faculty for giving talks etc. Hence, while the faculty know the CPL staff and relations are cordial, there has been little or no involvement with the Center.
2. Direction of the Center: The center was founded as a center for liturgical research, but took a different direction with the appointment of John Gallen in 1975. Since then, the pastoral-educational emphasis has been maintained, though an abortive attempt was made a couple of years ago to develop a research side.

Nevertheless, the question remains: can the University best serve the Church through research or through educational programs?

a. Education:

Pro: what the CPL has done, it has done well; it has an established reputation, and many, besides the Associates, look to it to continue;

Con: when the Center moved into population education in the mid-1970s, there was an obvious need for conferences, workshops and publications aimed at the parish level; since that time the scene has changed and the role of the NDCPL is no longer clear. For example: we have drawn less than 400 participants for the June conference the last couple of years or more. The

---

<sup>7</sup> This document is found in Searle Files D42: "Center for Pastoral Liturgy." The font used is an attempt to replicate the one chosen by Searle.

South-Western Michigan Liturgical Conference last August drew 800. This, like the corresponding conferences of Detroit and Chicago, appeals to and serves the needs of a specific local church. It is not clear that there is still room for ND doing the same thing at a national level.

b. Research:

Pro: there is a dire lack of empirical information about the state of the liturgy in this country, or of empirically based studies which could help future pastoral strategy. The ND Study of Catholic Parish Life could serve as a launching pad for more of this kind of study in areas relating to liturgy, ministry, prayer, etc. This kind of research would be invaluable to national organizations such as the BCL, FDLC, NCEA, etc., as well as to dioceses and parishes.

Con: this would represent a radical change for the Center, a really new beginning;  
since the national organizations mentioned above have rarely availed themselves of the expertise the Center has had in past years, there is no reason to think this is going to change and that they will suddenly start funding research at this point; the University has insisted on the Center being financially productive, even while it supported it financially: a move to research instead of education will, at least temporarily, cut off such monies as the Center is presently able to generate, and it is not certain that the Administration would be prepared to accept this.

3. Possible scenarios:

- A. Continue in present direction: The Center can only benefit from new direction and new energies. It will need a new director with a doctorate in liturgy, acknowledged pastoral skills, familiarity with the U.S. Church, management abilities, vision for the potential of the CPL, and name-recognition as a communicator/scholar in the area of liturgy. Experience has shown, since 1975, the advisability of an associate director with many of the same skills, as well as a programs coordinator who can do the work of setting up programs, hosting workshops, as well as contributing to the input and process of workshops and conferences. The associate director or programs coordinator should also have writing/editorials skills to continue the publications, especially ASSEMBLY.
- B. Move to research: In this case the new director need not be a liturgist, but could be a social scientist wishing to specialize in sociology of religion and particularly sociology of liturgy.

Such a person would be hired to develop a Center agenda, perhaps through consultation with NORC, CARA and the National Pastoral Life Center.

The associate would have to be a liturgist with an interest in empirically based research and a good sense of what the issues needing research might be, as well as of how to interpret the data.

(These roles could be reversible—liturgist as director, social scientist as associate—as long as they can work together and define appropriate job descriptions. Both should be able to write and speak!)

Research could begin in fairly small ways, and grant money might be available to seed the projects. Such comparatively small projects might include such things as:

- identification of various models of RCIA in a limited number of parishes and comparison of effectiveness in terms of continuing church involvement of participants;
- questionnaire on confessional practice in U.S.;
- study of after-effects of Archbp Whelan's consolidation of Sunday masses in his diocese.

4. The immediate future:      The future of the Center is now (suddenly) in jeopardy in a way that was not foreseen a few months ago.

If the Center goes under, it may prove very difficult to resurrect it. Thus my instinct is to appoint a new director to succeed John Melloh as soon as possible.

However, to follow that instinct would be to appoint a new director to continue the present direction of the Center: i.e. to continue with a June conference in 1985, to run workshops for 1984/5, to continue with ASSEMBLY, etc.

This, however, may forestall the Center going a new direction, one more relevant to the needs of the American Church. Hence the quandary, as I see it.

The question immediately to be decided, then, is on the direction the Center should take. Once that is decided, specific candidates can be considered.

## NOTRE DAME CENTER FOR PASTORAL LITURGY<sup>8</sup>

### ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR FOR RESEARCH

#### A PROPOSAL

##### I. Background.

The Notre Dame center for Pastoral Research (CPL) began as The Murphy Center for Liturgical Research in the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council (Cfr LC, n.44). Unlike the Institutes for Pastoral Liturgy envisaged by the Council, however, the MCLR seems to have envisaged itself as a center for the promotion of largely historical research. It undertook an ambitious program of bibliographical resourcing and sponsored an annual scholarly conference. With the departures of Aidan Kavanagh and Tim Shaughnessy and the arrival in 1975 of John Gallen, and with the establishment in 1976 of the North American Academy of Liturgy, the focus of the Center shifted from scholarly research to popular education and pastoral resourcing.

In the last twelve years, however, the development of diocesan liturgy offices (especially LTP in Chicago) and the growing number of regional and diocesan liturgy conferences (e.g. Chicago, Detroit, Grand Rapids) have tended to make the educational task of the CPL less unique and irreplaceable. The continued work of the FDLC, the BCL in Washington and the Liturgical Conference; the development of national organizations such as NPM and the North American Forum on the Catechumenate; not to mention the activities of the Georgetown Center and such occasional ventures as the North American Conference on Worship; all these have tended to meet the need which was apparent when the Murphy Center switched from a research-oriented to an education-oriented institution.

Yet the CPL remains unique in that it is (a) national in scope; (b) independent; (c) university-related. These three characteristics need to be taken into account in any consideration of the specific role of the CPL in the North American liturgical apostolate.

In reflecting on its future, the CPL has, over the years, come to the conviction that, while retaining its educational role, it is in a unique position to respond to a need for which none of these other institutions and organizations are really equipped: the need to undertake empirical research into the pastoral-liturgical life of the churches of North America.

##### II. Potential Research.

While the idea of developing a research program at the CPL has generally been welcomed by all who have given the matter any thought, the proposal has rarely gone much further for two reasons:

---

<sup>8</sup> This document is found in Searle Files D42: "Center for Pastoral Liturgy." The font used is an attempt to replicate the one chosen by Searle.

- a. because the range of potential research projects is so vast: everything from an interdisciplinary study of infant baptism to questions of de facto acculturation in American liturgy (e.g. in celebrating the Eucharist, marriages, funeral).
- b. Because the range of specialized research methodologies is so great: they range from sociological surveys and statistical analyses, through religious psychology, social psychology, symbolic/cultural anthropology, and on. . .
- c. Because any such studies require a high degree of expertise and a great deal of money.

### III. Resources at Notre Dame.

The advantage of being at Notre Dame is that a wide range of expertise (if not a great deal of money!) is easily accessible. Among the resources available to the CPL are the following:

1. Department of Theology: historical and theological research; semiotics of liturgy.
2. Department of Government: Dr. David Leege is a leading sociologist of religion, director of the ND Study of Catholic Parish Life, and no (part-time) Director of the Institute for Religion, Church and Society.
3. Department of Anthropology: has recently appointed Dr. Roberto DaMatta, a leading cultural anthropologist specializing in ritual studies to a chair in anthropology, as a prelude to developing a graduate program in anthropology. Dr. Patrick Gaffney is also a cultural anthropologist. He and DaMatta are very interested in developing future programs in association with the Graduate Program in Liturgical Studies. But DaMatta's research area is Brazilian culture; Gaffney's is Islam.
4. Department of Sociology: Dr. Michael Welch is a sociologist of religion, but this is not an area of strength in this department.
5. Department of Psychology: ??
6. Social Sciences Training and Research Laboratory: ??
7. A library with extensive holding in most relevant areas.

NB: This is a preliminary listing of resources available to the CPL. It is not intended to suggest that they are engaged in, or are interested in becoming engaged in, research into pastoral-liturgical issues. But they do promise:

- a. guided access to literature and other resources;
- b. expertise on methodological issues;
- c. possible assistance in identifying realistic projects and potential researchers.

### IV. Associate Director for Research.

Given its commitment to empirical research, what can the CPL hope to be able to do? Three possibilities:

- a. serve as a stimulant and clearing-house for pastoral-liturgical research around the country and overseas;

- b. undertake actual research projects (of what kind? Cfr n. 2 above.)
- c. both the above (how?)

The Job Description for the Associate Director for Research seems to envisage (a) or (c) rather than (b).

There is also the matter of obtaining funding for research – a specialty in itself! Here the Institute for Scholarship in the Liberal Arts, the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, and University faculty will be of some help, but the initiative and the work has to come from the CPL.

#### V. Proposal.

1. The position should be chiefly that of establishing the CPL as a clearing-house for pastoral-liturgical research:
  - networking interested parties such as members of the NAAL, the ritual studies group of the AAR, the SSSR, and graduate programs in universities with strong programs in sociology of religion, religious psychology, etc.
  - acting as an institutional sponsor for specific research projects (i.e. seeking funding with which to sponsor new projects).
2. Whoever is appointed will almost necessarily have his/her own area of competence and research interest, and should be encouraged to pursue this as far as may be compatible with the provisions of the last paragraph.
3. A Research Advisory Board should be set up to advise the Associate Director and the CPL. This should include representatives from the social sciences, liturgical/theological studies, and the pastoral-liturgical life of the Church.

Done in haste, this 11<sup>th</sup> day of March, 1988.

Mark Searle.

## Appendix 5

### *Handouts on Semiotics*

#### **SEMIOTICS: GETTING STARTED**<sup>9</sup>

The best way to begin may not be by presenting a mass of theory, but by just trying to see how semiotics looks at a text: what, in broad strokes, are the fundamental principles, and how do they work in reading a text?

READING . . .

We have all learned to read, as we have all learned to walk, or to ride a bicycle. . . And we read all sorts of texts, “naturally,” without usually thinking of what is involved in the process of reading.

It may be worthwhile stopping to try to grasp what we do when we read, and how texts of different kinds produce their meaning. This is especially important for biblical texts, which mediate the Word of God, and liturgical texts, which engage us quite differently from other kinds of texts.

It may be worthwhile to have a few rules or guidelines for reading: at least it will help us hear what we are reading when we read a text together.

READING THE TEXT . . .

You have to read the text.

This is obvious, but it already presupposes a DECISION about reading. Actually, confronted with most texts, our instinctive reaction is simply to read them for their content, to glean the INFORMATION they offer . . . either about the realities referred to or about the intentions of the author. That is how we read newspapers, journal articles, letters, notices, etc. We read in order to know, and once we know the text can be jettisoned.

But biblical texts (and literary classics) are different: one is never done reading and re-reading them. They cannot be reduced to the information they convey about the world or about their authors. They are TEXTS, properly speaking: monuments of the word. Who could ever say that they had read the Bible and did not need to read it any more?

---

<sup>9</sup> This document is found in Searle Files (Loose Collection): “Semiotics Course.” The font used is an attempt to replicate the one chosen by Searle. It was used in a graduate seminar Searle taught in the Spring of 1987 entitled “Pastoral Liturgy Seminar: Introduction to Semiotics.”

Reading the Bible, then, is not just a matter of using the text to make contact with the world it recounts, or the intentions it communicates. To read is to confront the text itself and to allow oneself to be seized by the word that takes shape there. It means making connections, both within the text itself and with other texts, and with other ways in which the word takes form or meaning is expressed.

It is the TEXT that needs to be read: this means seeing and grasping HOW it says what it says, using the language it uses:

how are ACTORS, ACTIONS, TIMES and PLACES arranged?

what OPPOSITIONS are at play between the actors themselves and what they do?

To read the text in this sense, then, is to stop “eyeballing” the text (i.e. merely checking it for its obvious contents) in order to undertake a much slower and more laborious process of tracking how the text is constructed before our eyes, and how it uses language to produce meaning. To read in this sense is to examine how the text makes sense (i.e. produces meaning through its own coherence).

The text is not read in order to know what the text has to say, but in order to hear the Word in the text.

### **1. Tracking: Discursive Analysis and its rules. . .**

The TEXT: something constructed out of language.

READING: following the trail of meaning in this construction.

LANGUAGE: we have all learned grammar at school, as well as vocabulary. There are words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs . . . verbs, nouns, adjectives, conjunctions . . . and a dictionary gives the meaning of the words.

But when we READ, it is not so much these things that matter. Instead, we count on being able to recognize words that belong together, words that are associated with each other by the text and combined and organized. In a text, then, words are located on TRAJECTORIES, and it is the trajectories that give the words their meaning.

e.g. The cook has a cold

The cook is covered in spots

The cook is covered with a large apron

The pantry maid covered for the cook

Reading is following the trajectory of meaning via the words and expression of the text. It is well and truly a “tracking game” played in and through the language of the text.

Discourse is another word for the language of the text, and the tracking of meaning in the text is called Discourse Analysis.

#### Step 1:

On first reading, a text looks like a mass of words, all with a range of possible meanings, a real virgin forest! How is one to find one’s way? How to



identify the pathways of meaning? There are characters, actions, objects, places, qualifications. . .

Step 2:

To create some order in this confusion, we can begin by classifying what it is the text has to say around THREE POLES:

- ACTORS
- TIMES
- PLACES

This enables us to recognize (and segment) the different scenes in the text: where one or more actors are found in a certain place at a certain time. These can also be called discursive situations.

e.g. Jesus and his disciples in the boat during the storm.

If the text changes the actor(s) or the place or the time, we are in a new scene/situation.

e.g. Jesus and the disciples in the boat after the storm.  
The disciples on their own in the boat during the storm.

Step 3:

One or more scenes have been identified. What CHANGE takes place in the definition of the actors, times, or places in passing from one scene to the next? Find the DIFFERENCE and name it.

e.g. The quieting of the storm by Jesus leads to the question of faith being introduced in the text, and a new relationship between Jesus and his disciples.

This is a CRUCIAL STEP:

a. If you find the difference, you will find out precisely what is at stake in this passage of the text, how the text presents its characters, what exactly it says about them, on what basis it compares or categorizes them.

e.g. Paul was rich yesterday / Paul is poor today  
Paul is big / Peter is small  
The differences enable us to see from what angle (or “register”) the actors are considered (wealth, size. . .) and on what basis they are categorized.

We all know the figures in the Gospels (maybe too well!) but every text presents its characters from a specific point of view, and we have to identify that point of view if we are to grasp the precise meaning of the text. (Otherwise all the texts just say the same thing: its always about Jesus!) Noting the differences helps us be precise. But the text, of course, always has the last word: in the boat he is associated with the “sleep” and with his “word”; all that is said about the sea is that it became “rough” and then “still”. . .

b. Finding the difference enables us to approach the text from the side of the ORGANIZATION OF THE MEANING of the text. When we stand before a landscape, a scene, a situation . . . we know how to recognize, read, interpret, evaluate, judge,

because we know how to perceive differences of shape, colour, quality. Difference is the basis of the meanings we perceive: NO DIFFERENCES, NO MEANINGS ("By night, all cats are grey." Similarly with texts: reading is a matter of identifying and describing the differences, the gaps, the oppositions between the trajectories of meaning we have identified. This does not take a lot of science, but it does take a certain way of looking. . .

#### Step 4:

When we measure the differences from one scene to the next, when we evaluate what has changed, this allows us to classify the elements of the text: the actors (people, objects), elements of time or space, which GO TOGETHER from a certain perspective (the mighty, the little ones, those who speak and those who do not, those who believe, those who murmur, etc.). We have to try to classify them all: those that go together, those that are opposed to each other. What are the categories of classification? This is the THEMATIC ANALYSIS of the text.

With this, we enter into a deeper understanding of the text. We realize that a text does more than just arrange scenes (Jesus in the boat, the sower going out to sow, the beggar at the roadside). It also CLASSIFIES and organizes these figures (or figurative elements) according to a certain code or logic (this is the THEMATIC dimension of the text).

NB: This point is BASIC to the reading of texts and it presupposes that the texts we read not merely "represent" a world (e.g. life at Corinth in the time of Paul), but that these texts also create a world on the basis of certain values which the kind of reading we are doing will allow us to identify. Finally, the reading brings us to the code of tracking. . .

To set up our reading, we propose hypotheses, schemes, models of how the text is organized which we can then test on the text itself.

Reading and the code. . .

This way of reading is a bit like someone watching a football game. Initially, it looks as though there is just a lot of people running around in all directions. But, after a while, the observer notices the actors following certain trajectories, making certain connections, entering into certain oppositions. . . And these are repeated. . . By categorizing the trajectories, the contacts, the oppositions, the observer eventually arrives at a glimpse of the code underlying the game he is watching.

Faced with a text, we have much the same experience. . . We do not know the code of the text we are reading right away, but we reconstruct it bit by bit. . . And when you have found it you appreciate the beauty of the game; you may even want to join in. . .

## **2. The play of roles: Narrative Analysis and its rules**

The TEXT is constructed out of language and we have sketched the steps which enable us to read the text and discover the code underlying its construction.

But every text also NARRATES, and often takes the form of a STORY. Here, too, we need to find the code and how it combines with the previous one. Now we are talking about the “narrative component” of texts.

There is a STORY when there are TRANSFORMATIONS in the text.

Earlier we talked about differences in the text. The differences between scenes can define the locus of transformations, what is at stake in the story.

- a. the sea threatens Jesus and the disciples in the boat
- b. the stilled sea is no longer a threat to the passengers

There is clearly a difference between a and b, but there is also a transformation and hence a story: the story of the quieting of the storm by Jesus.

So for there to be a STORY, we need (at least) an INITIAL STATE (a), a FINAL STATE (b), and a transformative PERFORMANCE (realized by an OPERATOR or subject of the performance).

For this central TRANSFORMATIVE PERFORMANCE to be realized, FOUR PHASES are necessary. These constitute a NARRATIVE PROGRAM:

MANIPULATION: making-to-do

Someone (Sender) looks for someone else (Performer) to undertake a task, and tries to get them to agree to do it.

COMPETENCE: being-able-to-do

If the first phase works out (the hero agrees), the story moves on to the quest for competence: the hero needs whatever means may be necessary to accomplish the task.

PERFORMANCE: doing

If the necessary competence is acquired (Operator is able to act), the story moves on to the transformation itself, which causes the subject to pass from an initial situation to the transformed situation.

SANCTION: evaluation

Once the performance is accomplished, the Performer/hero needs to be RECOGNIZED by those who prompted the performance (Senders). For the Performer, this is the veridictory text (seeming vs. being).

We are dealing here with a program (each phase logically presupposes the other three). This actual program enables us to identify precisely the different ACTANTIAL ROLES played by the characters in the text, their function in the action. Thus, from another angle, it is a set of categories for classifying the actors, identifying and naming the DIFFERENCES.

The main transformation in a narrative is often the occasion for CONFRONTATION between adversaries. Every narrative program can be shadowed by an ANTI-PROGRAM, set on preventing or undoing the operation in progress: another locus of differences.

Examples of such narrative organization are easy to find in biblical narratives or other stories (like fairy tales or soap operas): the hero is charged with rescuing the princess held prisoner by a dragon in the forest; for this he needs a magic object; with it he delivers the princess and brings her home to the palace where he is recognized and feasted as a hero, receives half the kingdom as his reward . . . and marries the princess.

Finding the narrative form of the texts we read is a way of making the differences stand out and of classifying the elements of the text (actors, objects, actions) according to their function (signification) in the text.

This reading method thus proposes TWO APPROACHES:

- discursive analysis: notes and classifies all the differences on the basis of scenes and meaning-trajectories;
- narrative analysis: notes and classifies differences on the basis of the functions of actors in the text.

Both approaches follow the same principles:

- all the information necessary for the reading are to be found IN THE TEXT ITSELF;
- the operation of reading is guided by the noting and classification of differences

### **Why bother to read this way?**

This approach proposes a step by step reading of texts. It may appear a little fastidious and slow at first sight, but it quickly becomes captivating. The method has the following advantages:

1. Attention to Scripture: To read the texts this way is to treat them as Scripture and not just as a story conveying information.
2. Attention to the text: The text is what reading is about; it is not just a “pretext” for reflections (sometimes interesting) on the world, the psychology of the characters, the history of ideas, etc. The text one reads is not just the occasion for acquiring knowledge, but the place where something is SAID to us if we will only LISTEN.
3. Attention to the organization of meaning: To read is to attend to how the text produces its meaning, how it classifies and organizes its data, its language. Read like this, the Bible can challenge our habitual ways of thinking and talking about life and death, about love, truth, etc. In that sense, it is not we who interpret the text, but the text which interprets us. And that is why we are never finished reading. . . (“In the beginning was the word. . .”)

## QUESTIONNAIRE<sup>10</sup>

### A. FOR STARTING THE DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

#### 1. Segmenting the “discursive situations” of the text

[A discursive situation or “scene” consists of one or more actors located in a particular place at a particular time]

Every time there is a change of actor, time or place there is a new “scene”.

#### 2. Identify precisely how each actor is defined in each situation

- note the figurative descriptions provided by the text;
- note the relations established between the actors and how these relations are described in the text;
- note the actors’ relations to space;
- note the actors’ relations to time;

It should be possible to define, in each discursive situation, on which precise registers each of the actors is defined (e.g. economic, religious, affective, etc.)

#### 3. Passing from one situation to the next . . .

- is there any change in the way the actors are described or defined?
- is there any change in the way the contexts are organized, either on the figuratively or thematically (changes of relations, of oppositions between figures)?
- how does the text select its meaning-trajectory? How does this trajectory realize itself in each segment?
- is it possible to say precisely what it is that this text is about?

### B. FOR STARTING THE NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

#### 1. Actions

Which actions are carried through (or not carried through)? Who performs them? Because of whom (or what)? Do the associations between actors have anything to do with wanting, knowing, or being able?

#### 2. Oppositions

Do these actions lead to confrontations between actors? Which ones? Do these oppositions have anything to do with wanting, knowing, or being able?

---

<sup>10</sup> This document is found in Searle Files (Loose Collection): “Semiotics Course.” The font used is an attempt to replicate the one chosen by Searle.

3. Finalities

For what purpose are these actions carried out? What are different actors hoping to get out of them? A competence (knowing or ability)? A modal value? An object of value? Recognition (knowledge about the value of actors and/or actions)?

4. Values

How do the values of the actions appear? Do the actors have different points of view on these values? How does the text represent these points of view? Who recognizes the value of the principle performance? What value do the opponents wish to promote?

5. Programs and Anti-programs

Taking all these questions (and answers) together, is it possible to identify a program and an anti-program? What are the functions of each actor in these programs? Can the narrative trajectory of each actor be identified?

6. What is the text about

How does the identification of program and anti-program relate to what the text was said (at the end of the discursive questions) to be all about?

# Appendix 6

## *Grant Proposal*

### LILLY ENDOWMENT

#### FACULTY OPEN FELLOWSHIPS FOR 1988-1989<sup>11</sup>

Dr. Mark SEARLE

Associate Professor  
Liturgical Studies  
Department of Theology

255 Decio  
7789/7811

#### Proposal

To investigate the application of semiotic theory to the study of ritual performance and specifically to the study of religious ritual, or liturgy.

#### Need

I need to pursue the research project proposed above because a series of major shifts have occurred in my own life, in the field of liturgical studies, and in the life of the Church in the almost twenty years since I gained my doctorate and began my career as a teacher.

First, in my own life, I switched ten years ago from seminary teaching to university teaching. With this change came the opportunity to pursue the research interests which the demands of seminary work left no time for. My area of special interest is that of pastoral liturgical practice and I am especially interested in questions about the viability of ritual in contemporary Church and society. One consequence of this research focus is that it is taking me further away from

---

<sup>11</sup> This document is found in Searle Files (Loose Collection): Blue Folder – “Matthew.” The font used is an attempt to replicate the one chosen by Searle.

the historical and theological methods in which I was originally trained.

Second, in the field of liturgical studies, there is a growing tendency to move beyond the exclusive attention to historical and theological issues which once characterized the field in search of a more profound understanding of the nature of the liturgy as ritual action. The Germans call this development "Theorie des Gottesdienstes," but it is more widely (and misleadingly) known as "pastoral liturgy." What these names cover is a wide variety of attempts to employ the methods and insights of the "human sciences" to study ritual behavior, or liturgical celebration, as a social phenomenon. Only after such empirical study, it is insisted, can theological reflection fruitfully take place.

Third, both the above-mentioned shifts were linked to developments in the Roman Catholic Church since 1960. Vatican II launched a massive program of reform of the Church's worship life, but it was based on principles drawn largely from the recovery of the understanding and practice of worship in the Church of the first six centuries. It seems to have been assumed that the results would inevitably be beneficial, fostering both personal and collective renewal in the Roman Catholic Church. Although many positive results were registered, this profound upheaval in the symbolic life of the community had effects which no one had foreseen. Consequently, it was only after the reform was launched, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, that serious attention began to be paid to the social and anthropological dimensions of rite and symbol.

I find myself, then, at a rather crucial juncture in my own professional life and in the development of my field. Through my own reading and research, I have been investigating a number of different approaches to the study of ritual over the years and have now reached the point where I recognize the need to learn a second discipline, (complementing my earlier historical-theological training), which will enable me to engage in genuine cross-disciplinary study of ritual performance.

Semiotics has been an interest ever since I first read Ferdinand de Saussure, Roland Barth and Pierre Guiraud in the late '60s. In attempting to account not so much for what "texts" mean as for how they mean, semiotics offers the possibility of exploring how ritual works without singling out



one particular aspect of it -- whether social or psychological -- for privileged status.

While I have used semiotics, mainly Barth and Greimas, for studying liturgical texts, my hope is eventually to develop ways of accurately describing and analyzing liturgical performances in their several dimensions. Work done in other areas (e.g. Paul Bouissac on the semiotics of the circus) suggests that such a hope is not implausible, but I have also discovered that a start on this task has already been made. A small group of researchers in Tilburg and Utrecht (Holland) are now in the fourth year of a five-year funded project researching the use of semiotics in liturgical studies. As it happens, they are also using A.J. Greimas's method and theory as their starting point, so I have been in contact with them, exploring the possibility of joining them for the final year of their current project. Their response has been strongly encouraging, so my plan is to spend a year in Tilburg, from August 1988 to August 1989.

The specific focus of my study will be the ritualization of infant baptism, a topic on which I have already written two books and several articles. One result of the sabbatical will be a book analyzing the rite semiotically, but the most important outcome will, I hope, be the foundations of a method which can then be refined and shared with others, both in graduate teaching and dissertation research at Notre Dame and through the various professional associations to which I belong.

What is ultimately at stake here, as my opening paragraphs suggest, is nothing less than a paradigm shift in the way liturgy is studied, a shift which could make a contribution not only to the doing of theology, but even to the study and appreciation of the role of ritual in everyday life.

# Appendix 7

## *Australia/New Zealand Lecture Tour*

### LITURGY SEMINAR

#### List of presentations<sup>12</sup>

1. Liturgy at the Crossroads: Where we have come from, where we could go.
2. Liturgy in the Modern World: The special challenge posed by some characteristic features of modern Western culture.
3. Participation I: A theology of liturgy and its practical consequences.
4. Participation II: A spirituality of liturgy and its practical consequences.
5. The Sense of the Sacred: Problems and possibilities for liturgy today.
6. The Language of the Liturgy I: The verbal.
7. The Language of the Liturgy II: The non-verbal.
8. Liturgy and Social Life: The possibilities of carry-over.
9. Where Do We Go From Here?

---

<sup>12</sup> This document as well as the list of topics on the next page are found in Searle Files (Loose Collection): "Chapter 1." The font used is an attempt to replicate the one chosen by Searle.

**LITURGY SEMINAR**  
**Topics for Reflection**

**It is suggested that participants may wish to reflect on the following questions ahead of the seminar in the light of their experience. These questions will be taken up in successive sessions of the seminar.**

1. What is your sense of where we are liturgically today? Are you happy with the way things are done? Are you or your people dissatisfied? What do you think "works"? What doesn't? How important is liturgy in the life of your parish community (compared, say, with religious education, fund-raising, adult education, pastoral care of the sick, pastoral care of young people, justice and peace work, etc.)?
2. What would be some of the characteristic features of what you would consider "good liturgy" or "bad liturgy"? Are there any underlying, chronic causes that produce these symptoms (good or bad)? How far do you think our liturgical/sacramental life reflect the values of our culture?
3. When the term "participation" or "active participation" is used in your parish, what is meant? What do you think fosters active participation? What impedes it?
4. If the liturgy is "public worship" or the "prayer of the Church," how do you think the average parishioner prays the liturgy? What help does he or she need, do you think?
5. Looking back to where we were in 1960 and considering the whole history of the changes in the liturgy, do you think the effort was worthwhile? Have the changes been beneficial? What has been gained? What, if anything, has been lost? Do you find people are still confused about what is expected of them, or are people now completely comfortable with the changes?
6. According to Church teaching, Christ is present when the congregation prays and sings, and it is God who speaks when the Scriptures are proclaimed. But how is the Scripture read by the reader "the Word of the Lord"? How is the prayer read by the celebrant the prayer of Christ? What issues do you associate particularly with the Liturgy of the Word, preaching, fixed prayer texts, improvised prayers, etc.?
7. Some people claim that the liturgy since Vatican II has become too wordy: do you agree? What should be done about it? Do you pay enough attention to the non-verbals, such as movement, gesture, beauty of sight and sound? Do you have any experience of liturgical dance? What can be learned from that experience?
8. What is liturgy for? If we stopped doing it, would anyone notice? Could the Church survive on religious education, social action and prayer groups? If not, why not?

## Appendix 8

### ***Guide to Mark Searle's Files***

Mark Searle Papers 1965-1991  
Unprocessed, private collection.  
Contact: Rev. Stephen S. Wilbricht, C.S.C.

Origin: Mark Searle as Director of Notre Dame Center for Pastoral Liturgy; Mark Searle as a Franciscan Friar (1941-1992)

Extent: 20 linear feet

Citation: Mark Searle Papers (MSP). Private Collection

Background: Mark Searle was born in Bristol, England, on September 19, 1941. Died August 15, 1992. Entered Franciscan Novitiate at Chilworth; Ordained for the English Province of Orders of Friars Minor (Franciscans) in 1965. STL from Pontificio Ateneo de S Antonio in 1966; STD from Theologische Fakultät, Trier, Germany, in 1969. Lecturer, Franciscan Studies Center in Canterbury, England, 1969-1977. Director, of Post Novitiate Formation for Franciscans, 1969-1977. Visiting Instructor, University of Notre Dame; Consultant to Notre Dame Center for Pastoral Liturgy (Murphy Center for Liturgical Research), 1975-1977. Resigned active ministry 1978. Assistant Professor, University of Notre Dame, Associate Director of Notre Dame Center for Pastoral Liturgy, 1978-1983. Editor, *Assembly*, publication of the Notre Dame Center for Pastoral Liturgy, 1978-1983. Consultant to the International Commission on English in the Liturgy, 1979-1992. Tenured Associate Professor, Department of Theology, University of Notre Dame, 1983-1992. Director of Master's Program in Theology, University of Notre Dame, 1983-1988. Associate Director Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life, 1983-1986. Sabbatical 1988-1989. Coordinator, Graduate Program in Liturgical Studies, 1983-85; 1987-1991. Diagnosed with Cancer, 1991. Died August 15, 1992.

Publications: Numerous articles, taped lectures, and twelve books, including *Christening: The Making of Christians*; *Liturgy Made Simple*; *Ministry and Celebration*; *The Celebration of Liturgy in the Parishes*. *Of Piety and Planning: Liturgy, the Parishioners, and the Professionals*, with David Leeger; and *Called to Participate: Theological, Ritual, and Social Perspectives*.

Organization of records: Records divided into eight groups:

- A. Ritual/Liturgical Issues in General
- B. Hours/ Liturgy and Justice/ Marriage and Penance

- C. Ritual Studies and Sociology/ Liturgical Movement
- D. Marriage/ Liturgical Assembly
- E. Initiation
- F. Pastoral Liturgy
- G. Semiotics
- H. Liturgical Year

Folder Inventory:

*Drawer A*

- 1. Anthropology, Human Sacrifice and Immortality
- 2. Ritual Knowledge
- 3. Ritual/Semiotics
- 4. Symbolic Interactionism
- 5. Symbol, Lies, and Symbolic Structure
- 6. Ritual and Social Change
- 7. The Senses in Liturgy
- 8. The Numinous
- 9. Signs and Symbols
- 10. Course Book Orders
- 11. ICEL; Funeral Rite
- 12. Draft Survey Instruments
- 13. Writing Projects
- 14. LIT THEO SEM: 683 (1991)
- 15. BCL Report (Spring 1980): The Directory of Masses for Children
- 16. NAAL Folder
- 17. Texts for LIT THEO
- 18. Liturgical Theology
- 19. Miscellaneous
- 20. Liturgical Theology
- 21. Sacramental Theology Course Outline
- 22. Theology in America
- 23. Sacrament: Theology
- 24. Mysterion - Sacramentum
- 25. Active Participation
- 26. Tertullian & Cyprian
- 27. Ambrose
- 28. Augustine
- 29. Paschasius Radbertus + 865
- 30. Trenton Sacraments
- 31. Lombard
- 32. Aquinas
- 33. Luther & Calvin
- 34. Zwingli

35. Berengarius, et al.
36. Pope Pius X
37. Unlabelled folder with various writings re: liturgy
38. Pius XII
39. New perspectives in Sacramental Theology
40. Trinitarian Structure of Sacraments
41. Christ and Church as Sacraments
42. Sacraments and Eschatology
43. BARI: Church, Faith, Sacraments
44. Word and Sacrament
45. Causality
46. Word – Liturgy of
47. Word – Sacramenta Fidei
48. Word – Theology
49. Happel on Sacraments
50. Entrance Rites
51. Entry Rites
52. Liturgy of Word: Talks
53. Liturgy of Word: History
54. Lectionary (CCT)
55. Liturgy of Word: Lections
56. Homily
57. Homily
58. Intercessions/Creed
59. Preparation of Gifts
60. Sacrifice
61. Communion Rites
62. Concluding Rites
63. Eucharist: memorial/Presence/Sacrifice
64. Eucharistic Prayers
65. Eucharist: Patristic Texts and Theologies
66. Eucharistic Prayers: Contemporary Texts and Theology
67. Eucharistic Theology: Mysterium Fidei
68. Jung: Transformation Symbolism in the Mass
69. Eucharistic Theology – Powers: Confection v. Celebration
70. Modern Eucharistic Prayers
71. Eucharist: Concelebration

#### Drawer B

1. Ordination
2. Educational Method: Papers
3. Planning Lists
4. Death and Dying
5. Orders

6. Hours: course Notes
7. Hours: Scripture (incl Psalms) + Judaism
8. Hours: Historical
9. Hours: Pastoral; Contemp. Rites
10. Blessings
11. 1974 Synod, etc.: Evangelization
12. Liturgy and Evangelization: Talk and Notes
13. Sacraments and Evangelization: Turk H. Denis
14. Judaism + Christian Liturgy
15. Liturgy and Justice: Talks
16. Liturgy + Social Justices: Papers
17. "The Goodness of Worship" by Robert A. Wenninger
18. Justice (Papers)
19. Ethics
20. Milwaukee
21. Music
22. Music
23. Marriage: Bibliography
24. Marriage: General Anthropology
25. Marriage: Pastoral Directives – USA
26. Marriage (unlabelled)
27. Marriage: Theology Today
28. Bibliographies
29. History: Overview + General
30. Judaica: Worship
31. Hahn: the Worship of the Early Church
32. Early Liturgy
33. Medieval Liturgy and Devotional Life
34. Discernment
35. Reformation
36. Radical Reformation
37. Catholic Reform: 16 – 17<sup>th</sup> century
38. Code of Canon Law
39. WCC/Faith and Order
40. Consilium: List of Schemata
41. UCC
42. 1985 Synod
43. Sickness + Anointing
44. Penance: Bibliography
45. Penance: General
46. Penance: Early and Canonical
47. Penance: OT, Judaism, NT
48. Tertullian (Penance)
49. Penance: Eastern Churches
50. History of Penance: Texts
51. Medieval: Penitentials

52. "Modern" Penance
53. Penance: 16<sup>th</sup> Century – Reformation/Trent
54. Contemporary Approaches
55. Sin/Holiness/Moral Responsibility
56. Penance/Satisfaction
57. Conversion/Contrition
58. Confession/Integrity Question
59. Penance: Community/Roles
60. On Repentance
61. Rite of individual Reconciliation
62. Revised Roman Rites (Penance)
63. Penance: Surveys
64. Penance: Pastoral
65. General Absolution
66. Communal Rites of Penance

#### Drawer C

1. Liturgical Spirituality: Schneider/Heschel
2. Liturgical Spirituality
3. Ministry/Priesthood, Liturgy and Pastoral Life
4. Intro to Ritual Studies
5. Ritual Studies
6. Intro to Ritual studies: II
7. Ritual Studies: IV
8. VII. Language of Liturgy: Time/Gesture/Space
9. Casel
10. Liturgical Movement (1)
11. Liturgical Movement II: Pius X, Beaudin, V. Michel
12. Liturgical Movement III: Germany and Pius XII
13. Vatican II
14. Since Vatican II
15. Pastoral Liturgy Bibliography
16. Liturgy: Empirical Studies (Germany)
17. Ritual Studies: Instruments
18. Empirical Studies: US
19. Ritual, Definitions of
20. Phenomenology: R. Otto, v. d. Leeuw, M. Eliade
21. Religion: Approaches to Study
22. Religion: Lindbeck, Winch, et al.
23. Berger
24. Douglas, Mary
25. Geertz/Levy Strauss
26. Rappaport
27. Schechner



28. Turner/Van Gennep
29. Domestic/Family Ritual inc. therapy
30. Religion in the US: Bellah, et al.
31. Religion + Secular society
32. On Knowing
33. Ritual as Language
34. Narrative
35. Ritual Efficacy
36. Performative Language
37. Performativity + Ritual: Sam Gill, Wade Wheelock and David Burrell
38. Ritual: experience, Feelings, Emotion
39. Ritual: Psychology (1): Freud, Erikson
40. Psychological Models
41. Jung
42. Gesture + Ceremony
43. Reflexivity + Ritual
44. Ricoeur: Action as text, as symbol
45. Sociology
46. Ritual + Ambivalence
47. Liturgy + Culture
48. Ritual, Secular
49. Liturgy + Social Contexts (incl. anti-ritualism)
50. Liturgical Creativity
51. Cultural Adaptation
52. Mystery of Faith (unlabelled)
53. Boston College, Liturgy and Life Collection (unlabelled)
54. Boston University School of Theology: Music in Churches Survey (unlabelled)
55. Survey Information (unlabelled)
56. Eucharist (binder)
57. Christ in Time (binder)

#### Drawer D

1. Marriage: Historical Surveys + General Studies
2. Marriage: OT and Judaism
3. Marriage in Ancient World
4. Marriage: NT – 4<sup>th</sup> Century
5. Marriage: Historical
6. Marriage: Eastern Christianity
7. Marriage: Roman Church
8. Marriage: Celtic, Gallican, Visigothic
9. Marriage: Medieval (11<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> c.)
10. Marriage: 16<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> cents
11. Stevenson, Kenneth
12. Marriage

13. Marriage: Present Rite/Discpl.
14. Family
15. French Texts on Marriage
16. Eucharist: Course Outline
17. Order of the Mass in the Byzantine Rite (unlabelled)
18. THEO 226: Mass – History and Shape
19. OT + Judaism
20. Eucharist: NT Texts
21. Didache
22. Eastern Liturgies
23. Eastern Rites
24. Finkelstein: “The Birkhat Ha-Mazon”
25. Origins of Eucharistic Prayers
26. Eucharist: Subapost. Period
27. Eucharist: 4-5 cents.
28. Roman Mass
29. Gallican Mass
30. Eucharist: Reformation
31. Vatican II/Consilium: Ordo Missae
32. Ordo Missae: Structure
33. Ordo Missae: Hurley
34. Lit Assembly: Theology/Docs
35. Lit Assembly: Script/History
36. Lit Assembly: Pastoral/Soc.
37. Lit Assembly: Sunday Obligation
38. Ordo Missae: Assembly
39. Ministry + Ministries
40. Music
41. The Cantor
42. Center for Pastoral Liturgy
43. North American Forum on the Catechumenate
44. Theologie and Eglise
45. Societas Liturgica
46. Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend
47. Summer Institute
48. Assembly
49. “Liturgical Education in Seminaries” by John Huels (unlabelled)
50. “Gathered in Steadfast Faith” by US Bishops (unlabelled)
51. Revision of Roman Missal (unlabelled)
52. ICEL correspondence
53. ICEL and Principles
54. Booklets: Reports and Guidelines re: prayers, Roman Missal, Liturgical Renewal
55. Catholic Faith Inventory
56. National Pastoral Life Center
57. Center for the Study of Communication and Culture

58. The Reconciling Community: the Rite of Penance (draft) by James Dallen (unlabelled)
59. Penance and Anointing of the Sick, various (unlabelled)

#### Drawer E

1. Baptismal Motivations (unlabelled)
2. Bibliography – Christina Initiation
3. Initiation: Bibliographies and Outlines
4. Initiation: Class Handouts and Tests
5. Course Syllabus for Christian Initiation (unlabelled)
6. Initiation: Gen. Studies
7. Bibliography – Assorted topics
8. Pre-Christian Baptism: Qumran and Other
9. Conversion
10. Conversion + Ritualization
11. Pre-Christian Baptism: Judaism
12. Baptism of Jesus
13. Baptism in the NT
14. Winkler: The Original Meaning of the Prebaptismal Anointing
15. Baptism in the 2<sup>nd</sup> C.
16. Cyprian
17. Subapostolic Church: Didache – Justin, etc.
18. East Syrian Bapt. Rites
19. Baptism in the 3<sup>rd</sup> C.
20. Baptism in the 4<sup>th</sup> C. + ff.
21. Baptismal Lit. in the 4 – 5<sup>th</sup> c.: Theology
22. Catechumenate + Faith
23. Original Sin
24. Original Sin – History
25. Satan: Renunciation/Exorcism
26. Baptism in the M. Ages
27. Baptism/Conf/1<sup>st</sup> HC: 7 – 20<sup>th</sup> c.
28. Baptism: Reformation
29. Rituale Romanum/Trent
30. RCIA: General
31. RCIA: USA
32. RCIA + Parish
33. Evangelization/Precatechumenate
34. RCIA: Catechumenate
35. Lent/Mystagogy
36. RCIA Ritual Aspects
37. Typology + Catechesis
38. RCIA Programs
39. RCIA: Evaluations of Practice

40. RCIA + Religious Education
41. Neo Catechumenate
42. Jim Lopresti
43. RCIA – Children/Youth
44. Infant Initiation: Bibliographies
45. Childhood: Historical
46. Ordo Baptizandi Parvulos
47. Benedictio Aquae
48. History of Childhood – Mause
49. Infant Initiation: Theology
50. Childhood: Theology
51. Infant Initiation: Theology
52. Infant Communion
53. Infant Initiation: Historical
54. Infant Dedication
55. Baptism and Ecumenism
56. Confirmation: Rite
57. Confirmation: H. Spirit
58. Confirmation: Age and Meaning
59. Confirmation: History
60. Confirmation

#### Drawer F

1. Intro to Lit Studies: Pastoral Liturgy
2. Course Outline + bibliography
3. Pastoral (566) 1985
4. Pastoral Liturgy Seminar 682
5. THEO 572: Intro to Ritual Studies
6. Pastoral Liturgy: USA
7. Pastoral Lit Studies: German Lit
8. Pastoral Liturgy: France
9. Lit Renewal: 1965 – 1990
10. Pastoral Lit Studies: Tasks + Methods
11. Revelation: Dei Verbum
12. Method
13. Boulding, K. The Image: Knowings in Life + Society
14. Models (Ramsey)
15. Northrop Frye
16. Hermeneutics (Ricoeur, etc.)
17. Communications Theory + Lit
18. Prayer + Prayers (Linguistics)
19. Semiotics (Basic notions)
20. Myth + Symbol
21. Language

22. Functions of Language
23. Rhetorical Criticism
24. Symbolic Language
25. Metaphor
26. Freire/Groome
27. Political Dimensions of Liturgy
28. Liturgy as Pedagogy
29. Groome
30. Power (Colemand, et al.)
31. Individualism
32. Anthropology
33. Ritual Space
34. Place of Worship
35. Space
36. Ritual Space: Domestic
37. Silence
38. Silence/Contemplation
39. G. Van Der Leeuw
40. Erik Erikson
41. Religious Experience
42. Tradition + the Unconscious
43. Popular Religion
44. Systems Analysis
45. Lit Formation Today
46. Ecumenical liturgy
47. Tradition + Change
48. Celebration
49. Myth and Symbol Course
50. Guardini: The Liturgical Act
51. Anointing of the Sick
52. Whitehead: Methods in Ministry
53. Textual Analysis
54. Liturgy and Imagination
55. Notes (binder)
56. Notes (unlabelled)
57. Consilium Ad Exsequendam Constitutionem De Sacra Liturgia

#### Drawer G

1. Semiotics: Bibliography
2. Semiotics + Hermeneutics
3. Semiotics, Liturgy, Theology
4. Initiation to Semiotics
5. Reference
6. Isotopes

7. Actant: Moral Person
8. Semiotic Theory: Overview
9. deSaussure/Hjelmslev
10. Enunciation
11. General Introduction to Semiotics of Liturgy
12. Fons vitae: A Case Study in the Use of Liturgy as Theological Source
13. Solemnity Mary Mother of God
14. Notes, booklet (unlabelled)
15. Introduction to Semiotics
16. Papers/articles re: semiotics (unlabelled)
17. Texts: NT Magnificat
18. Faith/Belief
19. Luke (19 and 10)
20. Psalm 138
21. OT Gn: Cain and Abel
22. Theology – Sin
23. Theology: Mysticism
24. Luke Parables: esp. Lk 8:1-21
25. Mark 5
26. Gospels
27. Bibliography: Greimas
28. Discursive Semantics
29. L'Observateur Et Le Discours Spectaculaire
30. Embedding
31. V. Propp and Levi Strauss
32. Semiotique Poetique
33. Planes of Expression/Content
34. Semio-Narrative Structures
35. Narrative Semantics
36. Polemical/Contractual
37. Generative Trajectory
38. Sanction/Manipulation
39. Metaphor
40. Greimas/Paris
41. Structuralism: Greimas, Patte, etc.
42. Calloud: Structural Analysis
43. Architecture: Instrumentarium
44. Architecture: Hammad
45. Worship space blueprints (unlabelled)
46. Architecture: Tupory
47. Architecture: Peter and Paul
48. Plenar Semiotics
49. Architecture: Notes on Method
50. Plenar Semiotics: Felix Thurlmann
51. Gestuality
52. Blessing of Baptismal Water

53. Baptism: Renunciation/Profession
54. Ritual
55. Blessing
56. Ritual: Symbolic Causality
57. Ritual: Roles of Subject
58. Calloud: Semiologuistique et Texte Liturgique
59. Marriage Rite
60. Semanet: Tilburet
61. Semanet: Utecht
62. Semanet
63. Cadir/Semanet
64. Schiwy: Zeichen im Gottesdienst

#### Drawer H

1. Time
2. Time, Lit Year: bibliogr.
3. Time: Phil/Anthro/Theol
4. Time: Old Testament
5. Time: New Testament
6. Calendars
7. Historicism vs. Eschatology
8. Lent
9. Time: Sunday + Week
10. Origins of Pascha
11. Holy Week/Triduum
12. Easter/Pentecost
13. Holy Week and Easter
14. Time: Advent + Christmas
15. Advent
16. Advent
17. Sanctoral
18. Baptism: Welcome to the Christian Community
19. Christian Ethics Notes (unlabelled)
20. Notes (unlabelled)
21. Initiation
22. Notes (unlabelled)
23. Eucharist
24. Children's Liturgies
25. Notebook: "Workshop"
26. Notebook: Baptism
27. Religious Life
28. Let Liturgy be Liturgy – Garvey
29. Prayer
30. "Community at Prayer: Eucharist" by Nathan Mitchell

31. Sacraments: Sacram. Economy
32. "Secular Life and the Sacraments" Karl Rahner
33. "Secular Life and the Sacraments" Karl Rahner
34. Workshops
35. Liturgy and Contemplation: Dom Paul Grammont, OSB
36. Let Liturgy be Liturgy – Garvey
37. Christian Worship and Holiness: Carl F. Starkloff
38. Spirit of the Liturgy
39. Theology Department
40. Everyday Sacred
41. VI. Language of the Liturgy: (1) Word
42. Liturgies of Death and Dying: Fall '92
43. Course Planning
44. Semiotic Analysis of Buildings
45. Semiotics and Church Architecture



# Bibliography

## PRIMARY SOURCES

Lukken Gerard and Mark Searle. *Semiotics and Church Architecture: Applying the Semiotics of A.J. Greimas and the Paris School to the Analysis of Church Buildings*. The Netherlands: Kok Pharos Publishing House, 1993.

Searle, Mark. "Active Participation" (Editorial). *Assembly* 6:2 (1979): 65, 72.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Attending (to) the Liturgy." *New Catholic World* 224: 1324 (1981): 156-160.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Between Utterance and Enunciation: Towards a Semiotics of Prayer Texts." In *Gelukkig de mens' Opstellen over psalmen. Exegese en semiotiek anangeboden aan Nico Tromp*. Eds. P. Beentjes et al., 193-211. The Netherlands: J.H. Kok, 1991.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Bread and Wine." *Assembly* 8:1 (1981): 143.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Called to Participate: Theological, Ritual, and Social Perspectives*. Eds. Barbara Searle and Anne Y. Koester. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2006.

\_\_\_\_\_. "The Child and the Liturgy." *Assembly* 9 (1982): 185.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Childhood and the Reign of God: Reflections on Infant Baptism." *Assembly* 9 (1982): 186-187, 192.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Christening: The Making of Christians*. Great Britain: Kevin Mayhew Ltd., 1977. (Reprinted under the same title). Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1980).

\_\_\_\_\_. "The Christian Community: Evangelized and Evangelizing." *Emmanuel* 86 (1980): 556-562, 609-618.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Christian Liturgies and Communication Theory" *Media Development* 31:3 (1984): 4-6.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Church Building." *Assembly* 10:2 (1983): 225.

\_\_\_\_\_. "The Church Celebrates Her Faith." *Life and Worship* 43 (1974): 3-12.

- \_\_\_\_\_. "Collecting and Recollecting: The Mystery of the Gathered Church." *Assembly* 11:1 (1984): 258-259.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Contributing to the Collection." *Assembly* 6:1 (1979): 62-62.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Conversion and Initiation into Faith Growth." In *Christian Initiation Resources Reader*, vol. 1, *Precatechumenate*, 65-74. New York: William H. Sadlier, Inc., 1981.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Culture." In *Liturgy: Active Participation in the Divine Life*. Ed. James P. Moroney, 27-52. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1991.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Diaconate and Diakonia: Crisis in the Contemporary Church." *Diaconal Quarterly* 7:4 (1981) 16-31. (Reprinted in *A Diaconal Reader*. Washington, D.C.: National Conference of Catholic Bishops [1985] 93-107).
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Effects of Baptism," *Catechumenate* 12:4 (1990): 15-22.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Eight Talks on Liturgy*. (Private Circulation). 1974.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Eucharist and Renewal through History." *Liturgy* 1:3 (1977): 4-19.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Faith and Sacraments in the Conversion Process: A Theological Approach." In *Conversion and the Catechumenate*. Ed. Robert D. Duggan, 64-84. New York: Paulist Press, 1984.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "*Fons Vitae*: A Case Study in the Use of Liturgy as a Theological Source." In *Fountain of Life*. Ed. Gerard Austin, 217-242. Washington, D.C.: The Pastoral Press, 1991. (Reprinted in *Vision: The Scholarly Contributions of Mark Searle to Liturgical Renewal*. Eds. Anne Koester and Barbara Searle, 208-230. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2004).
- \_\_\_\_\_. Foreword to *A Place for Baptism*, by Regina Kuehn, iv-vi. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1992.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Forgotten Truths about Worship." *Celebration* 17 (January 1988): 5-10.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "For the Glory of God: The Scrutiny for the Fifth Sunday of Lent," *Catechumenate* 10 (1988): 40-47 (Reprinted in *Commentaries on the Rite of the Christian Initiation of Adults*. Ed. James W. Wilde, 61-72. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1988).
- \_\_\_\_\_. "God Writes Straight in Crooked Lines: Part I. The Inner Process: Conversion." *Catechumenate* 12 (1990): 2-9.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Growing Through Celebration," *Music and Liturgy* 12:4 (1986) 110-118.

- \_\_\_\_\_. "Holy Thursday: Opening of the Paschal Feast." *Assembly* 6:4 (1980): 82-83, 88.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Households of Faith." *Assembly* 8:5 (1982): 169.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Images and Worship." *The Way* 24 (1984): 103-114. (Reprinted in *Vision: The Scholarly Contributions of Mark Searle to Liturgical Renewal*. Eds. Anne Koester and Barbara Searle, 126-137. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2004).
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Infant Baptism Reconsidered." In *Alternative Futures for Worship*, vol. 2, *Baptism and Confirmation*. Ed. Mark Searle, 15-54. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1987. (Reprinted in *Living Water, Sealing Spirit: Readings on Christian Initiation*. Ed. Maxwell E. Johnson, 365-409. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1995. Reprinted in *Vision: The Scholarly Contributions of Mark Searle to Liturgical Renewal*. Eds. Anne Koester and Barbara Searle, 142-180. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2004).
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Introduction." In *Parish: A Place for Worship*. Ed. Mark Searle, 5-10. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1981.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Introduction." In *Sunday Morning: A Time for Worship*. Ed. Mark Searle, 7-9. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1982.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Issues in Christian Initiation: The Uses and Abuses of the R.C.I.A." *Living Light* 22 (1986): 199-214.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Journey of Conversion." *Worship* 54 (1980): 35-55.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Kiss of Peace: Ritual Act and Image of the Kingdom." *Assembly* 11:3 (1985): 276-280.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Liturgical Gestures" (Editorial), *Assembly* 6:3 (1979) 73, 80.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Liturgical Language" (Editorial), *Assembly* 13 (1986): 337.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Liturgy of the Cantor," *Liturgy* 80 14:3 (1983): 2-5; 14:4, 5-7.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Liturgy Made Simple*. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1981.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Liturgy as Metaphor." *Worship* 55 (1981): 98-120. (Reprinted in *Vision: The Scholarly Contributions of Mark Searle to Liturgical Renewal*. Eds. Anne Koester and Barbara Searle, 27-48. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2004).
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Liturgy as a Pastoral Hermeneutic." In *Theological Field Education: A Collection of Key Resources*, vol. 4, *Pastoral Theology and Ministry*. Eds. D.F.

- Beisswenger and D.C. McCarthy, 140-150. Association for Theological Field Education, 1983.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Liturgy and Social Action." *Assembly* 6:1 (1979): 57.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Mass in the Parish." *The Furrow* 37:10 (1986): 615-622.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Ministry and Celebration*. La Crosse, WI: Diocesan Liturgical Office, 1980.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Narrative Quality of Christian Liturgy." *Chicago Studies* 21:1 (1982): 73-84.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "New Tasks, New Methods: The Emergence of Pastoral Liturgical Studies." *Worship* 57 (1983): 291-308. (Reprinted in *Vision: The Scholarly Contributions of Mark Searle to Liturgical Renewal*. Eds. Anne Koester and Barbara Searle, 105-121. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2004).
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Not the Final Word." *Pastoral Music* 10 (1986): 44-45.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life." *Worship* 60 (1986): 312-333.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Observations on Parish Liturgy," *New Catholic World* (November/December 1985): 258-263.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "On the Art of Lifting Up the Heart: Liturgical Prayer Today." *Studies in Formative Spirituality* 3 (1982): 399-410.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Parish at Worship." In *The Parish in Transition: Proceedings of a Conference on the American Catholic Parish*. Ed. David Byers, 73-88; panel discussion, 88-96. Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, Inc., 1986.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Participation and Prayer." *Music and Liturgy* 12:5 (1986): 145-154.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Pastoral Liturgy." *Music and Liturgy* 13:1 (1987): 7-18.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Pedagogical Function of the Liturgy." *Worship* 55 (1981): 332-359. (Reprinted in *Vision: The Scholarly Contributions of Mark Searle to Liturgical Renewal*. Eds. Anne Koester and Barbara Searle, 52-77. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2004).
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Perspectives on Liturgy and Religious Education." *Assembly* 10:5 (1984): 250-252.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "A Place in the Tradition." *Assembly* 12:1 (1985): 301-303.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Prayer: Alone or with Others?" *Centerlines* (July 1979): 19-20.

- \_\_\_\_\_. "Private Religion, Individualistic Society, and Common Worship." In *Liturgy and Spirituality in Context. Perspectives on Prayer and Culture*. Ed. Eleanor Bernstein, 27-46. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1990. (Reprinted in *Vision: The Scholarly Contributions of Mark Searle to Liturgical Renewal*. Eds. Anne Koester and Barbara Searle, 185-203. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2004).
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Reflections on Liturgical Reform." *Worship* 56 (1981): 411-430. (Reprinted in *Vision: The Scholarly Contributions of Mark Searle to Liturgical Renewal*. Eds. Anne Koester and Barbara Searle, 82-100. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2004).
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Renewing the Liturgy—Again. 'A' for the Council, 'C' for the Church." *Commonweal* (November 18, 1988): 617-622.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Response: The RCIA and Infant Baptism." *Worship* 56 (1982): 327-332.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Review of *Beyond the Text: A Holistic Approach to Liturgy*." *Worship* 62 (1988): 472-475.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Review of *Nuptial Blessings: A Study of Christian Marriage Rites*." *Worship* 58 (1984): 72-75.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Review of *Ritual Criticism: Case Studies in Its Practice, Essays on Its Theory*." *Worship* 65 (1991): 376-378.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Ritual." In *The Study of Liturgy*, rev. ed. Eds. Cheslyn Jones, et al., 51-58. London: SPCK, 1992.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Ritual and Music: A Theory of Liturgy and Implications for Music." *Assembly* 12:3 (1985): 314-317. (Reprinted in *Church* 2:3 [1986] 48-52; Reprinted in *Pastoral Music* 11:3 [1987] 13-18).
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Sacraments of Faith." *Assembly* 5:5 (1979): 54-55.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Sacred Places." *Assembly* 10:2 (1983): 226-228.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Semiotic Analysis of Eucharistic Prayer II." In *Gratias Agamus: Studien zum Eucharistischen Hochgebet für Balthasar Fischer*. Eds. Andreas Heinz and Heinrich Rennings, 469-487. Freiburg, Germany: Herder, 1992.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "*Semper Reformanda*: The Opening and Closing Rites of the Roman Mass." In *Shaping English Liturgy. Studies in Honor of Archbishop Denis Hurley*. Eds. Peter Finn and James Schellman, 53-92. Washington, D.C.: The Pastoral Press, 1990.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Serving the Lord with Justice." In *Liturgy and Social Justice*. Ed. Mark Searle, 13-35. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1980. (Reprinted in *Vision: The*

- Scholarly Contributions of Mark Searle to Liturgical Renewal*. Eds. Anne Koester and Barbara Searle, 4-22. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2004).
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Shape of the Future: A Liturgist's Vision." In *Sunday Morning: A Time for Worship*. Ed. Mark Searle, 129-153. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1982.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Silence." *Assembly* 9 (1982): 177, 184.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Spirit of the Liturgy: A Workshop." *Assembly* 13:5 (1987): 372-373.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Sunday: The Heart of the Liturgical Year." In *The Church Gives Thanks and Praise*. Ed. L.J. Johnson, 13-36. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1984.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Sunday: Noblesse Oblige" (Editorial). *Assembly* 5:2 (1978): 25.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Trust the Ritual or Face 'The Triumph of Bad Taste.'" *Pastoral Music* 15:6 (1991): 19-21.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Uses of Liturgical Language." *Liturgy* 4:4 (1984): 15-19. (Reprinted in *The Landscape of Praise: Readings in Liturgical Renewal*. Ed. Blair Meeks, 105-110. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996).
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Washing of the Feet," *Assembly* 4:5 (1978) 14-16.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "What Is the Point of Liturgy?" *Christian Celebration* (Summer 1973): 26-27.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Word and the World." *Life and Worship* 41 (1972): 1-8.
- Searle, Mark and David C. Leege. *The Celebration of Liturgy in the Parishes*. Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life, no. 5. Notre Dame, IN: The University of Notre Dame, 1985.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Of Piety and Planning: Liturgy, the Parishioners, and the Professionals*. Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life, no. 6. Notre Dame, IN: The University of Notre Dame, 1985.
- Searle, Mark and Kenneth W. Stevenson. *Documents of the Marriage Liturgy*. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1992.

## SECONDARY SOURCES

- Amaladoss, Michel. "Sémiologie et Sacrement." *La Maison-Dieu* 114 (1973): 7-35.
- Ariès, Philippe. *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*. Trans. Robert Baldick. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962.

- Austin, Gerard. "Introduction to 'Reflections on Liturgical Reform'." In *Vision: The Scholarly Contribution of Mark Searle to Liturgical Renewal*. Eds. Anne Koester and Barbara Searle, 78-81. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2004.
- Austin, John L. *How to Do Things with Words*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975.
- Balasuriya, Tissa. *The Eucharist and Human Liberation*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1979.
- Barthes, Roland. *Elements of Semiology*. Trans. Annette Lavers and Colin Smith. New York: Hill and Wang, 1967.
- Baum, Gregory. *Religion and Alienation: A Theological Reading of Sociology*. New York: Paulist Press, 1975.
- Beauduin, Lambert. *Liturgy the Life of the Church*. Trans. Virgil Michel. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1926.
- Bedouelle, Guy. "Reflection on the Place of the Child in the Church: 'Suffer the Little Children to Come unto Me.'" *Communio* 12 (1985): 349-367.
- Bell, Catherine. *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Bellah, Robert N. *Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion in a Post-Traditional World*. New York: Harper & Row, 1970.
- Bellah, Robert N., Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven M. Tipton. *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985.
- Berger, Peter. *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1969.
- Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy. *The Body of Christ*. Washington, D.C.: National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1977.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Fifteenth Anniversary of the *Constitution on the Liturgy: A Commemorative Statement*." In *Thirty Years of Liturgical Renewal: Statements of the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy*. Ed. Frederick R. McManus, 186-191. Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1987.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Twenty Years of Liturgical Renewal in the United States of America: Assessments and Prospects." In *Thirty Years of Liturgical Renewal: Statements of*

- the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy*. Ed. Frederick R. McManus, 236-246. Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1987.
- Black, Max. *Models and Metaphors*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1962.
- Blumer, Herbert. "Symbolic Interaction: An Approach to Human Communication." In *Approaches to Human Communication*. Eds. Richard W. Budd and Brent D. Ruben, 401-419. New York: Spartan Books, 1972.
- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Life Together: A Discussion of Christian Fellowship*. Trans. John Doberstein. New York: Harper and Row, 1954.
- Boston, Bruce. "The Politics of Knowing: The Pedagogy of Paulo Freire." *New Catholic World* (Jan-Feb 1973): 26-29.
- Bouyer, Louis. *Liturgical Piety*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1954.
- Bracken, Joseph A. "In Search of a New Pedagogy." *Chicago Studies* 16 (1977): 249-259.
- Brister, C.W. *Pastoral Care in the Church*. Third Edition, Revised and Expanded. San Francisco: HarperCollins Publishers, 1992.
- Brown, Robert McAfee. "My Story and 'The Story'." *Theology Today* 32 (1975): 166-173.
- Bruyn, Severyn. "The Methodology of Participant Observation." *Human Organization* 22 (1963): 224-235.
- Bugnini, Annibale. *The Reform of the Liturgy (1948-1975)*. Trans. Matthew J. O'Connell. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1990.
- Burghardt, Walter J. *Let Justice Roll Down Like Waters*. New York: Paulist Press, 1998.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "A Theologian's Challenge to Liturgy." *Theological Studies* 35 (June 1974): 233-248.
- Burrell, David. "Justice . . . What Is It All About?" *Occasional Papers on Catholic Higher Education* 4 (Winter 1978): 12-17.
- Burtchaell, James Tunstead. "A New Pastoral Method in Theology." *Commonweal* (January 27, 1984): 44-49.
- Byers, David, ed. *The Parish in Transition: Proceedings of a Conference on the American Catholic Parish*. Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, Inc., 1986.
- Calloud, Jean. "Sémio-linguistique et texte liturgique." *La Maison-Dieu* 114 (1973): 36-58.



- Castelli, Jim and Joseph Gremillion. *The Emerging Parish: The Notre Dame Study of Catholic Life Since Vatican II*. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987.
- Chesterton, Gilbert Keith. *Orthodoxy: The Romance of Faith*. New York: Doubleday, 1959.
- Cicognani, Gaetano. "Opening Address." In *The Assisi Papers: Proceedings of the First International Congress of Pastoral Liturgy*, 1-17. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1957.
- Clarke, D.S., Jr. *Sources of Semiotic: Readings with Commentary from Antiquity to the Present*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1990.
- Clothey, Fred W. "Toward a Comprehensive Interpretation of Ritual." *Journal of Ritual Studies* 2 (1988): 147-161.
- Collins, Mary. *Contemplative Participation: Sacrosanctum Concilium Twenty-five Years Later*. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1990.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Liturgical Methodology and the Cultural Evolution of Worship in the United States." *Worship* 49 (1975): 85-102.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Obstacles to Liturgical Creativity." In *Liturgy: A Creative Tradition*. Concilium 162. Eds. Mary Collins and David Power, 19-26. New York: The Seabury Press, 1983.
- Congar, Yves. "Pour une liturgie et une predication 'reelles.'" *La Maison-Dieu* 16 (1948): 75-87.
- Connerton, Paul. *How Societies Remember*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Connolly, Joseph M. "The Parish—The Church's Incarnation." In *Sunday Morning Crisis*. Ed. Robert W. Hovda, 98-109. Baltimore, MD: Helicon Press, Inc., 1963.
- Cooke, Bernard. *The Future of the Eucharist: How a New Self-Awareness Among Catholics Is Changing the Way They Believe and Worship*. New York: Paulist Press, 1997.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Living Liturgy: Life as Liturgy." In *Emerging Issues in Religious Education*. Eds. Gloria Durka and Joanmarie Smith, 116-126. New York: Paulist Press, 1976.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Sacraments as the Continuing Acts of Christ." In *Readings in Sacramental Theology*. Ed. C. Stephen Sullivan, 31-52. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1964.

- Covino, Paul, F.X. "Introduction to 'Marriage Rites as Documents of Faith: Notes for a Theology of Marriage'." In *Vision: The Scholarly Contributions of Mark Searle to Liturgical Renewal*. Eds. Anne Koester and Barbara Searle, 231-234. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2004.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Postconciliar Infant Baptism Debate in the American Church." *Worship* 56 (1982): 240-260.
- Crane, Julia and Michael V. Angrosino. "Participant Observation." In *Field Projects in Anthropology: A Student Handbook*. Morristown, NJ: General Learning Press, 1974.
- Crichton, J.D. "A Theology of Worship." In *The Study of Liturgy*. Eds. Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright, and Edward Yarnold, 3-29. New York: Oxford University Press, 1978.
- Crites, Stephen. "The Narrative Quality of Experience." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 39 (1971): 291-311.
- Crossan, John Dominic. "Stages in Imagination." In *The Archaeology of the Imagination, Journal of the American Academy of Religion, Thematic Studies*, 48:2. Ed. Charles E. Winquist, 49-62. Ann Arbor, MI: Edwards Brothers Inc., 1981.
- Curran, Larry. *Overview of Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life*. Notre Dame, IN: The University of Notre Dame, 2006. Available from [http://www.nd.edu/~icl/nd\\_study.shtml](http://www.nd.edu/~icl/nd_study.shtml); Internet; accessed November 5, 2008.
- Daniel-Rops, Henri, Ed. *The Liturgical Movement*. Trans. Lancelot Sheppard. New York: Hawthorn Books, 1964.
- Dillistone, F.W. "The Function of Symbols in Religious Experience." In *Myth and Symbol*. Ed. F.W. Dillistone, 1-14. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1966.
- Dinges, William D. "Ritual Conflict as Social Conflict: Liturgical Reform in the Roman Catholic Church." *Sociological Analysis* 48 (1987): 138-157.
- Donghi, Antonio. *Actions and Words: Symbolic Language and the Liturgy*. Trans. William McDonough and Dominic Serra. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1997.
- Donovan, Kevin. "Liturgy and Communication." *The Way* 12:2 (1972): 91-98.
- Donovan, Peter. *Religious Language*. New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1976.
- Doolan, Joe. "A Conversation with Mark Searle." *The Summit: Journal of the Liturgical Commission* 17:3 (September 1990): 6-7.

- Dougherty, Joseph. "Silence in the Liturgy." *Worship* 69 (1995): 142-154.
- Douglas, Mary. *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology*. New York: Vintage Books, 1973.
- Droege, Thomas A. "The Formation of Faith in Christian Initiation." *The Cresset* 46 (1983): 16-23.
- Drummond, Margaret. "The Nature of Images." *British Journal of Psychology* 17 (1926): 10-19.
- Dulles, Avery. *Models of the Church*. Expanded Edition. New York: Doubleday Image, 1986.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Symbolic Structure of Revelation." *Theological Studies* 41:1 (1980): 51-73.
- Dumont, Louis. "A Modified View of Our Origins: The Christian Beginnings of Modern Individualism." *Religion* 12 (1982): 1-27.
- Dussel, Enrique. "The Bread of the Eucharistic Celebration as a Sign of Justice in the Community." In *Can We Always Celebrate the Eucharist?* Concilium 152. Eds. Mary Collins and David Power, 56-65. New York: The Seabury Press, 1982.
- Ellard, Gerald. *Men at Work at Worship: America Joins the Liturgical Movement*. New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1940.
- Empereur, James L. "The Theological Experience." *Chicago Studies* 16 (Spring 1977): 45-62.
- Erikson, Erik H. *Childhood and Society*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1950.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Toys and Reasons: Stages in the Ritualization of Experience*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1977.
- Evans, Donald. *The Logic of Self-Involvement: A Philosophical Study of Everyday Language with Special Reference to the Christian Use of Language about God as Creator*. New York: Herder and Herder, 1969.
- Fink, Peter E. "Public and Private Moments in Christian Prayer." *Worship* 58 (1984): 482-499.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Three Languages of Worship." *Worship* 52 (1978): 561-575.
- Fischer, Balthasar. "Reform of Symbols in Roman Catholic Worship: Loss or Gain?" In *Liturgy Reshaped*. Ed. Kenneth Stevenson, 122-133. London: SPCK, 1982.

Fisher, Edward A. *Everybody Steals from God*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Ritual as Communication." *Worship* 45 (1971): 73-91.

Flannery, Austin, Ed. *The Basic Sixteen Documents: Vatican Council II Constitutions, Degrees, Declarations*. Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Company, Inc., 1996.

Fleming, Austin. *Preparing for Liturgy: A Theology and Spirituality*. Washington, D.C.: The Pastoral Press, 1985.

Foley, Edward. "Liturgy and *Economic Justice for All*." In *Living No Longer for Ourselves: Liturgy and Justice in the Nineties*. Eds. Kathleen Hughes and Mark Francis, 116-123. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1991.

Fossion, André. "Structural Readings of Scripture in Catechesis." *Lumen Vitae* 33 (1978): 446-470.

Fowler, James. "Faith Development Theory and the Aims of Religious Socialization." In *Emerging Issues in Religious Education*. Eds. Gloria Durka and Joanmarie Smith, 187-208. New York: Paulist Press, 1976.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Perspectives on the Family from the Standpoint of Faith Development Theory." *Perkins Journal* (Fall 1979): 1-19.

Francis, Mark R. "Introduction to 'Private Religion, Individualistic Society, and Common Worship'." In *Vision: The Scholarly Contributions of Mark Searle to Liturgical Renewal*. Eds. Anne Koester and Barbara Searle, 181-184. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2004.

Franklin, R.W. "Guéranger: A View on the Centenary of His Death." *Worship* 49 (1975): 318-328.

\_\_\_\_\_. "The Nineteenth Century Liturgical Movement." *Worship* 53 (1979): 12-39.

Freire, Paulo. "Conscientisation." *The Month* 7 (1974): 575-578.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Cultural Action for Freedom*. Cambridge: *Harvard Educational Review*, Monograph Series, no. 1, 1970.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Education for Critical Consciousness*. New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1973.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: The Seabury Press, 1970.

- Frye, Northrop. *Anatomy of Criticism*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1957.
- Gärtner, Heribert W. and Michael B. Merz. "Prologomena für eine integrative Methode in der Liturgiewissenschaft." *Archiv für Liturgiewissenschaft* 24 (1982): 165-189.
- Garvey, John. "Let Liturgy Be Liturgy: Stop Trying to Put a New Spin on It." *Commonweal* (December 3, 1982): 648-649.
- Gelineau, Joseph. "Celebrating the Paschal Liberation." In *Politics and Liturgy*, Concilium 92. Eds. Herman Schmidt and David Power, 107-109. New York: Herder and Herder, 1974.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Dans vos assemblées: Sens et pratique de la célébration liturgique*, Volume I. Paris: Desclée & Cie, 1971.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Liturgy Today and Tomorrow*. Trans. Dinah Livingstone. New York: Paulist Press, 1978.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Role of Sacred Music." In *The Church and the Liturgy*. Concilium 2. Ed. Johannes Wagner, 59-65. New York: Paulist Press, 1964.
- Goody, Jack. "Religion and Ritual: The Definitional Problem." *British Journal of Sociology* 12 (1961): 142-164.
- Greeley, Andrew. "Religion and Symbolism, Liturgy and Community." In *Liturgy in Transition*. Concilium 62. Ed. Herman Schmidt, 59-69. New York: Herder and Herder, 1971.
- Greer, William R. "Susanne K. Langer, Philosopher, Is Dead at 89." *New York Times* (July 19, 1985): A12.
- Greimas, A.J. "Knowing and Believing: A Single Cognitive Universe." In *On Meaning: Selected Writings in Semiotic Theory*. Trans. Paul J. Perron and Frank H Collins, 165-179. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1987.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Structural Semantics: An Attempt at Method*. Trans. Daniele McDowell, Ronald Schleifer, and Alan Velie. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1983.
- Greimas, A.J. and J. Courtés. *Semiotics and Language: An Analytical Dictionary*. Trans. L. Crist, and D. Patte, and others. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1982.
- Gremillion, Joseph and David C. Leege. *Post-Vatican II Parish Life in the US: Review and Preview*. Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life, no. 15. Notre Dame, IN: The University of Notre Dame, 1985. Available from

- [http://www.nd.edu/~icl/study\\_reports/report15.pdf](http://www.nd.edu/~icl/study_reports/report15.pdf); Internet; accessed October 15, 2008.
- Grimes, Ronald L. *Beginnings in Ritual Studies*, Revised Edition. Columbia, SC: The University of South Carolina Press, 1995.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Modes of Ritual Necessity." *Worship* 53 (1979): 126-141.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Ritual Criticism: Case Studies in Its Practice, Essays on Its Theory*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1990.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Ritual Studies." In *The Encyclopedia of Religion*. Ed. Mircea Eliade, Vol. 12, 422-425. New York: Macmillan, 1987.
- Groome, Thomas. "Christian Education: A Task of Present Dialectical Hermeneutics." *Living Light* 14 (1977): 408-423.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Christian Religious Education: Sharing Our Story and Vision*. San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc., 1980.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Crossroads: A Story of Christian Education by Shared Praxis." *Lumen Vitae* 32 (1977): 45-70.
- Guardini, Romano. "A Letter from Romano Guardini." *Herder Correspondence* (August 1964): 237-237.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Letter from Romano Guardini to the Bishop of Mainz, 1940," as quoted in *The Liturgical Movement*, Volume 15 of the Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism, Trans. Lancelot Sheppard. New York: Hawthorn Books, 1964: 9.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Living God*. Trans. Stanley Godman. New York: Pantheon Books Inc., 1957.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Prayer in Practice*. Trans. Prince Leopold of Loewenstein-Wertheim. New York: Pantheon Books, Inc., 1957.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Some Dangers of the Liturgical Revival." In *Unto the Altar: The Practice of Catholic Worship*. Ed. Alfons Kirchgaessner, 13-22. New York: Herder and Herder, 1963.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Spirit of the Liturgy*. Trans. Ada Lane. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1940.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Über die systematische Methode in der Liturgiewissenschaft." *Jarbuch für Liturgiewissenschaft* 1 (1921): 97-108.

Hall, Max. *Harvard University Press: A History*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986.

Hameline, Jean-Yves. "Aspects du rite." *La Masison-Dieu* 119 (1974): 101-111.

Happel, Stephen. "Classicist Culture and the Nature of Worship." *Heythrop Journal* 21 (1980): 288-302.

Hart, Ray. *Unfinished Man and the Imagination: Toward an Ontology and a Rhetoric of Revelation* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968).

Hauerwas, Stanley. "The Gesture of a Truthful Story: The Church and 'Religious Education'." *Encounter* 43 (1982): 319-329.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Learning Morality from Handicapped Children." *Hastings Center Report* (October 1980): 45-46.

Haughton, Rosemary. *Tales from Eternity*. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1973.

Häussling, Angelus. "Die kritische Funktion der Liturgiewissenschaft." In *Liturgie und Gesellschaft*. Ed. H.B. Meyer, 103-130. Innsbruck: Tyrolia-Verla, 1970.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Liturgiewissenschaft zwei Jahrzehnte nach Konzilsbeginn." *Archiv für Liturgiewissenschaft* 24 (1982): 1-18.

Hebert, A.G. *Liturgy and Society: The Function of the Church in the Modern World*. London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1935.

Henderson, J. Frank. "Introduction to 'The Pedagogical Function of the Liturgy'" In *Vision: The Scholarly Contribution of Mark Searle to Liturgical Renewal*. Eds. Anne Koester and Barbara Searle, 49-51. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2004.

Heschel, Abraham. *The Insecurity of Freedom*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1966.

Hessel, Dieter T., Ed. *Social Themes of the Christian Year: A Commentary on the Lectionary*. Philadelphia: The Geneva Press, 1983.

Hesser Garry and Andrew J. Weigert. "Comparative Dimensions of Liturgy: A Conceptual Framework and Feasibility Application." *Sociological Analysis* 41 (1980): 215-229.

Hiltner, Seward. *Preface to Pastoral Theology: The Ministry and Theory of Shepherding*. New York: Abingdon Press, 1958.

Himmler, Ann. "The Fisher King." *Parabola* 3:2 (1978): 16-22.

Hoffman, Lawrence A. "Appreciation." In *Vision: The Scholarly Contributions of Mark Searle to Liturgical Renewal*. Eds. Anne Koester and Barbara Searle, ix-xvii. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2004.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Beyond the Text: A Holistic Approach to Liturgy*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987.

Hollenbach, David. "A Prophetic Church and the Catholic Sacramental Imagination." In *The Faith That Does Justice*. Ed. John C. Haughey, 234-263. New York: Paulist Press, 1977.

Holmes, Urban T. "The Priest as Enchanter." In *To Be a Priest: Perspectives on Vocation and Ordination*. Eds. Robert E. Terwilliger and Urban T. Holmes, 173-181. New York: The Seabury Press, 1975.

Hoon, Paul Waitman. *The Integrity of Worship: Ecumenical and Pastoral Studies in Liturgical Theology*. New York: Abingdon Press, 1971.

Hovda, Robert W. *Dry Bones: Living Worship Guides to Good Liturgy*. Washington, D.C.: The Liturgical Conference, 1973.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Sunday Mass—Dullsville." In *Sunday Morning Crisis: Renewal in Catholic Worship*. Ed. Robert W. Hovda, 30-44. Baltimore, MD: Helicon Press, Inc., 1963.

Hughes, Kathleen. "Review of *Called to Participate: Theological, Ritual, and Social Perspectives*." *Worship* 81 (2007): 90-92.

International Commission on English in the Liturgy. *Documents on the Liturgy, 1963-1979, Conciliar, Papal, and Curial Texts*. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1982.

Irwin, Kevin W. "Christian Initiation: Some Important Questions." *The Chicago Catechumenate* 3 (1981): 4-24.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Context and Text: Method in Liturgical Theology*. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1994.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Critiquing Recent Liturgical Critics." *Worship* 74 (2000): 2-19.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi—Origins and Meaning: State of the Question." *Liturgical Ministry* 11 (2002): 57-69.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Liturgical Theology: A Primer*. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1990.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Liturgy, Prayer and Spirituality*. New York: The Paulist Press, 1984.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Models of the Eucharist*. New York: Paulist Press, 2005.



- \_\_\_\_\_. "A Sacramental World—Sacramentality As The Primary Language for Sacraments." *Worship* 76 (2002): 197-211.
- Jeggle-Merz, Birgit. "Pastoralliturgik: Eigenberechtigter Zweig oder Anwendungsdisziplin der Liturgiewissenschaft?" *Archiv für Liturgiewissenschaft* 29 (1987): 352-370.
- Jennings, Theodore W., Jr. "Ritual Studies and Liturgical Theology: An Invitation to Dialogue." *Journal of Ritual Studies* 1 (1987): 35-56.
- Johnson, Cuthbert. *Prosper Guéranger (1805-1875): A Liturgical Theologian, An Introduction to His Liturgical Writings and Work*. Rome: Pontificio Ateneo S. Anselmo, 1984.
- Johnson, Maxwell E. "Introduction." In *Living Water, Sealing Spirit: Readings on Christian Initiation*. Ed. Maxwell E. Johnson, xi-xx. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1995.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Introduction to 'Infant Baptism Reconsidered'." In *Vision: The Scholarly Contribution of Mark Searle to Liturgical Renewal*. Eds. Anne Y. Koester and Barbara Searle, 138-141. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2004.
- Joncas, Jan Michael. "Introduction to 'Fons Vitae: A Case Study in the Use of Liturgy as a Theological Source'." In *Vision: The Scholarly Contributions of Mark Searle to Liturgical Renewal*. Eds. Anne Koester and Barbara Searle, 204-207. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2004.
- Jungmann, J.A. *Pastoral Liturgy*. New York: Herder and Herder, 1962.
- Kanter, Rosabeth Moss. *Commitment and Community: Communes and Utopias in Sociological Perspective*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972.
- Kavanagh, Aidan. "Christian Initiation of Adults: The Rites," *Worship* 48 (1974): 318-335.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Initiation: Baptism and Confirmation." *Worship* 46 (1972): 262-276.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Introduction." In *The Roots of Ritual*. Ed. James Shaughnessey, 7-9. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1973.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Norm of Baptism: The New Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults," *Worship* 48 (1974): 143-152.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *On Liturgical Theology*. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1992.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Shape of Baptism: The Rite of Christian Initiation*. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1978.

- \_\_\_\_\_. "What Is Participation?—or, Participation Revisited." *Doctrine and Life* 23 (1973): 343-353.
- Keifer, Ralph A. "Christian Initiation: The State of the Question." *Worship* 48 (1974): 392-404.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Our Cluttered Vestibule: The Unreformed Entrance Rite." *Worship* 48 (1974): 270-277.
- Kelleher, Margaret Mary. "The Communion Rite: A Study of Roman Catholic Liturgical Performance." *Journal of Ritual Studies* 5 (1991): 99-122.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Introduction to 'Images and Worship'." In *Vision: The Scholarly Contribution of Mark Searle to Liturgical Renewal*. Eds. Anne Koester and Barbara Searle, 122-125. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2004.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Liturgical Theology: A Task and a Method." *Worship* 62 (1988): 2-25.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Liturgy: An Ecclesial Act of Meaning." *Worship* 59 (1985): 482-497.
- Kiesling, Christopher. "Liturgy and Social Justice." *Worship* 51 (1977): 351-361.
- Koernke, Theresa F. "Introduction to 'Liturgy as Metaphor'." In *Vision: The Scholarly Contribution of Mark Searle to Liturgical Renewal*. Eds. Anne Koester and Barbara Searle, 23-26. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2004.
- Koester, Anne Y. and Barbara Searle, Eds. *Vision: The Scholarly Contributions of Mark Searle to Liturgical Renewal*. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2004.
- Küng, Hans. "On the State of the Catholic Church: or Why a Book Like This Is Necessary" In *The Church in Anguish: Has the Vatican Betrayed Vatican II?* Eds. Hans Küng and Leonard Swidler, 1-17. San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1987.
- Lane, Dermot A. *Foundations for a Social Theology: Praxis, Process and Salvation*. New York: Paulist Press, 1984.
- Lang, Martin A. "Faith as a Learned Life-Style." In *Emerging Issues in Religious Education*. Eds. Gloria Durka and Joanmarie Smith, 69-75. New York: Paulist Press, 1976.
- Langer, Susanne K. *Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art Developed from Philosophy in a New Key*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite, and Art*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1942.

- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Primary Illusions and the Great Orders of Art," *Hudson Review* 3 (1950): 219-233.
- Lardner, Gerald V. "Communication Theory and Liturgical Research." *Worship* 51 (1977): 299-306.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Evaluative Criteria and the Liturgy." *Worship* 53 (1979): 357-370.
- Lee, Bernard J. and Michael A. Cowan. *Dangerous Memories: House Churches and Our American Story*. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1986.
- Leege, David C. "Catholics and the Civic Order: Parish Participation, Politics, and Civic Participation." *The Review of Politics* 50:4 (1988): 704-736.
- Leege, David C. and Michael R. Welch. "Catholics in Context: Theoretical and Methodological Issues in Studying American Catholic Parishioners." *Review of Religious Research* 31:2, Special Issue: Methodological Issues in Congregational Studies (Dec., 1989): 132-148.
- Levinson, Daniel J., et al. *The Seasons of a Man's Life*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978.
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude. "Structure and Form: Reflections on a Work by Vladimir Propp." In *Structural Anthropology*. Trans. Monique Layton, 167-188. New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1976.
- Lonergan, Bernard. *Method in Theology*. New York: Herder and Herder, 1972.
- Luckmann, Thomas. *The Invisible Religion*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1967.
- Lukken, Gerard M. "Liturgy and Language: An Approach from Semiotics." *Questions liturgiques* 73 (1992): 36-52.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Plaidoyer pour une approche integrale de la liturgie comme lieu théologique: un défi a toute la théologie." *Questions liturgiques* 68 (1987): 242-255.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Semiotics and the Study of Liturgy." *Studia Liturgica* 17 (1987): 108-117.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Unique Expression of Faith in the Liturgy." In *Liturgical Expression of Faith*. Eds. Herman Schmidt and David Power, 11-21. New York: Herder and Herder, 1973.
- Lyon, Arabella. "Susanne K. Langer: Mother and Midwife at the Rebirth of Rhetoric." In *Reclaiming Rhetorica: Women in the Rhetorical Tradition*. Ed. Andrea A. Lunsford, 265-284. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995.

- Madden, Lawrence J. "Introduction to 'Serving the Lord with Justice'." In *Vision: The Scholarly Contributions of Mark Searle to Liturgical Renewal*. Eds. Anne Koester and Barbara Searle, 1-3. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2004.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "A New Liturgical Movement." *America* 117 (September 10, 1994): 16-19.
- Maldonado, Luis. "The Church's Liturgy: Present and Future." In *Toward Vatican III: The Work That Needs to Be Done*. Eds. David Tracy and Hans Küng, 221-237. New York: The Seabury Press, 1978.
- Maldonado, Luis and David Power. "Editorial." In *Structures of Initiation in Crisis*. Concilium 122. Eds. Luis Maldonado and David Power, vii-xi. New York: The Seabury Press, 1979.
- Manning, Peter K. *Semiotics and Fieldwork*. Newbury Park, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 1987.
- Mannion, M. Francis. "Liturgy and the Present Crisis of Culture." *Worship* 62 (1988): 98-123.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Masterworks of God: Essays in Liturgical Theory and Practice*. Chicago, IL: HillenbrandBooks, 2004.
- Marty, Martin. *The Public Church*. New York: Crossroad, 1981.
- Marx, Paul B. *Virgil Michel and the Liturgical Movement*. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1957.
- McCready, William. "The Local Parish Community and Religious Socialization." *Chicago Studies* 20 (1981): 253-266.
- McManus, Frederick R. *Liturgical Participation: An Ongoing Assessment*. Washington, D.C.: The Pastoral Press, 1988.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Roman Liturgical Reform 1948-1975." *Worship* 60 (1986): 194-200.
- Michel, Virgil. "The Liturgy, the Basis of Social Regeneration." *Orate Fratres* 9 (1935): 536-545.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Scope of the Liturgical Movement." *Orate Fratres* 10 (1936) 485-490.
- Miller, Randolph Crump. "Theology and the Understanding of Children." In *The Nature of Man in Theological and Psychological Perspective*. Ed. Simon Doniger, 142-150. New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1962.

- Mitchell, Nathan D. *Liturgy and the Social Sciences*. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1999.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Once and Future Child: Towards a Theology of Childhood." *Living Light* 12 (1975): 423-427.
- Moiser, John. "A Promise of Plenty: The Eucharist as Social Critique." *Downside Review* 91 (1973): 298-305.
- Morlot, François. "Le colloque de Louvain: Questions posées." *La Maison-Dieu* 91 (1967): 152-162.
- National Conference of Catholic Bishops. *The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response*. Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1983.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Economic Justice for All*. Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1986.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Parish: A People, a Mission, a Structure*. Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1981.
- Nichols, Bridget. *Liturgical Hermeneutics: Interpreting Liturgical Rites in Performance*. New York: Peter Lang GmbH, 1996.
- Nocent, Adrien. "Christian Initiation and Community." In *Structures of Initiation in Crisis*. Concilium 122. Eds. Luis Maldonado and David Power, 26-33. New York: The Seabury Press, 1979.
- O'Dea, Thomas F. *The Sociology of Religion*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Order of Mass Study: A Report*. Washington, D.C.: Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions, 1985.
- Palmer, Parker J. *The Company of Strangers: Christians and the Renewal of America's Public Life*. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1983.
- Palmer, Richard E. *Hermeneutics*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1969.
- Panikkar, Raimundo. *Worship and Secular Man*. New York: Orbis Books, 1973.
- Parsons, Talcott. *The Structure of Social Action*. Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1949.
- Pasquier, Abel. "Initiation and Society." In *Structures of Initiation in Crisis*. Concilium 122. Eds. Luis Maldonado and David Power, 3-13. New York: The Seabury Press, 1979.

- Patte, Daniel. "Preface." In *Semiology and Parables: Exploration of the Possibilities Offered by Structuralism for Exegesis*. Ed. Daniel Patte, v-xviii. Pittsburgh, PA: The Pickwick Press, 1976.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Religious Dimensions of Biblical Texts: Greimas's Structural Semiotics and Biblical Exegesis*. Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1990.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Structural Exegesis for New Testament Critics*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1990.
- Pattison, Robert. *The Child Figure in English Literature*. Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1978.
- Pius X. "E Supremi Apostolatus." *Acta Sanctae Sedis* 36 (1903-1904): 129-139.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Inter Plurimas Pastoralis." *Acta Sanctae Sedis* 36 (1903-1904): 387-395.
- Power, David. "Theological Trends: Symbolism in Worship: A Survey, I." *The Way* 13 (1973): 310-324.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Unripe Grapes: The Critical Function of Liturgical Theology." *Worship* 52 (1978): 386-399.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Unsearchable Riches: The Symbolic Nature of Liturgy*. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1984.
- Rahner, Karl. *The Christian Commitment: Essays in Pastoral Theology*. Trans. Cecily Hastings. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1963.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Ideas for a Theology of Childhood." In *Theological Investigations*, vol. VIII. Trans. David Bourke, 33-50. New York: Herder and Herder, 1971.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Secular Life and the Sacraments: The Mass and the World." *The Tablet* 225 (March 13, 1971): 267-268.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Theology of Pastoral Action*. Trans. W.J. O'Hara. New York: Herder and Herder, 1968.
- Ramsey, Ian T. *Models and Mystery*. London: Oxford University Press, 1964.
- Rappaport, Roy A. "The Obvious Aspects of Ritual." In *Ecology, Meaning, and Religion*. Ed. Roy A. Rappaport, 173-221. Richmond, California: North Atlantic Books, 1979.
- Ratzinger, Joseph Cardinal with Vittorio Messori. *The Ratzinger Report: An Exclusive Interview on the State of the Church*. Trans. Salvator Attanasio and Graham Harrison. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1985.

- Redi, Louis Arnaud Reid. "Critical Notices." *Mind: A Quarterly Review of Psychology and Philosophy* 54 (1945): 73-83.
- Regan, David. *Experiencing the Mystery: Pastoral Possibilities for Christian Mystagogy*. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1994.
- "Rev. Melloh Named Director of N.D. Center. *The South Bend Tribune*. May 28, 1979.
- Ricoeur, Paul. "The Hermeneutics of Symbols and Philosophical Reflection," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 2 (1962): 191-218.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as Text." In *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*. Ed. and Trans. J.B. Thompson, 197-221. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.
- Riley, Hugh M. *Christian Initiation*, Studies in Christian Antiquity, Volume 17. Ed. Johannes Quasten. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1974.
- Roberge, R.-M. "Un tournant dans la pastorale du baptême." *Laval Théologique et Philosophique* 31 (1975): 227-238.
- Roguet, A.M. "La pastorale liturgique." In *L'Eglise en prière: Introduction à la Liturgie*, Ed. A.G. Martimort, 229-243. Tournai, Belgium: Desclée and Company, 1961.
- Rousseau, Olivier. *The Progress of the Liturgy: An Historical Sketch from the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century to the Pontificate of Pius X*. Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1951.
- Ruesch, Jurgen. *Semiotic Approaches to Human Relations*. The Hague: Mouton & Company, 1972.
- Sartore, Domenico. "Concetto di pastorale liturgica: Riflessione epistemologica a partire dal dibattito contemporaneo." *Rivista liturgica* 79 (1992): 9-24.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Pastoral Liturgy." In *Handbook for Liturgical Studies*. Volume II: *Fundamental Liturgy*, Ed. Anscar J. Chupungco, 65-95. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1998.
- Saussure, Ferdinand de. *Course in General Linguistics*. Ed. Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye with Albert Reidlinger. Trans. Wade Baskin. New York: Philosophical Library, 1959.
- Schleifer, Ronald. "Introduction." In A.J. Greimas, *Structural Semantics: An Attempt at Method*. Trans. Daniel McDowell, Ronald Schleifer, and Alan Velie, xi-lvi. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1983.

- Schmemmann, Alexander. *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*. Trans. Asheleigh E. Moorhouse. New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1966.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Sacraments and Orthodoxy*. New York: Herder and Herder, 1965.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Sacrifice and Worship." *Parabola* 3 (Winter 1978): 60-65.
- Schmidt, Herman. "Editorial." In *Liturgy in Transition*. Concilium 62. Ed. Herman Schmidt, 7-12. New York: Herder and Herder, 1971.
- Schüster, Heinz. "Die Methode der Pastoraltheologie als praktische Theologie." In *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie*. Book 1. Ed. F.-X. Arnold, 93-114. Freiburg: Herder, 1964.
- Seasoltz, R. Kevin. "Review of *Semiotics and Church Architecture*." *Worship* 68 (1994): 276-278.
- Seligman, Adam B., Robert P. Weller, Michael J. Puett, and Bennett Simon. *Ritual and Its Consequences: An Essay on the Limits of Sincerity*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Sennett, Richard. *The Fall of Public Man*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977.
- Shaughnessy, James D. "The Priest and the Renewed Liturgy." In *All Things to All Men*, Vol. 2. Ed. Joseph F.X. Cevetello, 139-167. New York: Joseph F. Wagner, Inc., 1967.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Review of *Liturgy Made Simple*." *Worship* 55 (1981): 467-469.
- Shea, John. "The Second Naïveté: Approach to a Pastoral Problem." In *The Persistence of Religion*. Concilium 81. Eds. Andrew Greeley and Gregory Baum, 106-116. New York: Herder and Herder, 1973.
- Sheehy, Gail. *Passages. Predictable Crises of Adult Life*. New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1976.
- Shiner, Larry E. "Sacred Space, Profane Space, Human Space." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 40 (1972): 425-436.
- Slaterry, Mary Francis. "Looking Again at Susanne Langer's Expressionism." *British Journal of Aesthetics* 27 (Summer 1987): 247-258.
- Smith, H. Shelton. *Changing Conceptions of Original Sin: A Study in American Theology Since 1750*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955.



- Smith, Jonathan Z. "The Influence of Symbols upon Social Change: A Place on Which to Stand." *Worship* 44 (1970): 457-474.
- Soltner, Louis. *Solesmes and Dom Guéranger, 1805-1875*. Trans. Joseph O'Connor. Orleans, MA: Paraclete Press, 1995.
- Stauffer, S. Anita. "Introduction." *Worship* 60 (1986): 290.
- Stevick, Daniel B. "Responsibility for Liturgy." *Worship* 50 (1976): 291-306.
- Stringer, Martin D. "Liturgy and Anthropology: The History of a Relationship." *Worship* 63 (1989): 503-520.
- Tena, Pedro. "The Liturgical Assembly and Its President." In *Liturgy: Self-Expression of the Church*. Concilium 72. Ed. Herman Schmidt, 43-54. New York: Herder and Herder, 1972.
- Thompson, Andrew D. "Infant Baptism in the Light of the Human Sciences." In *Alternative Futures for Worship*, Vol. 2, *Baptism and Confirmation*. Ed. Mark Searle, 55-102. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1987.
- Total, Mary David, Ed. *The Spirit of Solesmes*. Petersham, MA: St. Bede's Publications, 1997.
- Underhill, Evelyn. *Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness*. New York: The Noonday Press, 1955.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Worship*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1936.
- Vagaggini, Cypriano. *Theological Dimensions of the Liturgy: A General Treatise on the Theology of the Liturgy*. Trans. Leonard J. Doyle and W.A. Jurgens. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1976.
- Vergote, Antoine. "Symbolic Gestures and Actions in the Liturgy." Trans. Barbara Wall. In *Liturgy in Transition*. Concilium 62. Ed. Herman Schmidt, 40-52. New York: Herder and Herder, 1971.
- Vogel, Cyrille. "An Alienated Liturgy." In *Liturgy: Self-Expression of the Church*. Concilium 72. Ed. Herman Schmidt, 11-25. New York: Herder and Herder, 1972.
- Vogels, Walter. *Reading & Preaching the Bible: A New Semiotic Approach*. Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1986.
- Volpe, Rainer. "La liturgie en tant que comportement social: Réflexions en vue de l'élaboration de méthodes empiriques de recherches." *Social Compass* 22 (1975): 157-174.

- Vorgrimler, Herbert. "Die Liturgie al Thema der Dogmatik." In *Liturgie—eine vergessenes Thema der Theologie?* Ed. Klemens Richter, 113-127. Freiburg: Herder, 1986.
- Welch, Michael R. and David C. Leege. "Religious Predictors of Catholic Parishioners' Sociopolitical Attitudes: Devotional Style, Closeness to God, Imagery, and Agentic/Communal Religious Identity." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 27:4 (1988): 536-552.
- Westow, Theodore L. *The Variety of Catholic Attitudes*. New York: Herder and Herder, 1963.
- Wheelwright, Philip. *The Burning Fountain: A Study in the Language of Symbolism*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1968.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Metaphor and Reality*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1962.
- White, James. *Introduction to Christian Worship*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1980.
- Wilson, Bryan. *Religion in Secular Society*. Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books Inc., 1969.
- Wishy, Bernard. *The Child and the Republic: The Dawn of Modern American Child Nurture*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1968.
- Yzermans, Vincent A. *All Things in Christ: Encyclicals and Selected Documents of Saint Pius X*. Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1954.
- Zimmerman, Joyce Ann. *Liturgy and Hermeneutics*. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1999.
- Zuesse, Evan M. "Ritual." In *The Encyclopedia of Religion*. Ed. Mircea Eliade, Vol 12: 405-422. New York: Macmillan, 1987.
- Zulehner, P.M. "Religionssoziologie und Kindertaufe." In *Christsein Ohne Entscheidung, oder Soll die Kirch Kinder Tuafen?* Ed. Walter Kasper, 188-206. Mainz, Germany: Grünewald, 1970.

#### UNPUBLISHED SOURCES

- Baum, Gregory. Gregory Baum's letter to Mark Searle, dated July 7, 1982. Mark Searle Papers, Private Collection, Notre Dame, IN 46556, Contact: Stephen S. Wilbricht, F26. (Hereafter MSP).
- Hoffman, Lawrence, Gilbert Ostdiek, and Mark Searle. "A Grant Proposal from the Social Sciences Study Group of the North American Academy of Liturgy." MSP, Loose Collection.

Institute for Pastoral and Social Ministry and the Center for the Study of Contemporary Society of the University of Notre Dame. "University of Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Life Survey of Parishioners." 1983.

Krieg, Robert A. "Homily for the Funeral Mass of Professor Mark Searle." August 19, 1992. MSP, Loose Folder.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Memo to Mark Searle dated April 23, 1981." MSP, F28.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Letter to the Open Fellowship Committee dated October 16, 1987." MSP, Folder "Matthew."

Murnion, Philip J. "Letter to Mark Searle dated October 25, 1983." MSP, D56.

Searle, Barbara. "Acceptance Speech Given in Response to the Presentation of the Michael Mathis Award to Mark Searle, Posthumously." June 17, 1993.

Searle, Mark. "Christian Initiation." MSP, C38.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Description of Proposed Study." MSP, C19.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Developments in Roman Catholic Celebration of the Eucharist: 1960-1970." MSP, C14.

\_\_\_\_\_. "The Evidence of Things Not Seen." MSP, Folder "New Chapter IV."

\_\_\_\_\_. "Grant Proposal: Lilly Endowment Faculty Open Fellowships for 1988-1989. MSP, Folder "Matthew."

\_\_\_\_\_. "Grant Us Peace. . . Do We Hear What We Are Saying?" MSP, B16.

\_\_\_\_\_. "The Hallowing of Life."

\_\_\_\_\_. "House of God, House of the Church." MSP, F34.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Introduction to the Semiotics of Liturgy." Tilburg, 1989. MSP, Loose Folder.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Lilly Endowment Faculty Open Fellowships 1988-89 Application." MSP, Folder "Matthew."

\_\_\_\_\_. "The Liturgical Life of Catholic Parishioners in the United States." MSP, Folder "Parish Study – Reports."

\_\_\_\_\_. "The Liturgical Life of Catholic Parishioners in the USA." MSP, Folder "Parish Study—Reports."

\_\_\_\_\_. "Liturgy as Critical of Society." MSP, B16.

- \_\_\_\_\_. "Liturgy Seminar: List of Presentations." MSP, Folder "Chapter 1."
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Liturgy Seminar: Topics for Reflection." MSP, Folder "Chapter 1."
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Living Worship: Putting Liturgy to Work in the World." MSP, B16.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Memorandum—March 15, 1984." MSP, D42.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Modes of Ritual 'Necessity'." MSP, C19.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Notes on an Educational Policy." MSP, F28.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "*Notre Dame Center for Pastoral Liturgy*, Associate Director for Research: A Proposal—March 11, 1988." MSP, D42.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Pastoral Liturgy"—A Course Syllabus; Summer 1980. MSP, F2.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Pastoral Liturgy"—A Course Syllabus; Fall 1985. MSP, F3.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Pastoral Liturgy"—A Course Syllabus; Undated. MSP, F2.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Pastoral Liturgy"—Readings in Performative Language; Spring 1982. MSP, F2.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Pastoral Liturgy Seminar: Reading Liturgical Texts"—A Course Syllabus; Spring 1985. MSP, F4.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Paulo Freire's Pedagogical Method." MSP, F3.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Questionnaire." MSP, Folder "Semiotics Course."
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Report to the Lilly Endowment, Inc., Indianapolis, Indiana, Concerning the Faculty Open Fellowship Award, 1988-1989." Tillburg, December 13, 1988. MSP, Folder "Matthew."
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Rite for the Anointing of the Sick Outside Mass: A Semiological Analysis." University of Notre Dame, 1988. MSP, Loose Folder.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Sacraments of Initiation in the Catechesis of St. Cyril of Jerusalem." (Unpublished Licentiate Thesis). Rome: Pontificium Athenaeum Antonianum, 1966.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Semiotic Study of Liturgical Celebration: A Report Submitted to The Association of Theological Schools." 1989. MSP, Folder "Matthew."
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Semiotic Study of Liturgical Celebration: A Report Submitted to Lilly Endowment, Inc." 1989. MSP, Folder "Matthew."

\_\_\_\_\_. "Semiotic Study of Religious Ritual." 1989. MSP, Folder "Matthew."

\_\_\_\_\_. "Semiotics: Getting Started." MSP, Folder "Semiotics Course."

\_\_\_\_\_. "Symbolic Causality." MSP, G56.

\_\_\_\_\_. "A View in a Mirror: The Notre Dame Study of Catholic Parish Liturgy." MSP, Folder "Parish Study Reports."

Searle, Paul. *Searle Family History*. 2001.