

ARS CELEBRANDI. ENGAGING THE RITE WITH EMPATHY

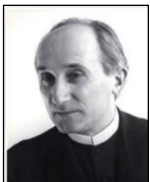
On Wednesday, October 5, 2022, Rev. Bruce Cinquegrani, D. Min, offered an outstanding keynote address to the participants of the 2023 FDLC National Meeting in New Orleans. He deftly blended his expertise in theology, liturgy, and psychology to address his topic.



The full text of his presentation follows. Father Cinquegrani also provides a select bibliography on the topic.

It was only two pages in Herder Correspondence in April of 1964;ⁱ a letter from Romano Guardini to the Liturgical Conference at Mainz set to take place later that month. The 1964 conference agenda was filled with great promise as well as some trepidation since the liturgy constitution had just been promulgated that past December. The big question: how to implement it!

Invited to address the conference, but unable to attend, Guardini wrote them a letter. In this classic missive, Guardini predicted the first efforts at reform would likely focus on the rites themselves, what to say, what to sing, where to stand, what to wear, how to arrange the space –all that. He didn’t discount the significance of these things but pointed to something else as even more important—so important that, should it be overlooked the entire enterprise of liturgical renewal, he thought, would be derailed.



That “something” Guardini had in mind concerned the basic understanding of what we’re actually *doing* when we celebrate the liturgy and he coined the term “*the liturgical act*” to name this operation.ⁱⁱ In the letter, Guardini does not so much define the liturgical act as describe it, as an act that is “done by every individual, not as an isolated individual but as a member of a body, which is the “we,” of the prayers.”ⁱⁱⁱ Pope Francis points to this very text in his apostolic letter on the liturgy issued last summer, *Desiderio Desideravi*^{iv}

Accomplishing the liturgical act, according to Guardini, would demand that we “relearn a forgotten way of doing things; and recall lost attitudes.”^v This would be the heart of the matter for liturgical renewal; the very foundation of liturgical spirituality.

But for all his insistence on the liturgical act, Guardini didn’t offer much hope that it would be realized, much less a clue as to what would be involved in learning how to do it.^{vi} Still, Guardini’s insight about, *the liturgical act*, remains a challenge and, it seems to me in the present time, even an imperative, as we press forward.

Pope Francis’ echoes Guardini on this idea of the liturgical act,^{vii} suggesting that it has everything to do with our subject: the *ars celebrandi*!^{viii} In fact, I would say that exploring, understanding, and developing the skills necessary to engage the liturgical act sits at the very core of the *ars celebrandi* –for presiders, other ministers and the entire liturgical assembly.

Undergirding the liturgical act would be a full-bodied embrace of the ecclesiology that such a vision of the liturgy demands—one in which the value of the entire gathered assembly as a genuine sacramental reality must be acknowledged, honored, and proclaimed.^{ix} Again, Pope Francis raises this important ecclesiological dimension of liturgical renewal.^x

At stake here, then, is not merely the mechanical execution of a ritual, but a conscious embrace of the rite, a mutual bond between the rite and its participants—something that approximates a real human relationship, even a kind of love and affection. I believe this is the “something more” that paragraph 11 in the liturgical constitution is trying to express. Let’s have a look at it again, so it’s fresh in our minds as we explore this question.

II. But in order that the liturgy may be able to produce its full effects, it is necessary that **the faithful come to it with proper dispositions**, that their minds should be attuned to their voices, and that they should cooperate with divine grace lest they receive it in vain

Pastors of souls must therefore realize that, when the liturgy is celebrated, **something more is required than the mere observation of the laws governing valid and licit celebration**; it is their duty also to ensure that the faithful take part fully aware of what they are doing, actively engaged in the rite, and enriched by its effects.^{xi}

The Something More: The Liturgical Act

That the “something more” in this paragraph of Sacrosanctum Concilium is in fact, the *liturgical act* as Guardini understood it would be my first pastoral intuition grounding this presentation.

And here I will define the “*liturgical act*” as a construct referring to the external and internal operations which happen between, among, and within the members of a liturgical assembly and the rite itself as the liturgy unfolds.^{xii} As such, the liturgical act is a unique intersubjective engagement involving cognition, affectivity, and behavior.

Since liturgical / ritual worship involves words and gestures that are not spontaneous, not our own, but come to us from outside ourselves, from the ecclesial tradition, each individual and the entire assembly as a whole must, in some substantive degree, give themselves over to the rite itself; and through the discipline of the rite, give themselves over to each other and to God. All of this is encompassed in the construct “*the liturgical act.*”

The Liturgical Act and Human Empathy

This leads to my second pastoral intuition—and it is this: the liturgical act is constituted by an act of human empathy or more precisely an act of empathic attending of the liturgical rite itself.

There are many definitions for this term, empathy. I will define it as the capacity to reach into the world of another; to be aware of, understand, and enter into the feelings, thoughts, worldview and experience of another person or group of persons of the past or present.^{xiii}

Similarly, empathic attending refers to a manner of conscious and deliberate perceiving, listening, and engaging such that the capacity for empathy is exercised in perceiving to the fullest possible degree.^{xiv}

I believe that this is what Pope Francis is getting at when he exhorts us to develop once again the capacity to encounter symbols – a constant theme in Pope Francis’ letter.

It seems that these two concepts –that of “*the liturgical act*” and that of “*empathic attending*” coincide in the sense that,^{xv} aspects of one are mirrored in the other. Both speak of an intersubjective “bridging of worlds” in a conscious and deliberate fashion.

THE LITURGICAL ACT

From my experience, and being ever more conscious of my own liturgical participation and presiding—*my own engagement of the liturgical act*—that the concept of empathic attending or lack thereof seemed to me to name what many are trying to express when describing their experience of the liturgy either positively or negatively.

So, I wondered ...would this bear out under empirical study. This formed the basis of my doctoral research. Using various methodologies, but primarily ethnography, I studied the factor of empathy in liturgical presiding and participation in six parishes in our region: two in Louisiana, three in Tennessee, and one in Kentucky. For the study, I narrowed the focus to the execution and experience of the Eucharistic prayer – primarily because this is when we most often lose a sense of participation – and the assembly tends to “check-out” so to speak.

Of course, this was an initial and limited research project – like sticking your big toe in the water. It suggests further research along this line would be worthwhile. Still, the results pointed to empathic attending as a substantive factor in the experience of the assembly’s engagement in the Eucharistic prayer as well as in their overall experience of liturgical participation.

I would suggest to you, then, with a view to the *ars celebrandi*, that Guardini did offer us prophetic wisdom back in 1964. In focusing much of our attention on the externals of the rites –the language, the shape of the rites, the music, and the architecture—we may have given short shrift to something more basic: what participation in a liturgical rite involves at the most fundamental level of human engagement.

Of course, it may not have been possible to undertake Guardini's challenge concerning the liturgical act until the externals of the renewed rites became more or less second nature to us, until we learned their basic grammar and vocabulary. But we are here now. We have had the post-conciliar missal for over fifty years in its various linguistic iterations.

Perhaps a fresh look at what might be involved in the call to "full, conscious, and active participation," seems right and timely. The Holy Father thinks so. And as I see it, this would be the foundation of any practical exploration of the "*ars celebrandi*."

Now it is critical that such an exploration which applies the human sciences to liturgical study and practice must be placed in a wider context or it could go off the rails. We must be very clear what the point of such an inquiry is and why it matters. This means constantly having before us the broad vision of the renewal of the church and the liturgy set forth in *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. As mentioned above, such a vision must necessarily be both one of the liturgy and of the church which celebrates it; liturgy and ecclesiology are inextricably linked. Grounding this work within the realm of what has traditionally been called the field of pastoral liturgy is the key, then, that can hold all this together.

As we all know, prior to the modern liturgical movement, the study of liturgy was for the most part, (*though not entirely*) limited to rubrics; and sacramental theology was done separately, in a systematic, scholastic format. Except for the categories of matter and form the liturgical rites were seen as simply the "throne" of the sacraments, not having much to do with the substance of them. The relationship between the liturgical rite as a whole and sacramental effect was not given much consideration.

As long as the right person, said and did the right things with the right stuff – you had a sacrament. This was the extent of the *ars celebrandi* – the mere *observation of laws governing valid and licit celebration*—as paragraph 11 of the liturgy constitution expressed it. We were all well-schooled in the principle of *ex opere operato*!

It was the liturgical movement, then, that began to recover the meaning and effectiveness of the whole rite. The idea that the entire rite "speaks" a word; proclaims a gospel, mediates God's presence—that sacramental mediation was not simply limited to the designated matter and form, but involved the whole rite—this was certainly a retrieval of liturgy in a more complete sense, drawn from the liturgical theology of the Fathers. Retrieving this more complete and holistic approach to the liturgy was a goal central to the liturgy constitution.

Within this wider vision then, there are two vantage points from which to explore a liturgical rite: one asks: what does this liturgical rite mean? And within this question are sub questions like: how is God present within this action? Or, what is God doing here? It is the question of sacramental effect: what are the intended consequences of this liturgical rite for us? And what are the intended consequences of this liturgical action in the world outside of the liturgy, what are the ethical demands that the liturgy holds out for us if we are faithful to its meaning and mandates?

These questions have been traditionally spoken of in the classic scholastic terminology as the *sacramentum et res* and the *res tantum* –or the immediate, ecclesial effect of the sacrament and the *res tantum*, its wider, later, final effect. All of this is part of liturgical theology. But there is also another second viewpoint, a necessary correlative — that of pastoral liturgy.

Pastoral liturgy asks: how are we present to God and to his Christ and to the aims of the Gospel reflected in the intentionality of the liturgical rite we are celebrating; and in the case of a sacramental rite, how are we embracing its intended sacramental effect? In his recent letter Pope Francis challenges us to this very process when he points to our inadequate ability to engage symbolic action."^{xvi}

This is the question, not so much about why we should participate, and what the rite produces, but how we should participate. What is our responsibility in bringing about the ultimate intended effects of this rite? Here the focus is not the *sacramentum et res*, but the *sacramentum tantum*, the sign qua sign and its relationship to the *res tantum* or the final effect of the rite. **This is the question of effective liturgical signification. Here we are in the theatre of the *ars celebrandi* as such.**

How is this rite to be executed in such a way that its intended effects are revealed and realized as completely as possible? And how should we –those of us who are enacting the rite, both ministers and assembly—how should we behave in order to fully engage the totality of what's intended in and by this particular rite? Pope Francis asks this exact question in #27 of his letter, "...how do we recover the capacity to live completely the liturgical action?"^{xvii}

There are of course questions within both arenas of inquiry that relate to how the rites might better be shaped, translated, or regulated. These can and should be addressed; but that is not the focus here. Our focus here assumes the liturgical rite as it is given to us. Because in the end, when you reach the point of actual celebration, that is all you have to work with.

So, the question remains: given this liturgical rite, in its current state given to us by the church and so regulated, and given this particular liturgical assembly, how do we enter into the rite in the best way possible? The answer, I believe, lies in more basic aspects of liturgy that may have been too quickly taken for granted—as if liturgical participation would have happened automatically once the language was in the vernacular and the rubrics for the assembly clearly set forth—as if that alone would have done it!

Once again, we are led back to paragraph eleven of the liturgy constitution: “*something more is required.*” And what is that something more? I believe it is the “*liturgical act*” understood as an act of human empathy and empathic attending. So, let’s explore this further.

Liturgy as Intersubjective

Looking over the landscape of critical reflection on post-conciliar liturgical reform especially when it comes to the actual execution or ritual performance of the liturgy, the “*ars celebrandi*,” as such—it seems that in various ways and to a greater or lesser extent, subjectivity and objectivity have often been pitted against each other.

Those who champion the “objective” dimensions of the liturgy sometimes tend to see the subjective element as intrusive and even destructive of the liturgical rite itself. Do what’s in the red letters, say what’s in the black letters and if we stick to that we’ll be ok. How often have we heard that!

On the other hand, those who espouse the subjective element may view an emphasis on the objective dimension as lifeless and out of touch; they seek more intelligible translations that employ oral language, vibrant musical settings that move the heart and in general, a far greater leeway in the cultural adaptation of the liturgy at the local level. Both of these elements and points of view offer important perspectives that must be attended to by liturgical practitioners.

But what really is at stake in recovering “active participation” and an adequate model for the “*ars celebrandi*” points beyond the two poles of subjective / objective to the horizon of intersubjectivity, and attention to the quality of the ritual performance as an interactive, intersubjective encounter.^{xviii}

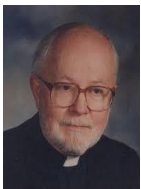
The intersubjective arena focuses our attention not only on the rite itself or only on its current social location, but on the relations that the *rite-in-action* configures and intends to establish—as rite. Once again, the Holy Father challenges us to this very thing throughout his latest apostolic letter on the liturgy.

All the language of the rite, all the gestures of the rite in the end are about the intersubjective field that the rite intends to configure and the persons the rite intends to bring together into relationship. That would be: the present gathered assembly as a whole as well as the individual members of that assembly, the liturgical ministers, the presiding celebrant, the whole Church in heaven and on earth carried in the texts and gestures of the liturgical rite itself, and the triune God with Christ as the priestly mediator of the whole event.^{xix}

Every word and gesture in the liturgy involves an exchange between and among all of these participating subjects. Active participation is what is going on between and among them and it is configured, constructed, and engaged through the language and gestures of the rite. That is what in fact a rite is – a thoroughly intersubjective event which results in effects and entailments for all involved.

Evelyn Underhill, in her classic work, *Worship*, points out the necessity of ritual action to configure the community, to engage us in a corporate act of worship and connect us with the timeless dimension of sacred tradition. She speaks as well of “giving ourselves to the common worship with humility.”^{xx}

Mark Searle asserts that whatever further metaphysical or theological meanings we assign to the liturgical rite and its effects, our understanding begins with perceiving it precisely as a ritual event^{xxi} which creates, modifies, and sustains relationships.^{xxii}



In line with Searle, Aiden Kavanagh insists that in considering sacramental effect, we must acknowledge the effectiveness of the ritual action as such quite apart from any metaphysical or theological process we might attribute to it by faith.^{xxiii} Moreover, Kavanagh contends that whenever a participating assembly celebrates the liturgy, the result is “deep change in the lives of those who participate; and deep change will affect their next liturgical act, however slightly.”^{xxiv} Recall here what we ask of God in one form or another in every Eucharistic prayer: “*that we may become one body, one spirit in Christ!*”

But this attention to the rite as rite does not detract from its ultimate theological meaning grounded in faith but rather points directly to it as the classic scholastic sacramental schema held out for us. Once again, remember: the scholastics called it the *sacramentum tantum* – the sign qua sign. With the recovery of a wider view of liturgical/sacramental theology

drawn from the Fathers, we must consider the ritual performance of the entire rite and all that it entails, as the *sacramentum tantum*, not just the designated “matter and form.”

In this vein, Louis Marie Chauvet says, whether it expresses praise, belief, petition, or confession...the liturgy always involves the **establishment of a new relationship** which it seeks to accomplish and purports to achieve among the members of the community and between the community and God.”^{xxv}

As an example, Chauvet points out how the Eucharistic presence at Mass is not simply presented to us as a flat object but as a “coming into presence,” an active, not passive presence—a reality that comes to us in and through the interaction of the ritual performance.^{xxvi}

The Eucharistic bread is not merely there; instead, we interact with it, so that “the great sacramentum of Christ’s presence is not just the bread as such ...but *bread–broken, bread-as-food, bread-as-meal – bread-for-sharing*. *It is in the breaking, sharing and eating of the bread that its ultimate reality is manifested, its true essence revealed.*”^{xxvii} It is precisely the intersubjective reality that comes forth as the heart of each *sacramentum*—what the rite is doing in and among us and in our relationship to the Father, through the Son in the Holy Spirit

These authors have emphasized attention to the rite as rite and the rite as performative, as an event that engages, manifests, configures, nurtures, establishes, and proclaims a network of relationships. Any attempt to understand its meaning apart from this intersubjective dimension will ignore something essential in our understanding and execution of the rite, and result in an incomplete liturgical vision.

Consider the root metaphors of the sacraments: bathing, anointing, hand-laying, prostrating, eating and drinking – these are all intimate acts. These are the ground metaphors or primary symbols from which the sacraments are constructed. In the liturgy their nature as intimate, personal acts is cracked open and they become what they portend, they effect what they signify.

Similarly, the very language of the rite is recognized as familiar to all gathered there, a language uniquely our own as the ecclesial body, the church. “*The Lord be with you; and with your spirit; Lord Have Mercy, Christ Have Mercy; Glory to God in the Highest; Lift up your hearts, we lift them up to the Lord...*” In speaking the texts of the liturgy and engaging its gestures, the community realizes that it is no longer a company of strangers but the assembled Body of Christ.

As the liturgical assembly gives itself over to the rite in action, and to the extent that it does that, there results a pouring out of the self, patterning the very kenosis or self-emptying of Christ. This is not merely a trite ideology of intimacy, but intimacy poured out in genuine mutual agape among the *plebs sancta dei* for the life of the world.

This is what Romano Guardini was talking about when he described the *liturgical act* as an act of the body as a whole.^{xxviii} Similarly, Pope Francis rightly insists, “...*the action of the celebration does not belong to the individual but to the Christ-Church, to the totality of the faithful united in Christ.*”^{xxix}

So, what then underlies this unique intersubjective network created by the ritual performance? What is the human capacity that allows each individual in the assembly – regardless of their particular role – to enter into the world established by the rite? What is the foundational dynamic of the *liturgical act* as such? What I have been proposing to you is that our human capacity for empathy and empathic attending lies at the heart of all this.



Looking Toward Empathy

Employing the construct of empathy in the study of and practice of liturgical participation, “*the ars celebrandi*,” opens a new horizon in understanding what the “art” involves – it suggest that the “*ars celebrandi*” requires a careful and intentional intersubjective engagement **with the rite itself**, first of all; and **through the rite to everyone involved** such that all are drawn in. My hunch is that this pinpoints more precisely the “something more,” of the liturgy constitution’s paragraph 11.

EMPATHY

“Intersubjectivity,” says psychologist Louis Agosta, has to do with “exploring the many meanings of the relationship between self and other, individual and community.”^{xxx} Agosta further describes a reciprocal character essential to intersubjectivity so that not only is the individual seen as part of the community but likewise, the community becomes “an aspect of,” and “is functionally represented within the individual”^{xxxi} Does this sound something like Guardini’s description of the liturgical act? I think it does. This intersubjective field then is accessed, apprehended, and constituted by the human process called *empathy*.^{xxxii}

Empathy and Philosophy

The concept initially emerged within epistemology —specifically what happens when someone apprehends a work of art or nature and experiences a sense of beauty. The ability to perceive beauty rests in our capacity for empathic attending. So, empathy is first of all understood as a particular kind of perception. A good deal of philosophical study was devoted to empathy, and one particular scholar warrants mentioning.

Edith Stein (*now Saint Theresa Benedicta of the Cross*^{xxxiii}) as a young philosophy student in 1916 under the direction of Edmund Husserl wrote her doctoral dissertation on the topic of empathy. Stein says that “empathy is a unique kind of perceiving.”^{xxxiv} As such this wholly unique mode of perceiving is described by her as “the experience of foreign consciousness in general...”^{xxxv} By “foreign consciousness,” she means “the internal mental states of other persons,”^{xxxvi}

For Stein, empathy involves our capacity to enter into the thinking and feeling of another.^{xxxvii} Curiously, Stein concludes her dissertation with a snippet about empathy and God:

Empathy is how human beings comprehend the psychic life of their fellows. Also, as believers they comprehend the love, the anger, and the precepts of their God in this way; and God can comprehend people’s lives in no other way.

As the twentieth century progressed, the topic of empathy was largely abandoned by philosophy until recently,^{xxxviii} when new research in the field of neuroscience seems to affirm the intuition of these early phenomenologists, including Edith Stein, that intersubjective engagement involves a unique mode of perception – quite handily described by the term “empathy”.^{xxxix}

John Ziman, a British physicist, and philosopher of science points out that the human sciences, depend, ultimately on an empathic intersubjectivity; indeed, he says, “their primary research data [*interpersonal exchanges of various sorts written down in text or recorded by audio or video*] are nothing other than **frozen records of intersubjectivity in action**.”^{xl}

Empathy in Psychology

While philosophy had its highs and lows with empathy, psychology developed the concept in the arena of the human sciences to an extent that philosophy probably could not have. Psychologists understand *empathy* to be a “central aspect of emotional intelligence.”^{xli} As such, it yields, “a type of emotional information processing that includes accurate appraisal of emotions in oneself and others as well as appropriate emotional expression.”^{xlii} Two seminal thinkers in the field of clinical psychology have contributed especially to acknowledging the importance of empathy: Carl Rogers and Heinz Kohut.^{xliii}

For Kohut, empathy was not merely one clinical technique or method among an array of others, but a central human quality at the core of the bonds of human relationship.^{xliii}

Carl Rogers’ focused less on the broad perspective of empathy and “more toward therapeutic practice.”^{xliv} Rogers explains: “The state of empathy, or being empathic, is to perceive the internal frame of reference of another with accuracy.”^{xlvi}

This means that I am accurately perceiving and understanding the personal and subjective reality of another which includes both their cognitive, emotional, and intentional experience or their mind, heart and will. Empathy – so described—says Rogers, becomes a necessary and unique component at the core of deep personal change.

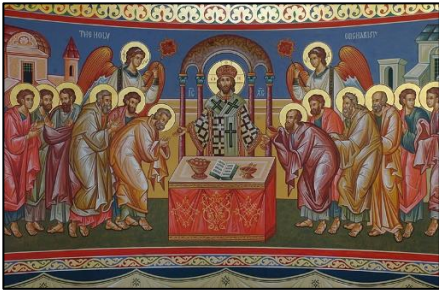
In the field of social psychology, Mark Davis explores empathy moving it from the narrow arena of the client/therapist relationship to a wider social setting: and empathy’s “deep change,” applied to a wider social aggregate—something like a liturgical assembly.

Empathic Tracings and the Liturgy

All this represents only a glimpse of the literature on empathy in the many fields which have found it significant for understanding the dynamics of interpersonal encounter.

Such encounter can happen between two persons,^{xlvii} among a group of persons, or with liturgical rites viewed as treasured remnants and artifacts of prior intersubjective engagements, or “**frozen records of intersubjectivity in action**.”^{xlviii}

For us in the church these “frozen records” have been preserved, not for research in the human sciences, but for our public worship; and this because they are so treasured that they have been passed down through the ages and enhanced from one generation to the next.



As such, these “frozen records” carry the tracings of the living church and thereby unite the church across generations and across the miles. In one sense it is the most concrete outward reality that constructs and unites the church in its identity as one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.

Already in the fifth century Prosper of Aquitaine noticed this characteristic of the liturgy – when he noted that the celebrations of the sacred mysteries “handed down from the apostles are uniformly celebrated throughout the whole world and in every Catholic Church so that the law of prayer might establish the law of belief [*ut legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi*].^{xlix}

Every time a given liturgical assembly celebrates a liturgical rite it “defrosts” and “reconstitutes” one particular “frozen record of ecclesial/divine intersubjectivity” and gives it life again. Moreover, the life it gives is not neutral. It does not merely light up a once used artifact.

When I add heat and water to a frozen entrée to bring it back to life, that water and heat will add something new to the mix, even if ever so subtly. For example, the water I add has minerals the original did not contain. In the same way, when an ecclesial assembly engages a liturgical rite that assembly remains socially located and embedded in a cultural-linguistic context – an “always-already” world. It cannot help but contribute to the liturgical mix each time it celebrates a given liturgy, and passes it on.

Once again, an echo of Prosper of Aquitaine’s dictum surfaces here and is evidently not a static but a living reality. Even if ever so slightly and imperceptibly, the liturgy develops; it is shaped by we who celebrate it as it likewise shapes us—a people called to be a sacrament of communion for the world. And it does seem to be the quality of empathic engagement that actually “defrosts” the rite and “gives it life again?”

EMPATHY AND THE LITURGICAL ACT

From the perspective of the human subject, empathy is what moves a text with accompanying rubrical directives from merely words on a page to a living reality. And it does this in several critical ways:

Firstly, empathy is employed in the ability to apprehend and engage the assembly as a whole, as a unity of subjects which in and through the liturgical rite become –by a free gift of self—a single subject. There are two operations here – apprehending the liturgical assembly as a subjective whole; and giving oneself to it.

In this vein, Guardini goes on to describe this “giving of the self” over to the community when he says that “in the liturgical act, the celebrating individual becomes part of this body and incorporates the *circumstantes* (*the whole assembly*) in their self-expression. “This,” Guardini says, “is not so simple if it is to be genuine and honest,;” not so simple indeed!”¹

Correlative to this first movement of empathy in the liturgical act, would be a second, and it is this: In the liturgical act the participants must apprehend the liturgical rite they are celebrating as a whole, while they are celebrating any given part of it.

In other words, there needs to be a sense of where this or that particular element fits into the whole liturgy and thus a sense of the entire sweep of the ritual performance from start to finish. This in contrast to celebrating the liturgy as if it were a collection of independent words and gestures strung together one after the other. The requirement here is the ability to perceive “shape” in the rite.

Edith Stein’s research notes this. “You want to see a whole that is not necessarily right in front of you,” she says; “to be engaged with the part of the whole and at the same time have the whole reality of which it is a part in the backdrop ready at hand” or “always-already” there.^{li}

When the ritual performance of the liturgy – *the ars celebrandi* – is executed within this integral mode of perception by empathic attending—then each prayer, gesture, invocation, proclamation, direction, acclamation, and silence—presents itself as tethered to a whole and makes sense in the overall scheme.

The third movement of empathy at work in the integrated liturgical act would be to approach the texts and gestures of the rite precisely as intersubjective and interpersonal; as “minded” engagements from the life of the church, minded interpersonal engagements of the Body of Christ.

This complex reality – a divine/human matrix of sorts, reflecting the mystery of the incarnation itself, is what those engaged in the ritual performance – *the ars celebrandi* --are attempting to enact. A careful look at any of the texts of the liturgy be it a dialogue, a prayer text, or an act of adoration and praise brings home the realization that these are dialogic exchanges and require an empathic attention, an empathic stance of intersubjectivity.

One does not merely recite these texts. They require a sense of life; they require that their intentionality be infused into how they are spoken by voice tone, body language, direction of the eyes, as well as the incorporation of the specific rubrics assigned to each text.

So, if a text is a greeting, the presider and the assembly must look like they are greeting each other, sound like they are greeting each other and bodily be engaged as if they are greeting each other.

The place where this dynamic is probably most critical is during the eucharistic prayer which is arguably the most difficult part of the eucharistic liturgy to execute well because it involves an extensive monologue that is, in a sense, the other side of a dialogue; but the primary dialogue partner –God the Father–remains unseen. While the priest alone speaks most of the text, he is not speaking for himself but in the name of the assembled Body of Christ – this being the full agent of the action, with Christ at the head.

Empathic Attending and Kenosis

Now as I have laid out for us as a pathway to understand the *ars celebrandi* by means of a critical correlation between the liturgical act and the dynamic of empathic attending, something further catches the eye – a deeper theological process endemic to our faith – that of kenosis. I have already alluded to this earlier.

It seems that the very internal psychic operation that empathy demands – a movement from the ego out to the other – whether the other is one person or a collective gathering, or God — this psychic process changes people. If that is the case, like in any change, something must be given up.

Could the very process by which we engage the liturgy call us to a pattern of self-emptying, after the manner of the “kenosis” of Christ as proclaimed in the ancient hymn from Philippians? ^{lii} Perhaps it does. Again, I would suggest this offers us a rich pathway forward in further pastoral liturgical research.

For now, it does seem that the human dynamic of empathy and empathic attending sits at the heart of the *liturgical act*. And if so, it sits at the heart of the *ars celebrandi* in terms of the internal psychic dynamic it requires.

The question of how this can be applied practically in liturgical catechesis on all levels – but especially in seminary formation warrants further exploration and application. There are concrete pathways already indicated that I have explored, but that would be a whole other presentation.

Finally, it does seem that the role of empathy in the liturgical / ritual performance may not merely be employed to get the rite right, but so that the rite shapes our hearts and minds in the spirit of the gospel, and thus our interactions for the life of the world. ■ © FDLC 2022



ⁱ Romano Guardini, "A Letter from Romano Guardini," *Herder Correspondence*, Special Issue, I, no. 0 (1964): 24-26

ⁱⁱ *Ibid.*, 24.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Ibid.*

^{iv} *Desiderio Desideravi* #19 (hereafter DD)

^v Guardini, 24

^{vi} *Ibid.*, 26.

^{vii} DD #34

^{viii} *Ibid.*

^{ix} Guardini, 25.

^x DD #31

^{xi} CSL 11

^{xii} Guardini," 24-26.

^{xiii} Frank Ra, *Empathy and Parenting: Teaching Empathy with Children* (Mazon Digital Services), Kindle, LOC 31, ASIN: B005YQL3S8.

^{xiv} The following are additional sources from which I have constructed this working definition of empathy: Mark H. Davis, *Empathy: A Social Psychological Approach* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996); Gerard Egan, *The Skilled Helper: Model, Skills, and Methods for Effective Helping* (Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole, 1982); Susan B. Gibbons, "Understanding Empathy as a Complex Construct: A Review of the Literature," *Clinical Social Work Journal* 39, no. 3 (2011); Gerald A. Gladstein, "Understanding Empathy: Integrating Counseling, Developmental, and Social Psychology Perspectives.," *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 30, no. 4 (1983); Marco Iacoboni, *Mirroring People: The Science of Empathy and How We Connect with Others* (New York, NY:

Picador, 2009); David Levine, *Teaching Empathy: A Blueprint for Caring, Compassion, and Community* (Moorabbin, Vic.: Hawker Brownlow Education, 2012); Joseph D. Lichtenberg, Melvin Bornstein, and Donald Silver, *Empathy*, vol. 1&2 (Hillsdale, NJ: Analytic Press, 1984).

^{xv} Relying on the working definitions presented above.

^{xvi} DD #27

^{xvii} DD #27

^{xviii} Andrea Grillo, *Beyond Pius V: Conflicting Interpretations of the Liturgical Reform* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2013), 25. .

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^{xx} Evelyn Underhill, *Worship* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 32-37.

^{xxi} Mark Searle, Barbara Schmich. Searle, and Anne Y. Koester, *Called to Participate: Theological, Ritual, and Social Perspectives* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2006), 22.

^{xxii} *Ibid.*, 23.

^{xxiii} Aidan Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology: the Hale Memorial Lectures of Seabury-Western Theological Seminary, 1981*. (New York: Pueblo Pub. Co., 1984), 74.

^{xxiv} *Ibid.*, 73.,-74.

^{xxv} Louis Marie. Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: a Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995), 429.

^{xxvi} *Ibid.*, 404.

^{xxvii} *Ibid.*, 406.

^{xxviii} Guardini, 24-26.

^{xxix} DD #19

^{xxx} Louis Agosta, PhD, "2. Empathy and Intersubjectivity," in *Empathy*, ed. Joseph D. Lichtenberg, M.D., Melvin Bornstein, M.D., and Donald Silver, M.D., vol. I (Hillsdale, NJ, Etc.: Analytic P., 1984), 43-44.

^{xxxi} *Ibid.*, 44.

^{xxxii} *Ibid.*, passim.

^{xxxiii} Edith Stein et al., *Life in a Jewish Family: Her Unfinished Autobiographical Account* (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 1986), passim, and 430-432. Edith Stein (12 October 1891 – 9 August 1942) at the time of doctoral studies was an atheist although Jewish by heritage. Later in her life she underwent a gradual conversion to Christianity, then to Catholicism. Eventually she entered a Carmelite cloister and was given the religious name Sister Theresa Benedicta of the Cross. Because of her Jewish heritage she was captured by the Nazi regime's SS and taken to Auschwitz-Birkenau where she was executed in the gas chambers there and then her body was incinerated. She was canonized by Pope Saint John Paul II in 1998.

^{xxxiv} Edith Stein and Waltraut Stein, *On The Problem of Empathy*, 11.

^{xxxv} *Ibid.*

^{xxxvi} Kris McDaniel, "Edith Stein: On the Problem of Empathy," March 25, 2014, 6, accessed November 10, 2014, <http://krmcDani.mysite.syr.edu/ESPOE.pdf>.

^{xxxvii} *Ibid.*, 1, 3.

^{xxxviii} Karsten Stueber, "Empathy," Stanford University, March 31, 2008, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/empathy/>, 14-20.

^{xxxix} *Ibid.*, 10-11.

^{xl} *Ibid.*, 29-30.

^{xli} Frank-M., Staemmler, *Empathy in Psychotherapy: How Therapists and Clients Understand Each Other* (New York: Springer, 2012), 2.

^{xlii} John Mayer, Maria Dipaolo, and Peter Salovey, "Perceiving Affective Content in Ambiguous Visual Stimuli: A Component of Emotional Intelligence," *Journal of Personality Assessment* 54, no. 3 (1990): 772.

^{xliii} *Ibid.*, 6,

^{xliv} Staemmler, *Empathy in Psychotherapy*, 17.

^{xlv} *Ibid.*, 18.

^{xlvi} Carl R. Rogers, *A Way of Being* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1980), 140.

^{xlvii} Edith Stein and Waltraut Stein, *On The Problem of Empathy*.

^{xlviii} John Ziman, "No Man Is An Island", 29-30.

^{xlix} Prosper of Aquitaine "...a letter from Pope Celestine to the Bishops of Gaul c.435-442; in Lawrence J. Johnson, *Worship in the Early Church: An Anthology of Historical Sources*, vol. 3 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2009), 179.

^l Romano Guardini, 24.

^{li} Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 57. Chauvet alludes to this when he discusses the relationship between metaphysics and language; "Humans do not possess language; rather they are possessed by it. *They speak only because they are always-already spoken*; and humans are human only "to the extent that they are those who speak." It seems to me that the internal connecting sinew or membrane appears to be empathy.

^{lii} Philippians 2:6-7.

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