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# Where Do We Go From Here?

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## Where Do We Go From Here?

### Liturgical Pondering

When Chicago released this song in 1970 I was going from high school to college. It was pretty clear to me where I was going and why. I was going to college and I was going to learn to play the organ really well. I didn't understand the depth of the question in the song 'where do we go from here' until I got to college where Northwestern University students, just months before had shut down Sheridan Rd. as part of the student protests that gripped the country that spring. I, too, would become part of these protests, first against the Vietnam War, and later in the anti-nuclear movement. I learned there wasn't any point in going anywhere if we weren't headed there in a truthful way, and if we didn't move together. While I didn't make any liturgical connections then, I certainly have in 2017. Asking ourselves where we go from here is not only prudent, it is urgent.

Those 2 lessons, **heading in a truthful way and moving together**, will be the guides for this morning's talk. We Christians are always heading to the word and table, often via the font. We are always going together, even if only 2 or 3 of us are gathered. This moving together is powerful. It initiates the equalization of the gathered. We come to worship as individuals but we move together as the corporate body of Christ once we're in worship. We are individual bodies becoming a corporate body. When only the leaders move, it may not be clear that they are moving on our behalf, and symbolically for all of us. It might just be better if we all moved.

Which brings up messiness. It's awkward to move; we bump into each other, we're not sure where we are going, and it takes up time. Those are at least some of the reasons we give for not moving the whole assembly. And it's true. At the women's march on Chicago this past January, 3 VU students and I tried to find our place in the march. There were so many people it took us nearly an hour to wind our way through the crowd so that we could join the march and see the stage. Once we got there, one student heard the announcement that there were so many people present there would be no way for everyone to march anywhere. So we had a 'stay' instead of a march. Wouldn't that be great if we had that problem in worship?

Still, we all moved together. We found little holes in the crowd and moved gradually together. We often weren't close enough to a speaker (the amplified kind; there wasn't even a chance we could hear the human kind) to hear what was coming from the stage. Yet we clapped when others did, and chanted when we heard others chant. Just like little children in church. We once found we were near other VU alums when we pulled out our Valpo flag, and we shared conversations about our mutual situations with people we'd never met. Yet we were there together. Just like in church.

On the way home, after some silence in the car, one of the students said, "It's funny. We thought we were going there to hear speakers and to march. We couldn't do either one, but it was so important to be there." **Liturgy, exactly.**

It's the being there that matters. Being there **forms us into the body of Christ in that time and place.** It's a different body if anyone is added or subtracted. It's also a different body each time we gather for we are different people hearing different words, praying different prayers each week or each day. **Our liturgy is both the same and different each time as well.** Same in the claim that we become the body of Christ; different in its members and parts.

Sometimes the best thing we can do as liturgical leaders is not to mess up this basic being there. Like messing it up with music that's too complicated, or sermons that are too long, or prayers that are thoughtless. Or leading in a way that calls attention to itself, or elevates some members above others, or makes distinctions between people. You'd think that would be enough, just staying out of the way and not messing things up.

Truth is, though, we need wise and discerning counsel in order learn how to be liturgists for our assemblies. Liturgists, whether worship leaders or planners, presiding or assisting, spoken or musical, all need a coherent sense of their assembly's worship. I hope to demonstrate that such coherence emerges from both a broad interaction with the wider church, ecumenical partners and others, as well as a deep look into our own particular assembly's cultural context. Deepening the specific and broadening our reach are challenging in and of themselves; keeping them in balance is always an ongoing project.

Last month the Pontifical Council for Culture and the Congregation for Catholic Education, in collaboration with the Pontifical Institute of Sacred Music held a conference "Music and the Church: worship and culture 50 years after Musicam sacram." Musicam sacram is one of several documents that contained teachings and

instructions for implementation of liturgical music reforms following the adoption of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vatican Council reforms in the 1960s.

Pope Francis addressed the conference at its closing. “Half a century after the Instruction of Musicam sacram, the conference wanted to elaborate, in an interdisciplinary and ecumenical perspective, the current relationship between sacred music and contemporary culture,”

“Of great importance, it was also a reflection on the aesthetic and musical education of both the clergy and religious and the laity engaged in the pastoral life, and more directly in the choirs.”

The Church has a great responsibility toward liturgical music, the Pope continued, because it deals with the sacred mystery of the Eucharist, and that sacred music must balance the past and present in a way that invites full participation and lifts the congregation’s hearts to God.

The “dual mission” of the Church, Francis said, “is, on the one hand, to safeguard and promote the rich and varied heritage inherited from the past, using it with balance in mind and avoiding the risk of a nostalgic vision” that becomes a sort of “archaeology.”

On the other hand, we have to also ensure that sacred music and liturgical chant don’t ignore “the artistic and musical languages of modernity.”

All those responsible for liturgical music, on whatever level, “must know how,” he said, “to embody and translate the Word of God into songs, sounds, harmonies that make the hearts of our peers vibrate, creating even an appropriate emotional climate, that puts in order the faith and raises reception and full participation in the mystery that it celebrates.”

Pope Francis continues to lead us in the directions of **where we go from here**. I admire his courage in many ways. Here he is affirming the continuation of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vatican council’s reforms that have lately come under critique and repristination in his own church. He is calling liturgists to careful discernment in making choices that will allow the congregation to enter into the mystery of the body of Christ. I hope we will all be inspired by his boldness.

We do well to remember this connection and purpose of our liturgical words, actions and music. The Christian assembly, in fact, our whole reason for being together, is to become again the body of Christ each time we meet, by proclaiming the Gospel and celebrating the Meal.

I am encouraged by Pope Francis and the hope that the reforms of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vatican Council still have currency in Roman Catholic practice. The Protestant churches have benefited from the relationships with our Catholic brothers and sisters throughout these 50 years of reforms. Many of you know the history of the invitation in the 1960s for Protestants to join the North American Roman Catholic bishops as they worked out the implications of Vatican 2 in the English-speaking and North American context. Their shared work resulted in our ability to share many common liturgical texts, even yet today.

For those that don't the shared history of North American Lutheran and Roman Catholic collaboration from Vatican 2 forward, I'm going to spend a little time rehearsing it for us, as I believe this history can help inform **where we go from here**.

In 1969, Roman Catholic scholars formed the International Consultation on English Texts. Interestingly, the group was ecumenical from its inception, and included Lutherans. Rev. Hans Boehringer, VU faculty member and director of the Institute of Liturgical Studies from 1962-1974, was a founding member of the group, and served at one point as the chair. Their vision for shared texts among North American Roman Catholic and Protestant churches is clear in the title of their 1975 publication *Prayers We Have in Common*. In it were the English versions of the Apostles', Nicene and Athanasian Creeds, and the Lord's Prayer, all still in wide common use by English-speaking Christians.

Having found common ground among these church bodies in the formation of the consultation on English texts, a very few years later, Roman Catholic liturgical scholars again turned to ecumenical, and also this time, interfaith liturgists to form the North American Academy of Liturgy. The Academy's origins date to December 1973, ten years after the beginnings of the Second Vatican Council. Two Jesuits organized a group of fifty American liturgists, to meet and discuss the principal opportunities, needs, and problems of liturgical renewal.

Here again Lutheran scholars were in on the ground floor of the Academy. This is evident already in 1975, the year of the Academy's first annual meeting. Hans Boehringer gave a plenary presentation at that first Academy meeting. Since that time

there have been numerous Catholic theologians presenting at the **Institute**, and large numbers of Lutheran scholars in leadership in the **Academy**. David Truemper, chair of the VU Theology Dept., and Director of the Institute from 1984-2004, also served for a time as treasurer of the Academy. I currently am a member of the Lutheran caucus and the Liturgical Theology seminar in the **Academy**, and have both led and planned worship, and presented papers.

In fact, many of the past presidents of the Academy have been Lutheran (not to say that most haven't been Roman Catholic, since 2 of the past presidents Ed Foley and John Baldovin are in the room) 1985 Gordon Lathrop; 1997 Frank Senn; 2001 Gail Ramshaw; 2006 Tom Schattauer; 2013 Craig Satterlee; 2015 Max Johnson. All of them have also been directly involved in the **Institute**. This gives us all a taste of the rich collaboration we have enjoyed this past 50 years.

At its recent January 2017 meeting of the **Academy**, the Lutheran and Roman Catholic caucuses spent a morning together both celebrating the 50+ years of this common work and anticipating the future at this historical juncture of the Reformation's 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Tom Schattauer of Wartburg Seminary and Steve Janco of St. Joseph's, Rensselaer, addressed the gathering, both pointing to the relationships in the room as well as the documents that have been spun from our collaboration.

Tom noted accomplishments in addition to those I've already listed, including: the ecumenical project of the Revised Common Lectionary, the 2013 report of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity, *From Conflict to Communion*<sup>2</sup> and work even up to the most recent 2015 publication *Declarations on the Way*, which outlines 32 agreements between North American Lutherans and Roman Catholics. While the shared work is a real and significant accomplishment, Tom also pointed us in another direction.

"The human fellowship, friendships, and collaborations across ecclesial boundaries embody the spiritual unity in Christ we **already** share and offer a foretaste of the full reconciliation of our churches, which then becomes possible to imagine. This is what Luther called "the mutual conversation and consolation of brothers and sisters" in Christ (The Smalcald Articles 6), and he regarded this personal **fellowship itself** as a means of grace, a communication of the Gospel, which creates the church and binds it together as one. The continuing separation of our churches does not diminish the

importance of our mutual conversation and consolation as participants in the liturgical dialogue of Lutherans and Catholics in North America.”

Our history of shared work is especially important to lift up and remind ourselves what is still possible together. The past few years have been more difficult as much of our common work was set aside with Pope Benedict XVI’s issuance of the *Summorum Pontificum* (SP) in July 2007, and the *Liturgiam Authenticam* document, challenging the previous translations of the mass, and eventuating in a return to reprinted English language for the translation of the mass.

It seems to me, looking today as a Lutheran, that Pope Francis is again championing the reforms of Vatican 2. He noted that there is an intrinsic fundamental international and ecumenical hope which was expressed in the language of the *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the foundational document of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vatican Council, often called in English, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. Much more than just an opening to the vernacular, the Constitution reached outward in openness to cultural and contextual liturgical forms to express the unity of the church, while developing linguistic and cultural specificity.

Dr. Massimo Faggioli in his 2012 book on Roman Catholic liturgical reforms, writes, “Vatican II reformed liturgy on the solid basis of an international liturgical movement, a profound stream of theological *ressourcement*, and ecumenical hope.”<sup>1</sup>

So, one of the places **we go from here** is to own this vision of an international liturgical movement. This is certainly one of the later, and now unfinished projects of Vatican 2. Not that we haven’t started. Lutherans worldwide, through the Lutheran World Federation, published in 1996 the Nairobi Statement: Worship and Culture in Dialogue. This document offered 4 models for cultural interaction in the liturgy – transcultural, contextual, cross-cultural, and countercultural. Several North American Lutherans, most notably Gordon Lathrop, Anita Stauffer and Mark Bangert contributed to the vision and were authors of the statement and its accompanying articles. Just this past year, to note this 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the ELCA published a parish resource “Can We Talk?” put together by a team of scholars and practitioners, edited by Jennifer Baker-Trinity, one of our new co-directors of this Institute. Its interactive and friendly format is intended to bring parishes into accessible conversation in their own context about inculturation of the liturgy.

2 years before the publication of the Nairobi Statement, in 1994, the Vatican published "The Roman Liturgy and Inculturation." This was the beginning of the adaptation of the liturgy to Roman Catholic cultural contexts. Inculturation is the process of integrating pertinent elements of a local culture into local worship.<sup>ii</sup> Roman scholars, most notably, Anscar Chupungco, helped liturgists introduce indigenous materials into worship. A native Filipino, his work opened up the use of new worship forms, recognizing value from the culture where the assembly gathers. He wrote, "Inculturation should aim to deepen the spiritual life of the assembly through a fuller experience of Christ. If it does not do this, it remains a futile exercise."<sup>iii</sup>

In 2003 Chupungco was to be a plenary speaker at our Institute. At the last moment, he was not allowed a visa and could not travel out of the Philippines. He sent his 2 manuscripts, which David Truemper read to the conference. In it, he suggested 2 methods for liturgical renewal as most useful for North American Lutherans: creative assimilation and dynamic equivalence. I find his thoughts bear repeating here because his work isn't finished.

Creative assimilation involves finding similarities between liturgical rites and one's own cultural rites. Chupungco pointed out that Lutherans have the advantage of decentralized, already nationalized churches, whose leadership is already in the language and culture of its church body.<sup>iv</sup> Creative assimilation allows for a local culture to introduce elements of its own experience into worship. This could be as simple as naming local geography in prayers for creation, to as complicated as creating rites for gay marriage.

Dynamic equivalence, on the other hand, expresses liturgy with something of equal value or meaning in the local culture. How a culture expresses hospitality, for example, differs widely from one culture to another. North Americans are currently busy adding gathering spaces to their building, highlighting the importance of communal gathering, before entering the worship space. This is where guests are welcomed, members greet one another, a ritual of gathering begins before proceeding to the nave.

Dynamic equivalence allows each culture to determine what the hospitality looks like. Sharing the peace is another place where this would apply. One culture shakes hands, another bows with folded hands, another exchange a kiss. Each culture decides what,



for them, expresses a sign of reconciliation, according to their own cultural norms and boundaries.

While, as Chupungco notes, Lutherans have an advantage in being able to work out these solutions at more national and local levels than Romans Catholics, Lutherans also have things from our own heritage to expand liturgy's inculturation. Central to Luther's reforms were the notions of both freedom and essence in the liturgy. Liturgy boils down to reading the Word and celebrating the Meal. Just about everything else is adiaphora, a term Luther used to mean it is fine to have it but not essential to the actual rite. Simplicity, sifting through the unnecessary, would be another way to understand Luther's reforms. Adiaphora allows for tremendous freedom in exploring any culture's liturgical expressions.

So where might that freedom take us? I'd like to suggest first some things right in front of us. The Kyrie from *Evangelical Lutheran Worship's* setting 7 is taken from the Nicaraguan popular mass. This mass was written in solidarity with the base communities in Nicaragua and other Central American countries. These base communities encouraged and enabled the faithful to meet in homes and informal during the situation of national oppression. When we sing it, we are joining our voices to theirs in proclaiming God's intent for liberation of all God's children. Why not point out that connection the next time we sing it, or teach this Kyrie to your assembly if you haven't already used it. There might even be an immigrant community singing that Kyrie near you. What if we connected ourselves to them? And perhaps at the same time point out that Luther championed finding new forms for the Kyrie, and probably would have liked this one.

While we're talking about Kyries, how about this setting from Singapore composer, Swee Hong Lim? Jennifer and Julie will lead it in its in its full form. We will sing the refrain.

Someone else right in front of us is a woman who was a trained theologian and became a women's rights activist. Georgia Harkness was ordained in the Methodist church in 1926, long before women could be admitted to any Methodist conference. That didn't happen until 1956. She is the first woman to teach theology in a US seminary, and the author of numerous hymn texts and books. Her hymn "Hope of the World" was written for the second global meeting of the World Council of Churches in 1954.

The hymn is in *Lutheran Service Book* and may say something to us today. In the first stanza she writes,

'Hope of the world, Thou Christ of great compassion;

Speak to our fearful hearts by conflict rent,

Save us, Thy people, from consuming passion,

Who by our own false hopes and aims are spent.'

Here she places Christ as our hope over and against our own false hopes. Wouldn't that be something to sing about in 2017? Where have we placed our false hopes that now plague us? How do we place again our hope in Christ?

Or in this Easter season, hear this stanza:

'Hope of the world, afoot on dusty highways,

Showing to wand'ring souls the path of life.

Walk Thou beside us lest the tempting byways

Lure us away from Thee to endless night.'

In *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* she wrote the 3<sup>rd</sup> stanza of "This Is My Song." Part of that stanza reads

"O God, be lifted up till all shall serve you and hearts united learn to live as one.  
So hear my prayer, O God of all the nations; myself I give you; let your will be done."

As Christians advocating for human rights today, Harkness could offer us connections for our work right out of the hymnal and help us connect our liturgical lives with our daily life and work.

What I'm suggesting is that since we already have so many resources in front of us, our greatest need is not finding new ones. What is needed, I believe, is the commitment to make the cultural connections for our assemblies, and to note our debt and reliance on others' gifts. In a nation and in churches as powerful as ours, it is easy to forget every day the gifts we receive from other cultures, whether it's the bananas picked in Columbia or the oil we buy from Iran. A starting place is simply acknowledging what

we constantly overlook, and direct our attention with gratitude to those who invisibly provide for us daily.

When I introduce some new music into worship I would love to hear the response “that hymn, song, liturgy really opened my eyes today” rather than the usual “I liked that song.” Or . . . **Even our attitude of expressing like or dislike comes from a place of judgment and evaluation, rather than reception. It is a way of claiming privilege, giving ourselves some self-given authority.** Understanding ourselves as receivers may be one of the important ways we can inculturate the liturgy in North America.

How, then, can we decide whether we are heading in a truthful direction together?  
Who decides?

Finally, my brothers and sisters, whatever is true, honorable, just, pure, pleasing, commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise.  
Philippians 4:8

I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. John 14:6

How can our **liturgy head us in a truthful way**? Here I want to return to Pope Francis’ comments last month about the relationship of tradition to contemporary expression. He encouraged the conference attendees to value the varied traditions of the past while also being open to the artistic and musical languages of modernity. I hear that as sage wisdom to all of us planning liturgies. What is it that still bears truth to our assemblies today that we have inherited from our forebears? **Then, at the same time, in the same liturgy, with the same assembly,** what are the words of truth from our own time and place that we need to add so that our liturgies head us toward truth?

It is an awesome privilege to put words into the mouths of our assemblies. Crafting prayers that can be prayed by everyone in the room, or creating a response or song that can meet the congregation where they are is both simple and not so simple. The wisdom of our tradition is that there is much overlap in biblical and liturgical language. We have prioritized this language and can rely on it for much of our liturgies.

What about truth in our own time?

I was writing this address during a week of spring break that my brother was spending with us. He is suffering from Parkinson's, manic depression, and colon cancer among other things. I came across this prayer as I looked for examples of inculturation in *ELW*:

God, our refuge and strength, our present help in time of trouble, care for those who tend the needs of the sick. Strengthen them in body and spirit. Refresh them when weary; console them when anxious; comfort them in grief; and hearten them in discouragement. Be with us all, and give us peace at all times and in every way; through Christ our peace. Amen.

It was a beautiful moment to feel the care of the church around me through this prayer. A generation ago, in our last series of worship books, we would have found prayers for the sick and suffering, the dying and the homebound. The recognition of the caregiver's needs, I suggest, is an added contemporary addition to our liturgical corpus, expanding the circle of prayer to them. In that moment I felt the body of Christ joining me in this prayer.

So also we now find prayers for our neighborhood, care of children, those whose marriage has ended, those who suffer abuse and violence. These expanding circles are reflections of our culture and times, making the body of Christ more inclusive as it addresses more of its members and the circumstances they face.

And then there is the matter of the table. How do we truthfully welcome the stranger, the wayward, the unbaptized? What is the invitation we give to eat and drink the body of Christ? Dare we withhold it from anyone who approaches us? Our churches are still sorting this out, and I believe that ecumenical work is important. In the meantime, though, we all have to make our decisions about that invitation and what we say about it.

Truthful prayers are another place to spend some of our common time and work. I have nothing against churchwide resources as a source for weekly prayers of the church. I think, though, it's important to also have prayers that arise from each specific community. We shy away from that, perhaps, because it's hard, and we don't know how to form prayers that are both truthful and that everyone can pray. Here are some pitfalls I've noticed along the way.

1. Do we ask God to do things we are unwilling to do?

2. Are we telling God what God already knows?
3. Is the prayer really addressing God, or the other people in the room?

Some have a gift for writing prayers; in other places they might be best crafted by a team of members. I see this as both a spiritual and parish commitment to take on this task for the whole assembly. Taking it seriously can be a real gift to all.

So, **where do we go from here?** Let's see where our sending rite tells us to go. In one form the presider says, "The God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with each other, in accordance with Christ Jesus." When we hear those words, what do we say? **Amen**

Really? That means, we agree, let it be so, we're onboard. If some of God's last words in the liturgy are encouragement to live in harmony with others, can we do that, believe that, live that? Can I use those words to seek harmony with one who causes me resentment, who makes my life difficult? Do we believe the liturgy is true here, and, if we do, are we ready to act on it? When we give our assent, our amen, we are committing publically our desire to do this. I can only note my own hypocrisy in the assent I often give to these words. Some Sundays I may not have even hit the parking lot before I'm describing some sort of disharmony among the worship leaders that morning. Do I really believe I can live in harmony, or do I mentally justify why I don't?

But the sending rite isn't done with us yet. In the *ELW* rite it's the assisting minister that gets the last word. So there can be no mistake that a lay person is speaking to the assembly: a baptized member speaking to the baptized. Or, in the case of the parish we belong to, it is a group of children who command us "Go in peace. Remember the poor." How long do we remember the poor once we've started our weeks? It's humiliating to try to explain that to the 6-year olds who command it. It's easier to just say "thanks be to God" and be done with it. But I can still hear those children's voices in my ears.

In the complexity of our lives, the liturgy calls us back to what is true, just, and lovely. Finding those things again may be among the hardest things we do, for the simple is often difficult to achieve. In our lives the simple may be so overgrown, we can't even find it. Except that there is this body that continues to rehearse these truths in spite of us, **for us** and the world. That is our way, and truth, and life.

We will all go back to our own worshipping communities after these days of refreshment. It is the Institute's purpose to provide this respite for you so that you can return with energy to your home and work. I hope you'll use this time to consider what next steps you might take upon return to deepen the beauty of the liturgical life in your place.

At the close of his address in January, Tom Schattauer gave us a list of possible next steps. I pass one on to you to stimulate your own creativity. Here in North America, let's establish a regular practice of having ecumenical witnesses whenever baptism is celebrated. Our dialogues have agreed that we share a common baptism. What if the local Roman Catholic parish and Lutheran congregation agreed to send representatives to each other's baptisms? What if synods, districts, diocesan and churchwide agreed to encourage and support such a practice? The ecumenical witnesses could have a particular role in the liturgy analogous to that of the sponsors, but distinct in its witness to our common baptism. The presence of ecumenical witnesses would make visible—literally embody—our unity in baptism.

As you consider this, and imagine your own next steps, remember that such deepening connects your parish to an international and ecumenical community of others seeking the same thing. Each of us will have a different next step, for we all come from different places. Perhaps if we do continuously work to plan worship that is truthful, others will see us and recognize our attempt to move together truthfully. Though our work will be contextual and particular to our assembly, we can know that we are connecting to the reforms of the widest expressions of the western church we know. We can only hope that we might hear of reports like the ones Tertullian received, when he reported that the early pagans would say of 2<sup>nd</sup>-century Christians, "see how they love each other" that it may also be true for us.

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<sup>i</sup> Faggioli, Massimo *True Reform: Liturgy and Ecclesiology in Sacrosanctum Concilium*. Collegeville, MN. Liturgical Press. 2012. P. 137

<sup>ii</sup> Chupungco, Anscar J., OSB in *Worship and Culture: Foreign Country or Homeland?* Grand Rapids, MI. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 2014. P. 262-3.

<sup>iii</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 263

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<sup>iv</sup> Chupungco, Anscar J., OSB “Liturgical Inculturation: The Future that Awaits Us” in *Occasional Papers #11: Liturgy in a New Millennium*. 2006. Valparaiso, IN. Valparaiso University. P. 250.