LITURGICAL PERSONHOOD
AND THE NEW EVANGELIZATION

Abstract. The liturgical task of all pastoral activity has not yet been fully accounted for in the recent turn toward the New Evangelization discernable in the magisterium. This article offers the fundamentals of an argument for a liturgically-centered approach to the pastoral task of the New Evangelization. In the first part of the essay, author argues that the implicit telos of the New Evangelization in John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and now Pope Francis necessitates the formation of a liturgical and sacramental personhood made difficult by late modern society. In the second, author provides three dimensions of cultural renewal necessary for developing the liturgical-pastoral task of the New Evangelization. These dimensions include a critique of the technocratic paradigm, a fostering of memory in a secular age, and the reclamation of aesthetics as an authentic form of knowing.

Key words: liturgy; New Evangelization; liturgical personhood.

In his magisterial work, Theological Dimensions of the Liturgy: A General Treatise on the Theology of the Liturgy, Cyprian Vagaggini, O.S.B. comments upon the liturgical task of implementing the pastoral vision of the Second Vatican Council. He writes:

An ideal is proposed to pastors, an ideal of a pastoral totally centered on the liturgy—a program, that is, in which the most varied pastoral activities—especially catechesis, teaching, religion, preaching, Catholic action movement, biblical movement, etc., are performed with a vision of the whole intimate union in reference to the ideal of the plenary participation of the people in the liturgy, especially in the Eucharistic Sacrifice, as the goal to which all

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else is ordered and the source which leaves the mark on its spirit on everything.¹

The flourishing of ecclesial life in the post-conciliar era depends upon a liturgical orientation to each dimension of pastoral activity. Through such an approach, the Church is brought to a conscious participation, one that responds “with perfect attunement to the given objective of the celebration, displays in full the possibilities of the supernatural activities involved in his supernatural existence as a man deputed to the worship of God in Christ.”²

The telos of ecclesial formation is the creation of a liturgical person or subject who participates in the triune life of God.³

The liturgical task of all pastoral activity has not yet been fully accounted for in the recent turn toward the New Evangelization discernable in the magisterium.⁴ This essay offers the fundamentals of an argument for a liturgically-centered approach to the pastoral task of the New Evangelization.⁵ In the first part of the essay, I argue that the implicit telos of the New Evangelization in John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and now Pope Francis necessitates the formation of a liturgical and sacramental personhood made difficult by late modern society. In the second, I provide three dimensions of cultural renewal necessary for developing the liturgical-pastoral task of the New Evangelization. These dimensions include a critique of the technocratic paradigm, a fostering of memory in a secular age, and the reclamation of aesthetics as an authentic form of knowing.

² Ibid., 838.
³ See Laurence Paul HEMMING, “The Liturgical Subject,” in The Liturgical Subject: Subject, Subjectivity, and the Human Person in Contemporary Liturgical Discussion and Critique (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), 1–16.
⁵ For a fuller account of liturgy and the new evangelization, see Timothy P. O’MALLEY, Liturgy and the New Evangelization: Practicing the Art of Self-Giving Love (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2014).
The 1997 General Directory for Catechesis provides a clear expression of the various dimensions of the Church’s mission of evangelization in the post-conciliar era. Evangelization is the very milieu in which a robust Christian formation unfolds. Drawing upon Pope Paul VI’s Evangelii Nuntiandi, the document describes evangelization as consisting of “proclamation, witness, teaching, sacraments, love of neighbor: all of these aspects are the means by which the one Gospel is transmitted and they constitute the essential elements of evangelization itself.” In this sense, evangelization is never simply a moment but a process through which an entire culture is transfigured in light of the Church’s proclamation, celebration, and living of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the world. Paul VI describes this global sense of evangelization: “For the Church, evangelizing means bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new.” Evangelization is the intentional process by which the Church renews culture, and thus lives out her vocation to sow the seeds of the Gospel in the world.

Yet, the General Directory for Catechesis also addresses the New Evangelization as a particular socio-religious situation in which this global sense of evangelization unfolds:

In many countries of established Christian tradition and sometimes in younger Churches there exists “an intermediate situation, where entire groups of the baptized have lost a living sense of the faith, or even no longer consider themselves members of the Church and live a life far removed from Christ and his Gospel.” The peculiar nature of this situation is found in the fact that missionary activity is directed toward the baptized of all ages, who live in a religious context in which Christian points of reference are perceived purely exteriorly. Here primary proclamation and basic catechesis are priorities.

The Church in the West have baptized men and women who are only marginally Christian. Their participation in the sacramental life is negligible.

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7 Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Nuntiandi, no. 18.
9 General Directory for Catechesis, no. 58c.
since the traditions of the Church have been understood as markers of cultural identity rather than a commitment to the person of Jesus Christ as mediated through the sacramental life of the Church.\footnote{This clash between an intentional religiosity and a cultural one is not simply a consequence of late modern life. Instead, the gap between the social and cultural dimensions of religiosity and an interior commitment of the person is precipitated by the reforms of the Second Vatican Council itself. See Louis-Marie Chauvet, The Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body, trans. Madeleine Beaumont (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001), 173-200.}

The clarification of the precise nature of the New Evangelization has occupied the pontificates of John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and now Francis. From the very beginning, the magisterium has implicitly underlined the nature of the New Evangelization as a formation into a liturgical and sacramental personhood that might renew the cosmos itself.

While John Paul II had used the term New Evangelization previously, his 1985 address at a conference on secularization and evangelization in Europe is his clearest early account of its nature. He writes:

The twilight of ideologies, the erosion of confidence in the capability of structures to respond to the most serious problems and to the anxious expectations of man, the dissatisfaction with a life based on the ephemeral, the loneliness of the great mass metropolises, the youth abandoned to themselves, and the same nihilism, all have dug a deep void, that awaits the credible announcers of new proposals for new values capable of building a new civilization worthy of the vocation of man.\footnote{Compendium on the New Evangelization, no. 220.}

Like much of the magisterium of the saintly Pontiff, John Paul II acknowledges the vocation of the Church to participate in a renewal of human society. With the collapse of values related to meaning in late modernity, the Church, which keeps before her eyes the God-man Jesus Christ, must be the source through which a renewal of a personalist account of human flourishing may unfold.\footnote{Augusto Del Noce, “Secularization and the Crisis of Modernity,” in The Crisis of Modernity, ed. and trans. Carlo Lancellotti (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2014), 73–86.} As John Paul II continues: “The Church is called to give a soul to modern society, whether it be a soul for the complex and pluralistic West or the monolithic East. And this soul, the Church must infuse not from above and from outside, but passing on the inside, becoming close to the man of today. What is imposed, then, is the active and intense participation in the life of man”.\footnote{Compendium on the New Evangelization, no. 220.}

In this sense, the New Evangelization is never merely a matter of bringing lapsed Catholics back to the Church. Instead, it is a renewal of culture
itself whereby the Christian person is invited to discover in the Church’s missionary outreach a persuasive account of what constitutes authentic human flourishing. The New Evangelization is the revitalization of the Church for the sake of the renewal of humanity.

Under John Paul II, the liturgical facets of the New Evangelization were slowly drawn out. If one is to discover an authentic account of human flourishing in late modernity through Jesus Christ, it is by means of the liturgical life of the Church through which this encounter might occur:

the liturgical movement must give a renewed impetus to living deeply the mysteries of our faith, leading to an encounter with the risen Christ in the Church’s liturgy. It is in the celebration of the Word and of the Sacraments, but especially in the Eucharist, the source and summit of the Church’s life and of all evangelization, that there is effected our saving encounter with Christ, to whom we are mystically united…in order to from his Church.\textsuperscript{14}

In this sense, the liturgical movement itself should focus not on the creativity of rites but on making possible a lived encounter with the person of Jesus Christ as mediated through the signs of the liturgical economy. Liturgical prayer is a formation into Christian personhood.

This liturgical dimension of the New Evangelization is most explicitly drawn out in Pope Benedict XVI’s \textit{Sacramentum Caritatis}. In the third section, an account of the mystery of the Eucharist as one to be lived, he describes what may be called a liturgical humanism:

There is nothing authentically human—our thoughts and affections, our words and deeds—that does not find in the sacrament of the Eucharist the form it needs to be lived to the full. Here we can see the full human import of the radical newness brought by Christ in the Eucharist: the worship of God in our lives cannot be relegated to something private and individual, but tends by its nature to permeate every aspect of our existence. Worship pleasing to God thus becomes a new way of living our whole life, each particular moment of which is lifted up, since it is lived as part of a relationship with Christ and as an offering to God. The glory of God is the living man (cf. \textit{1 Cor. 10:31}). And the life of man is the vision of God.\textsuperscript{15}

The living out of an authentic personhood through liturgical prayer is precisely that very practice, which might renew society’s vision of what constitutes human flourishing. Liturgical prayer is the \textit{telos} of the New Evan-

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{14} Ibid., no. 509.
\item \textsuperscript{15} BENEDICT XVI, Apostolic Exhortation \textit{Sacramentum Caritatis}, no. 71.
\end{itemize}
gelization whereby Christians are renewed in fervor and missionary practice through the formation of a liturgical imagination that extends to every dimension of human life.

The worker lives out a vocation of Eucharistic love in the context of the tedium of labor itself, and thereby transforms the work-a-day world into a place where the history of salvation unfolds. The father or mother performs their oblation of Eucharistic love in the domestic Church, transfiguring even the most mundane aspect of human life into a place where the Word becomes flesh. The New Evangelization, in this sense, is not simply concerned about the liturgy as a practice to be carried out within parishes. Instead, it holds up the liturgical encounter as a privileged occasion for learning a way of life in which society might come to perceive the vocation of the human person as created for love of God and neighbor. The New Evangelization is intrinsically liturgical because the liturgy has as its goal “…love-transformed mankind, the divinization of creation and the surrender of all things to God: God all in all (cf. 1 Cor 15:28). That is the purpose of the world. That is the essence of sacrifice and worship.”

Pope Francis’ treatment of the New Evangelization conforms to this liturgical telos. Although Pope Francis rarely addresses the liturgy itself in his magisterium, he deals explicitly with the nature of liturgical and sacramental living in *Laudato Si’*. Early in this document, he describes the kind of malformation of human society that has taken place, leading to the ecological crisis of late modern life:

> the way that humanity has taken up technology and its development according to an undifferentiated and one-dimensional paradigm…exalts the concept of a subject who, using logical and rational procedures, progressively approaches and gains control over an external object. This subject makes every effort to establish the scientific and experimental method, which is itself already a technique of possession, mastery and transformation…we are the ones to lay our hands on things, attempting to extract everything possible from them while frequently ignoring or forgetting the reality in front of us…It can said that many

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16 This account of liturgy as giving a form to human life, especially work, is especially present in the work of Josef A. Jungmann, S.J. *Pastoral Liturgy* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2014), 334–44.


problems of today’s world stem from the tendency, at times unconscious, to make the method and aims of science and technology an epistemological paradigm which shapes the livings of individuals and the workings of society”.19

This technological paradigm destroys humanity’s relationship with the created order as well as with one’s neighbor. All of creation becomes something that is meant to be penetrated by the intellect for the sake of technological development. The human being comes to define his or her own personhood through the lens of power, a concern that Pope Francis raised in his Apostolic Exhortation on the New Evangelization, Evangelii Gaudium.20

The solution to the ecological crisis for Pope Francis is not discernable simply in technological development. Rather, the person needs the kind of formation that fosters a renewed way of dwelling in the created order. Pope Francis sees the Eucharist, as well as rest upon Sunday as integral to the Church’s missionary task of caring for the created order: “In the Eucharist, fullness is already achieved; it is the living centre of the universe, the overflowing core of love and of inexhaustible life…The Eucharist joins heaven and earth; it embraces and penetrates all creation.”21 The celebration of the Eucharist on Sunday in particular is an occasion for the Christian to take part in practices of leisure or rest, which “opens our eyes to the larger picture and gives us renewed sensitivity to the rights of others”.22 In this sense, the New Evangelization unfolds as a liturgical-sacrament task of creating a culture in which the Christian learns to become a liturgical person in the world. Formation into this personhood is not reducible to the matter of creating good liturgies but is instead an attuning of the human heart to one’s identity as a liturgical creature in the broader cosmos of creation.23

THE NEW EVANGELIZATION
AND DIMENSIONS OF A LITURGICAL CULTURE

Thus, if one is to foster this liturgical task of the New Evangelization, it is necessary to approach it not simply as an occasion for liturgical reform of

20 Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium, no. 52.
21 Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter Laudato Si’, no. 236.
22 Ibid., no. 237.
books but a broader cultural renewal oriented toward the formation of a liturgical person. This cultural renewal, intrinsic to the New Evangelization, is the fulfillment of Romano Guardini’s account of the relationship between liturgy and culture: “In the liturgy it is civilization’s task to give durable form and expression to the treasure of truths, aims, and supernatural activity, which God has delivered to man by Revelation, to distill its quintessence, and to relate this to life in all its multiplicity.”

Three dimensions of human culture that must be renewed for the flourishing of the liturgical person include the destruction of the technocratic paradigm, the fostering of memory in secularity, and the restoration of aesthetic forms of knowing. In this essay, I can only point toward these dimensions without developing them fully.

Concern relative to the technocratic paradigm is not limited to Pope Francis. Joseph Ratzinger in his Introduction to Christianity describes the effect that this technocratic paradigm has upon human existence in the world: “By thinking only of the practicable, of what can be made, [man] is in danger of forgetting to reflect on himself and on the meaning of his existence.” As the technocratic paradigm takes over human culture, questions of meaning are eliminated from life. To turn away from the ultimate questions that constantly impinge upon existence is to surrender the human person to a world without wonder and worship alike. In other words, if one never asks what the meaning of life is, what a good life consists of, what values are central to human flourishing, how can the Church expect this person to worship God?

In this sense, the liturgical renewal must be connected with a broader restoration of a Catholic education that does not succumb to this technocratic paradigm. Education is not reducible to learning a series of facts or scientific methodologies employable to create technology. It is related to the search for ultimate meaning, for encountering a hypothesis that makes sense of life as a whole. Such an education does not elevate organic chemistry above the reading of Dante. It does not enthron e what is practical, such as securing

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25 I am working on this development of a liturgical culture in a work entitled Liturgy and Society that will flesh out the kind of cultural renewal necessary for a renewed liturgical movement.
gainful employment or developing a successful business, above what is existentially important. A society that has failed to pass on the love of wisdom will discover that there is also an attenuated desire for God. The formation of a liturgical personhood necessitates a renewal of a liberal education, one that grounds itself in an intellectual charity that flows forth from the Eucharistic life of the Church herself.29

This renewed education toward meaning is closely linked to countering the amnesia of Western society. The perils of Western secularity are not fundamentally a separation of the Church from the state30 nor the decline of religion from human consciousness. Secularity, as Danièle Hervieu-Léger argues, is the loss of cultural memory. She writes:

he problem of transmission, whether in culture or religion, is not primarily a problem of failure to adjust to the educational methods used to transmit a body of knowledge. It is structurally linked to the collapse of the framework of collective memory which provided every individual with the possibility of a link between what comes before and his or her own actual experience.31

In a society without memory, the human person has no capacity to locate oneself in a broader narrative. In terms of religious experience, the human person’s only measurement for what constitutes authenticity now becomes the experience of the individual self apart from a broader cultural tradition.32 Subjectivity reigns supreme.

Liturgical experience is oriented toward locating the human person in a broader narrative, one that capacitates the person to perceive one’s life in the context of salvation history itself. The gift of the liturgical theology emerging out the Second Vatican Council was an emphasis upon a form of liturgical participation in which the one’s very identity was taken up into the Christian mystery. But this approach necessitates that one is actually aware of the basic narrative of the Christian story by which the human person can locate oneself in salvation. A certain naïve interpretation of lex orandi, lex credendi surmised that participation in the liturgy would make knowledge of

32 Ibid., 139.
this history available. But, there needs to be a sustained catechesis grounded in telling the basic narrative or kerygma of salvation within the life of the Church. Preaching and catechesis, in particular, are important to restoring the basic points of the Christian memory in society. Here, a liturgical catechesis for the New Evangelization cannot simply be concerned about an explication of the rites but rather a personal immersion into the mystery of salvation through the signs of the Scriptures and liturgy alike. That is, liturgical memory must become personal memory.

Lastly, this memory is not passed on simply through speech. It is available in the material culture that came into existence forming the Catholic imagination. In the years since the Second Vatican Council, this material culture has been dismissed through an overemphasis upon the rationality of human speech. Abstract art or sparse concrete in ecclesial spaces testifies to the sense that it is the speech of the prayers that is the most important dimension of the liturgical life of the Church. The abstraction or sparseness of art reveals a radical division between matter and spirit that is ultimately gnostic, a problem for the New Evangelization itself: “The chasm between matter and spirit is too great for most Western thinkers. It is a common error today to deny the existence of the spiritual; or to deny the possibility of objectively knowing that which is metaphysical, that which is not demonstrable scientifically”.

Yet if the Church is to foster a liturgical personhood in the New Evangelization, it will be through renewing an aesthetic culture not simply in liturgical spaces but in society as well. Aesthetic knowledge is not merely subjective. There is an objectivity to this knowing grounded in the perception of the form revealed in the perceiving act. The object exists, and thus the aesthetic encounter cannot simply be related to the presence of feelings. Beauty is a value that is important unto itself, transcending our particular experience of the beautiful object.

Aesthetic knowing in the liturgy is thus always a form of knowledge of the beautiful God himself. This beauty is neither kitsch nor the artistic appreciation of the aesthete, who simply enjoys the experience of the en-

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counter. Such beauty in the Christian life, as Hans Urs von Balthasar is attuned to the splendor of divine revelation in which, “the paradoxical events with which God ‘shocks’ sinful man are seen as an invitation and stimulus to overleap the bounds of a closed world of finite ideas and to share in God’s self-manifestation and openness, something to which the creaturely condition itself points, though unable to obtain it.”

This kind of theological aesthetics is at the center of the New Evangelization’s formation of a liturgical person. Churches will need to create art, including music, architecture, statuary, mosaics, and literature that depicts the paradoxical events revealed in the mystery of salvation as a way of allowing the human person to share in God’s self-manifestation. At the same time, this beauty cannot be reduced to the ecclesial arts. The New Evangelization will foster liturgical personhood every time the Christian perceives the drama of King Lear, the cosmic dimensions of Mozart’s Jupiter, or the sacramental vision of Flannery O’Connor. In each case, the perception of the form of the beautiful object invites the human person to give oneself over to the beautiful, serving as a way of drawing a person into the very logic of self-gift necessary in the liturgical encounter. One grows into liturgical personhood through the beautiful.

CONCLUSION

Liturgy has implications for the New Evangelization not simply in the need to attend to the liturgical ceremonies that make up the Church’s cursus of daily, weekly, and yearly prayer. Rather, it is only through liturgical prayer that the Church can understand precisely what the renewal of culture will consist of. Liturgical personhood, integral to the New Evangelization, is formed of course through regular practice in this prayer. But pastoral strategies are not reducible to the liturgy alone. Rather, a certain kind of culture must be created whereby liturgical renewal can unfold. This culture will include offering an alternative form of life available outside of the technocratic paradigm through a renewal of Catholic education. In addition, there must be an explicit and intentional remembering of the Christian narrative in catechesis and preaching. Lastly, the Church must involve

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herself in the creation of art that allows the human person to practice oneself in forms of self-gift that the liturgy require. Without this broader cultural renewal that is both ecclesial and secular, the New Evangelization is simply a strategy for getting lapsed Catholics to attend Church again rather than the gospelization of human existence itself.

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OSOBOWOŚĆ LITURGICZNA I NOWA EWANGELIZACJA

Streszczenie

Artykuł przedstawia podstawy tezy przemawiającej za podejściem do pastoralnych zadań nowej ewangelizacji opartej na liturgii. W pierwszej części ukazano, że niezaprzeczalny telos nowej ewangelizacji w nauczaniu Jan Pawła II, Benedykt XVI i obecnie papieża Franciszka wymaga formacji liturgicznej i sakramentalnej osobowości trudnej do osiągnięcia przez ponowoczesne społeczeństwo. Następnie przestawiono trzy wymiary owocowej kulturowej koniecznych do rozwoju liturgiczno-pastoralnego zadania nowej ewangelizacji. Te wymiary uwzględniają krytykę technokratycznego paradigmatu, podsyatanie pamięci w sekularnej epoce i odzyskanie estetyki jako autentycznej formy wiedzy.

Słowa kluczowe: liturgia; Nowa Ewangelizacja; osobowość liturgiczna.