

# EX|FONTE

Journal of Ecumenical Studies in Liturgy

VOLUME 4 | 2025

Going Beyond the Rubrics?

*Ars Celebrandi* and Its Relationship to *Ius Liturgicum*

JAMES BRADLEY



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## How to Cite

BRADLEY, James, Going Beyond the Rubrics? *Ars Celebrandi* and Its Relationship to *Ius Liturgicum*, in: *Ex Fonte – Journal of Ecumenical Studies in Liturgy* 4 (2025) 447–503.

DOI 10.25365/exf-2025-4-22

## Author

James Bradley is Assistant Professor in the School of Canon Law at The Catholic University of America, Washington, DC.

GND 1383596220

ORCID 0000-0002-4960-3641

## Abstract

The idea of an *ars celebrandi* has become increasingly prominent in discussions about liturgical practice in general, and liturgical formation in particular. Whilst previous studies have approached this notion from a variety of perspectives, none has fully treated the history of the term or its technical relationship to liturgical norms. This essay examines the origins and development of the concept of an *ars celebrandi* from the theological literature of the immediately postconciliar period to its more recent adoption in formal Church teaching. From this historical vantage point, the essay draws on principles of canonical legal interpretation to consider, more precisely, how an authentic *ars celebrandi* demands both a certain *going beyond the rubrics*, and at the same time guarantees their faithful observance. It concludes with the English translation of an important intervention on the *ars celebrandi* given by Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio, S.J. (later, Pope Francis) in 2005.

## Keywords

Ars Celebrandi | Liturgical Law | Rubrics | Canon Law | Participation, Active | Worship | Roman Catholic Church

## Going Beyond the Rubrics?

### *Ars Celebrandi and Its Relationship to Ius Liturgicum*

JAMES BRADLEY

The prominence attributed to the notion of an *ars celebrandi* in discussions about liturgical celebration over recent decades has only increased with the inclusion of the term in official Church documents, especially in papal teaching. As a result, the *ars celebrandi* has become an oft-cited and influential idea in the renewal of liturgical practice in general, and the formation of seminarians and clergy in particular.

Although the *ars celebrandi* has been discussed by various authors, from various perspectives, two key issues remain untreated. First, the origins of the term *ars celebrandi*, its development in theological thought, and its eventual articulation in magisterial documents, has been largely omitted from discussions to date.<sup>1</sup> Secondly, the specific and technical

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Werner HAHNE, *De arte celebrandi oder Von der Kunst, Gottesdienst zu feiern. Entwurf einer Fundamentalliturgik*, Freiburg 1990; *L'arte del celebrare. Atti della XXVII Settimana di Studio dell'Associazione Professori di Liturgia*. Brescia, 30 agosto–4 settembre 1998 (BEL.S 102), Rome 1999; Jozef LAMBERTS (ed.), *"Ars Celebrandi". The Art to Celebrate the Liturgy / L'art de célébrer la liturgie* (TEL 17), Leuven 2002; Francis ARINZE, *Il sinodo sull'Eucaristia e l'ars celebrandi*, in: *Not.* 41/469–470 (2005) 393–395; Nicola Bux, *L'arte di celebrare il servizio liturgico*, in: *L'Osservatore Romano* 182 (4–5 August 2008) 6; Michael KUNZLER, *Liturge sein. Entwurf einer Ars celebrandi*, Paderborn 2007; Malcolm RANJITH, *Towards an Ars Celebrandi in the Liturgy*, in: *Antiphon* 13 (2009) 7–17; Stefan RAU, *Ars celebrandi – ein*

relationship of the *ars celebrandi* to *ius liturgicum* – from both a liturgical and canonical perspective – has generally been overlooked. As a result, a critical question remains unanswered: how can the *ars celebrandi* involve both a *going beyond* the rubrics, and at the same time *guarantee* their faithful observance?

In this essay we will aim to contribute to the resolution of these lacunae. First, we will trace the development of the notion of an *ars celebrandi* in the theological literature. We will see how the idea was originally proposed as a license for spontaneity, in no small part the result of a general antipathy toward liturgical norms and their observance, and a reaction against a perceived rubricism in the celebration of the rites before the Second Vatican Council. Secondly, we will examine the term as it has been taken up by the ecclesiastical magisterium. Here we will find the *ars celebrandi* presented as a definitive means of implementing the postconciliar liturgical norms, thereby guaranteeing an authentic *participatio actuosa*. We will see that, far from being a call to liturgical improvisation, the *ars celebrandi* has more recently been posited by official Church teaching as a buttress for liturgical norms, a bulwark against creativity, and an indis-

Schlagwort macht Karriere, in: *HID* 62 (2008) 19–35; Andreas REDTENBACHER, Liturgie authentisch und bewegt. Beiträge zu Entwicklung und Verstehen des Gottesdienstes der Kirche, Würzburg 2024, 108–114; Owen VYNER, Friendship with the Fairest of the Children of Men. Relating the *Ars celebrandi* to *Actuosa participatio*, in: *Antiphon* 14 (2010) 261–272; Guido MARINI, *Ars Celebrandi*. The way of celebrating as an indication of the awareness of one's identity as Priest (2012);  Claire M. GILLIGAN, *Ars Celebrandi* as Asceticism, in: *Antiphon* 16 (2012) 114–129; Alcuin REID, From Rubrics to *Ars Celebrandi* – Liturgical Law in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, in: *Antiphon* 17 (2013) 139–167; Peter J. ELLIOTT, *Ars Celebrandi* in the Sacred Liturgy, in: Alcuin REID (ed.), *Sacred Liturgy. The Source and Summit of the Life and Mission of the Church*, San Francisco 2014, 69–85; Paul TURNER, *Ars Celebrandi*. Celebrating and Concelebrating Mass, Collegeville 2021; Nicola GIAMPIETRO, *Arte del Celebrare*, Teramo 2022; Marc CARON, The Principles for a New *Ars Celebrandi*, in: ID., *Ceremonial for Priests*, Manchester/NH 2023, 5–11; Félix M. AROCENA – Alberto PORTOLÉS, *El arte de celebrar la Eucaristía*. En el jardín de la Pascua, Madrid 2021, translated into Italian as *L'arte di celebrare l'Eucaristia*. Nel giardino della Pasqua (Biblioteca di Formazione Sacerdotale 10), Rome 2023; Daniel CARDÓ, *Ars Celebrandi*. Truth and Beauty as Path to Deification, in: *Antiphon* 29 (2025) 78–89.

pensable component for orienting the liturgical celebration toward an authentic *participatio actiosa*.<sup>2</sup>

Having traced the development of the term, we will proceed to some conclusions on the relationship of the *ars celebrandi* to liturgical law. Proceeding from these we will seek to delineate, from a theological and juridical perspective, a just means of approaching liturgical norms in light of both the idea of an *ars celebrandi* as articulated in ecclesiastical documents, and the general norms for the interpretation of law common to the entire canonical legal tradition.

## 1 *Ars Celebrandi in the Theological Literature*

Whilst the idea of an *ars celebrandi* as such is absent from the documents of the Second Vatican Council, certain ideas within the council's teaching – especially in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (SC) – have helped form the concept of an *ars celebrandi* in the decades since the council's close.<sup>3</sup> This is especially evident in the work of liturgical scholars in the immediately postconciliar period. We therefore begin with an illustrative overview of such contributions, drawing on ex-

<sup>2</sup> The essay engages with the notion of *ius liturgicum* in the broad sense of what is just in respect of acts of divine worship as a whole, and not in a more specific consideration of norms, legislative or otherwise. The aim is to reflect on the *ars celebrandi* and its place within the framework of what is just (*ius liturgicum*), rather than discuss specific instances where these intersect. It is hoped that this sense contributes to a growing awareness that the interpretation of liturgical norms demands a sound liturgical knowledge, skill, and expertise. On *ius liturgicum* see John M. HUELS, *Liturgy and Law. Liturgical Law in the System of Roman Catholic Canon Law* (Gratianus Series), Montréal 2006, 64.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (4 December 1963), in: AAS 56 (1964) 97–134. All English translations taken from Austin FLANNERY (ed.), *Vatican Council II, vol. 1: The Conciliar and Postconciliar Documents, New Revised Edition*, New York 1996, 1–36. On this, see Josef A. JUNGSMANN, *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, in: Herbert VORGRIMMER (ed.), *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, vol. 1, New York 1967, 1–87, especially 11–19; Frederick R. McMANUS, *The Constitution on the Liturgy. Commentary, Part I*, in: *Worship* 38 (1964) 314–374.

amples that highlight the development of the idea of an *ars celebrandi* from the 1970s to the early 2000s.

### 1.1 *Origins in Sacrosanctum Concilium*

Early formulations of the idea of an *ars celebrandi* in the theological literature look to SC 9–11. At first glance these paragraphs may be thought to present a contradiction. SC 9 states that “[t]he sacred liturgy does not exhaust the entire activity of the Church”, whilst SC 10 affirms that “the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; it is also the fount from which all her power flows”. Any perceived dissonance is swiftly resolved by what follows: “[F]rom the liturgy, therefore, and especially from the Eucharist, grace is poured forth upon us as from a fountain, and the sanctification of men in Christ and the glorification of God to which all other activities of the Church are directed, as toward their end, are achieved with maximum effectiveness” (SC 10).

This presentation of the fundamental place of the liturgy in the life of the Church – a both/and approach, in which the liturgy is certainly not all the Church does, yet all she does depends upon it – offers the basis for a more particular consideration of the liturgical celebration itself. Thus SC 11 insists that “in order that the liturgy may be able to produce its full effects it is necessary that the faithful come to it with proper dispositions, that their minds be attuned to their voices, and that they cooperate with heavenly grace lest they receive it in vain”.

The triptych of ideas presented in SC 9–11 points to the constitution’s promotion of the *participatio actiosa* “before all else” in SC 14. As SC 11 teaches, achieving this within the liturgical celebration demands that “pastors of souls must, therefore, realize that, when the liturgy is celebrated, something more is required than the laws governing valid and lawful celebration”. As Josef Andreas Jungmann notes in his commentary on this paragraph: “true worship presupposes, on the part of the faithful, corresponding preparation followed by collaboration. For the pastor of souls this means that in the revived liturgy it could no longer suffice merely to perform the rite correctly in accordance with the rubrics”<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> JUNGMAN, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 16.

On the council's own terms, then, observance of the liturgical norms is necessary, even essential, but it is not an end in itself. It is rather the means of achieving an authentic *participatio actuosa*. On the face of things, this seems a straightforward and uncontroversial statement. But by placing these two considerations side-by-side, the constitution invites a comparison: on the one hand, a need to be faithful to the rubrics; on the other hand, a need for true *participatio actuosa*. The exposition and resolution of this apparent dichotomy is the basis for the emergence of the idea of an *ars celebrandi* in the theological literature following the council.

## 1.2 Emil Joseph Lengeling

An early text in the theological literature on the *ars celebrandi* is a 1976 interview by Klemens Richter of the German liturgical scholar, Emil Joseph Lengeling.<sup>5</sup> Richter asks Lengeling whether “an individualistic and rubricist mentality continues” in the postconciliar period, and so if “the old books have been exchanged for new ones, but the spirit of the reform is not often grasped”<sup>6</sup>. To this provocative question, Lengeling replies: “When you speak of the spirit of reform, I want to emphasize something that the constitution on the liturgy does not speak of, and which the post-conciliar books hardly speak of. I mean the art of presiding [*Kunst des Vorstehens*]”<sup>7</sup>.

According to Lengeling, the *art of presiding* is concerned with a certain “communication” between the priest and the faithful within the liturgical act.<sup>8</sup> As is evident from his response, Lengeling acknowledges that this phrase is absent from the conciliar texts, and only implied in the revised liturgical books. Yet he identifies it as emerging definitively from

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Klemens RICHTER – Emil LENGELING, Hat sich die Liturgiereform gelohnt? Ein Gespräch zwischen Klemens Richter und Emil Lengeling, in: BiLi 49 (1976) 357–370.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 358.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. ibid. Lengeling's use of term “art of presiding” emphasizes the role of the ordained minister. This view is expanded by Pope Francis, who writes that “the *ars celebrandi* is required of the entire assembly that celebrates”. FRANCIS, Apostolic letter *Desiderio Desideravi* (29 June 2022), in: AAS 114 (2022) 799–825, no. 54 [hereafter DD].

“the spirit of reform”, and thus something to be taken seriously and applied to the celebration of the revised rites. To support this, Lengeling goes so far as to suggest that the *art of presiding*, so conceived, was impossible before the council. According to Lengeling, this is because the celebration was generally carried out with the priest facing the altar, and in Latin.<sup>9</sup> Lengeling concludes that sufficient communication between the priest and faithful was simply impossible in such a context.

Lengeling also explains that this *art of presiding* is something which “must grow naturally out of an interior attitude”<sup>10</sup>. That is to say, it must be located in an intrinsic approach to the liturgy in the first place, and only subsequently in externals. At the same time, Lengeling cites examples of what comprises his *art of presiding* only in outward elements; not only the orientation of the celebrant and the use of the vernacular, but in still more specific externals: the placement of the missal on the altar, the position of the priest’s chair, the design and location of the seats for servers, and the construction of an ambo for the presidential prayers, which he laments is “often embarrassingly reminiscent of an old-style school desk, instead of at the priest’s seat”<sup>11</sup>.

Although Lengeling does not use the term *ars celebrandi*, his notion of an *art of presiding*, together with an implicit recognition of the need to go beyond the mere performance of the rubrics (referring again to SC 11), is an important early indicator of what would become more commonly thought of as the *ars celebrandi*.

<sup>9</sup> Lengeling does not account for the fact that the postconciliar liturgical rites permit the priest to celebrate facing the altar, nor that the council explicitly called for a preservation of the Latin language. SC 36 §1: “Linguae latinae usus, salvo particulari iure, in Ritibus latinis servetur”. On this first point see, inter alia Albert GERHARDS, *Versus orientem – versus populum*. Zum gegenwärtigen Diskussionsstand einer alten Streitfrage, in: *ThRev* 98 (2002) 15–22; Uwe M. LANG, *Turning Towards the Lord. Orientation in Liturgical Prayer*, San Francisco 2005; Paul B. WODRAZKA, *Die Zelebration „versus orientem“ bzw. „versus absidem“*. Ein chronologischer Durchgang durch die postkonziliaren kirchlichen Dokumente (in Auszügen), in: *Theologisches* 37 (2007) 99–114.

<sup>10</sup> RICHTER – LENGELING, *Hat sich die Liturgiereform gelohnt?*, 359.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 359. 366.



### 1.3 Paul Brunner

Paul Brunner contributes to the early delineation of an *ars celebrandi* with his 1980 essay, “The Art of Celebration and the Creativity in Liturgy”.<sup>12</sup> Brunner sees a necessary correlation between the two concepts stated in his title: the “art of celebration” and “creativity”, going so far as to identify the notions of rubrical fidelity and participation as almost contradictory, and claiming the former (rubrical fidelity) necessarily limits the latter (participation).

Brunner expresses this view, building on the work of Joseph Gelineau, by formulating a dilemma between “rigorous repetition” on the one hand, and “free creation” on the other.<sup>13</sup> For Brunner, the perceived open-ended sense of SC 11, with its broad call to orient the fulfilment of liturgical norms towards the *participatio actuosa*, is resolved by creativity. Thus the explicit need to go beyond the simple observance of the rubrics stated in SC 11 brings with it an implicit call for intelligent creativity, something which in turn views liturgical laws as mere guidelines for the liturgical celebration rather than as binding norms.

With such a clear preference for creativity, it is tempting to view Brunner’s intervention in overly simplistic terms: legitimizing spontaneity as an antidote to a perceived, perhaps irredeemable, repetitiveness. Brunner’s own words even seem to support this view: “a celebrant is obviously not just a person who has memorized the rubrics [...] what he needs most is [c]reativity”<sup>14</sup>. At the same time, to give greater credence to his argument, Brunner points to the 1973 circular letter of the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, *Eucharistiae Participationem* (EP).<sup>15</sup> With little sense of the irony that comes from citing a curial document to argue

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Paul BRUNNER, The Art of Celebration and the Creativity in Liturgy, in: East Asian Pastoral Review 17 (1980) 86–95.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Joseph GELINEAU, A Technique to be Recovered. The Proper Use of a Pattern in Liturgical Prayers, in: Good Tidings 17 (1978) 122, cited in BRUNNER, Art of Celebration, 87.

<sup>14</sup> BRUNNER, Art of Celebration, 87.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. SACRED CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP, Circular letter *Eucharistiae Participationem* (17 April 1973), in: Not. 84 (1973) 193–201. See also the study of the then-Protestant pastor and member of the Taizé community, Frère Max THURIAN, Tradition et renouveau dans l’Esprit, Taizé 1977. The

against the need to observe directives, Brunner notes that *Eucharistiae Participationem* identifies no fewer than eight places in the revised *Ordo Missae* where (he claims) “creation and improvisation are not only tolerated but encouraged”<sup>16</sup>. In what follows, Brunner adopts the encouragement and legitimization he perceives in *Eucharistiae Participationem*, extending it well beyond the (in fact) rather limited scope for liturgical admonitions found in the document itself, preferring to see in it a general and implicit license to supplement, and even supplant, the rites and ceremonies of the approved liturgical books at whim.

Time does not permit a fuller appraisal of Brunner’s interpretation but it is sufficient to note that the broad encouragement of *Eucharistiae Participationem* is not to creativity in the free manner proposed by Brunner at all, but to fidelity to the revised liturgical books, and restraint in their implementation. Indeed, as the document – issued less than five years after the introduction of the postconciliar Roman Missal – asserts: “the wealth of text from which a choice may often be made” in the revised liturgical books is sufficient to facilitate the options’ essential purpose, namely “to bring about both unity and variety of liturgical prayer” (EP 3). In other words, *Eucharistiae Participationem* called for fidelity to the texts, acts, and norms of the revised books, as the direct means of achieving the council’s principal aim: the *participatio actuosa*.

In summary, Brunner’s contribution to the development of the idea of an *ars celebrandi* represents one of the more radical approaches found in the literature of this period. Brunner takes an ambiguity he perceives in SC 11 not as a call to go beyond concerns for mere validity and liceity so as to recover a more authentically liturgical spirit, but as something *opposed* to the observance of liturgical regulations, viewing norms as non-binding if, in the judgement of the celebrant, they do not sufficiently facilitate the *participatio actuosa* of the faithful.

relevant excerpt is published as ID., Créativité et Spontanéité dans la Liturgie, in: Not. 140 (1978) 169–175.

<sup>16</sup>

BRUNNER, Art of Celebration, 89.

### 1.4 Jakob Baumgartner

A more nuanced contribution to the development of the idea of an *ars celebrandi* was made in 1982 by Jakob Baumgartner, whose thoughts are noteworthy for the substantial theological basis given to the more practical elements of his thesis.<sup>17</sup> This grounding is first of all presented by the familiar notion of the priest engaged in an *exitus-reditus* action. For Baumgartner, “the Lord acts as the liturgist proper”, and, as everything in Christian worship is done by means of sensible signs, there is a demand for a certain objectivity in their representation, which in turn assists in “a revelation of the one who mysteriously governs and bears the liturgical celebration”<sup>18</sup>.

This identification of the celebrant with the person of Christ leads to the sacramental representation of Christ the Great High Priest within a given liturgical celebration, and at the same time gives credence to the minister’s governance of the community gathered for worship, and his prophetic proclamation of the works of salvation through the Church’s liturgical rite. Thus, for Baumgartner, these “fundamental facts of faith [...] can and must never be suppressed, if the Christian presidency is not to sink to the leadership of an arbitrary association”<sup>19</sup>.

Whilst offering a considered theological basis for his view of the *ars celebrandi*, Baumgartner also offers guidance on practical application. Here, preparation for a particular liturgical celebration, engagement of the assembly (with resonances of Lengeling’s “communication”), and even a certain animation of the rite, are all given expression. Yet these prescind not, as in Brunner, from the charisma or subjective (if informed) creativity of the priest, but from an awareness that the celebrant acts in the person of Christ and in the name of the faithful.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Jakob BAUMGARTNER, *De arte celebrandi. Anmerkungen zur priesterlichen Zelebration*, in: *HID* 36 (1982) 1–11.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. SC 33. See also the recent intervention of the Apostolic See in the note *Gestis Verbisque* (GV), especially its section on the *ars celebrandi* in nn. 23–27. Cf. DICASTERY FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, *Note Gestis Verbisque* (2 February 2024), in: *AAS* 116 (2024) 364–379. The contribution of this document to the notion of an *ars celebrandi* is discussed below (2.10) but the

What for Brunner is “creativity”, then, is for Baumgartner a certain “dynamism”; an idea that remains open to subjective definition, but which at the same time is more fully dependent on the priest acknowledging his humble service of the received liturgical rite.<sup>21</sup> Practically speaking, the approach of Baumgartner to the spontaneous admonitions called for by the liturgical books, as hinted at in *Eucharistiae Participationem*, differs in kind from Brunner. Thus where Brunner sees in these opportunities for improvisation, Baumgartner insists: “[t]hese indications, which are of a mystagogical (and not catechetical) nature, call for preparation, otherwise it is easy to fall into too much talk”<sup>22</sup>.

Similarly, in his encouragement of an authentic liturgical atmosphere for worship, Baumgartner does not promote an “art of creativity” as such, but an “art at the service of the mystery to be celebrated”<sup>23</sup>. Here, then, a certain prominence is attributed to the assigned value of objects, actions, words, and gestures, because (again) externals “build a bridge to the transcendent”<sup>24</sup>. To underscore this, Baumgartner acknowledges that, on the one hand “the new *ordines* [...] demand from priests a thoroughly creative commitment”, and on the other hand “[t]he real creativity of the priest takes place in the act of celebrating the liturgy itself, and not at the desk where one writes prayers. Just as music is not first a score, so liturgy is not first a text; it is what the conductor or the presider brings out of what has been written down that counts in both cases”<sup>25</sup>. In other words, *creativity* is to give way to a certain *dynamism*, that is itself reliant on an es-

dual concepts of *in persona Christi* and *in nomine Ecclesiae* as presented in *Gestis Verbisque* have also been discussed in a recent article: James BRADLEY, *The Note Gestis verbisque*. Canonical Observations and Commentary, in: *The Jurist* 80 (2024) 623–661.

<sup>21</sup> It is in this way that we can speak of the celebration of the liturgical rite. This term in English can denote or suggest a kind human festivity: the celebration of a birthday, the celebration of a victory, and so on. Its etymological root however suggests something more closely associated with frequent repetition of a given action (rite).

<sup>22</sup> BAUMGARTNER, *De arte celebrandi*, 5.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 10 f.

entially interior connection of the priest to the given and received liturgical rite.

### 1.5 *Silvano Maggiani*

Contributing to the 1998 study week of the Italian association of professors of liturgy on the topic of the *ars celebrandi*, Silvano Maggiani presented the postconciliar reform as offering a definitive “transition from an ‘*ars orandi*’ and from a ‘*ritus servandus*’ to an ‘*ars celebrandi*’”<sup>26</sup>. This is characterized by Maggiani as a move from a rigid rubricism and vague, non-liturgical (even anti-liturgical) approaches to worship, to what is proposed as an authentic *ars celebrandi*. For Maggiani, the *ars celebrandi* is something definitely “rigorous, respectful of the object of each celebration and its subject; respectful [...] of the *veritas* proper to the Christian liturgy, of its theanthropic reality”<sup>27</sup>. In this way, it is oriented toward an authentic *participatio actuosa*, to the end that the faithful might in turn participate more fully in the life of God himself.

In more practical terms, an authentic *ars celebrandi* is for Maggiani not so concerned with an *embellishment* of the rite as such, but rather derives its mandate from the conciliar insistence that the rites “should be distinguished by a noble simplicity” (SC 34).<sup>28</sup> As Maggiani puts it: “The

<sup>26</sup> Maggiani and others made these interventions during the 1998 study week of the Italian Associazione Professori di Liturgia, cf. Silvano MAGGIANI, *Presentazione*, in: *L’arte del celebrare. Atti della XXVII Settimana di studio dell’Associazione professori di liturgia*, Brescia, 30 agosto–4 settembre 1998 (BEL.S 102), Rome 1999, 5.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> The term “noble simplicity” may be traced to the work of the German art historian and archaeologist Johann Joachim Winkelmann, who uses the phrase “edle Einfalt und stille Größe”. Henry Fusseli renders this into English as “noble simplicity and sedate grandeur”. The term is used here to describe the characteristics of Greek sculpture. Johann J. WINKELMANN, *Reflections on the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks. With Instructions for the Connoisseur and An Essay on Grace in Works of Art* [trans. by Henry FUSSELI], London 1765, 30. The author expresses his gratitude to Stephen Morgan for bringing this to his attention. On the topic of noble simplicity see Gerard MOORE, *Organic Development and Noble Simplicity. German Neoclassicism and the Reform of the Liturgy I*, in: *ACR 101* (2024) 204–217

*nobile simplicitas*, which is hard to define, seems to indicate a middle ground between the hieratic *Ritus servandus* and the possibly over-familiar ‘*ars orandi*’<sup>29</sup>. In other words, for Maggiani the notion of noble simplicity in the revised liturgical rites relates not primarily to a “stripping back” of externals for the sake of it, but to the more obvious statement of the rite itself, unencumbered by elements that may either confuse or obstruct its integrity and inherent symbolic currency.

Here again we hear resonances of Baumgartner’s more positive and theologically reliable articulation of the “space” between rubricism and creativity: an authentic liturgical “creativity” is located in the relative “newness” – or, better (again, to use Baumgartner’s term) “dynamism” – of the particular celebration. This celebration is not therefore essentially new at all, but rather a particular instantiation of the legitimately authorized liturgical rite of the Church.

### 1.6 *Louis-Marie Chauvet*

Louis-Marie Chauvet contributed to the developing notion of the *ars celebrandi* during a conference dedicated to the subject at Leuven in 2001. In his introduction to the conference proceedings, Jozef Lamberts sets out the context for Chauvet’s intervention, stating that the *ars celebrandi* presumes “an elementary expertise” to be properly fulfilled.<sup>30</sup> For Lamberts, this is to be distinguished from “the meticulous performing of the liturgical rituals, sometimes ridiculed as rubricism”, but is equally to avoid “amateurism within the liturgy that indeed allows greater freedom and creativ-

(Part 1); 278–292 (Part 2); ID., *Expanding the Future Lex. The Roles of Tradition, Culture and Eschatology in Critiquing Liturgy’s Founding Principles*, in: Clare V. JOHNSON et al. (eds.), *Sacrosanctum Concilium. Exploring Liturgical Futures*, Cham 2025, 23–39; Alcuin REID, *Noble Simplicity Revisited*, in: D. Vincent TWOMEY – Janet E. RUTHERFORD (eds.), *Benedict XVI and Beauty in Sacred Art and Architecture. Proceedings of the Second Fota International Liturgical Conference, 2009 (Fota Liturgy Series)*, Dublin 2011, 94–111.

<sup>29</sup> MAGGIANI, *Presentazione*, 5.

<sup>30</sup> Jozef LAMBERTS, “*Ars Celebrandi*” or the Art to Celebrate the Liturgy, in: ID. (ed.), “*Ars celebrandi*”. *The Art to Celebrate the Liturgy / L’art de célébrer la liturgie* (TEL 17), Leuven 2002, 7–14, here: 9.

ity”<sup>31</sup>. Accordingly, the question of an authentic *ars celebrandi* pertains not only to the *participatio actuosa*, but also to the prior, sufficient liturgical formation of the clergy; the notion of an art form dependent on technical proficiency, knowledge, and skill.

This relationship between the *ars celebrandi* and *participatio actuosa* is also the concern of Gino Mattheeuws who, in the same forum, identifies the “liturgical congregation” as the subject of the *ars celebrandi*.<sup>32</sup> This is the view taken up by Chauvet in his own essay, whilst insisting that liturgical presidency is proper to the celebrant on the basis of his ordination rather than personal attributes.<sup>33</sup> There is surely no issue with this statement as such, yet in developing this idea Chauvet privileges the relationship of the priest to the *specific* worshipping community over that of the Church as such. In other words, the minister is ordained and derives his proper role as celebrant from his consecration to holy orders, but his principal relationship with the people of God is immediate and subjective.

This approach again sees the unfolding notion of an *ars celebrandi* in the theological literature somewhat skewed toward the accommodation of specific worshippers, in a specific celebration, at a specific time and place, over the more essential premise of fidelity to the Church’s liturgical rites and to the communal dimension of Christian worship, arising not from immediate relational encounters but from life in the universal

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Gino MATTHEEUWS, The “Ars celebrandi” of the Liturgical Congregation, in: Jozef LAMBERTS (ed.), “Ars celebrandi”. The Art to Celebrate the Liturgy / L’art de célébrer la liturgie (TEL 17), Leuven 2002, 35–47. Mattheeuws rightly states that the “‘Ars celebrandi’ cannot be narrowed down to the ‘ars praesidendi’” (ibid., 36). What is lacking, however, is a further insistence on his part that the *ars celebrandi* cannot be reduced to a given celebration, by a given community, in a given time and place. Rather, the *ars celebrandi* is concerned with the participation of the faithful as such; a true gathering of the Church, celebrated in the name of the Church, by duly delegated ministers of the Church, according to the rites of the Church, and so it is not limited to, but rather sits across, time and place.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Louis-Marie CHAUVET, La présidence liturgique dans la modernité, in: Jozef LAMBERTS (ed.), “Ars celebrandi”. The Art to Celebrate the Liturgy / L’art de célébrer la liturgie (TEL 17), Leuven 2002, 49–64, here: 57.

Church, and so from the ecclesial communion that flows from baptism and incorporation into the Church of Christ.

### 1.7 Summary

This representative overview of the theological literature on the *ars celebrandi* and its development as an idea in the immediately postconciliar period demonstrates the gradual but insistent refinement of the concept in theological discourse. Each of these approaches is rooted, to some greater or lesser degree, in SC 11's affirmation that something more than the mere observance of rubrics is required for an authentic liturgical celebration.

The various contributions offer nuanced distinctions, ranging from free creativity and spontaneity to an understanding of the *ars celebrandi* that points not so much away from the rubrics, but beyond their mere fulfilment as an end in itself to their inherent purpose: the facilitation of an authentic *participatio actiosa*. This invites an acknowledgment of the fundamentally cultic nature of the Church's worship, which is necessarily regulated by external acts, and which recognizes that regulated and defined sensible signs both signify and effect the sanctifying office of Christ.

## 2 *Ars Celebrandi in the Ecclesiastical Magisterium*

As noted, whilst the notion of an *ars celebrandi* does not appear in the conciliar texts, the council nevertheless gave impetus to proposals which sought to reconcile fidelity to the rubrics with the central notion of the liturgical reform, the *participatio actiosa*. These ideas were critical to the early formulations of the concept of an *ars celebrandi* in the theological literature we have reviewed, with the approaches characterized by the varying weight they give to the liturgical norms in this equation. Although theologians openly considered these questions in the immediately postconciliar period, it was not until the turn of the millennium that the *ars celebrandi* entered the vocabulary of the formal ecclesiastical magisterium. In this section we will therefore review the development of the *ars celebrandi* from its speculative and conceptual origins to its inclusion in official Church teaching.



## 2.1 Plenary Meeting (2001)

The Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments took up the idea of the *ars celebrandi* at its 1996 Plenary Meeting, proposing to accompany the publication of the third typical edition of the Roman Missal with a document on this topic, but the more immediate work of preparing the instruction *Liturgicam Authenticam* interrupted this effort.<sup>34</sup> The topic was revisited at the dicastery's 2001 Plenary Meeting, at which it

<sup>34</sup> Cf. CDWDS, Relazione dell'Ecc.mo Mons. Francesco Pio Tamburrino, Arcivescovo Segretario, in: Not. 37/423 (2001) 406–461, here: 420: "Documento sulla 'ars celebrandi'. Quanto al progetto di fare accompagnare la pubblicazione della nuova edizione del *Missale Romanum* con un documento, forse una Istruzione, di cui si è parlato favorevolmente nella Plenaria del 1996, il Dicastero si è sforzato di portare avanti il discorso e ha commissionato vari lavori e consultazioni in merito, con lo scopo di perfezionare il materiale già raccolto. Per il sopraggiungere soprattutto del progetto di una Istruzione sulle traduzioni liturgiche non è stato poi possibile portare a termine i lavori. Il Dicastero considera ancora utile l'idea di un documento sulla 'ars celebrandi', il quale però avrebbe bisogno di un rilancio con collaboratori nuovi e di una certa disponibilità di tempo per una stesura efficace." The reports of the 1996 Plenary Meeting contain no specific reference to a document specifically on the *ars celebrandi*, and it is not clear if what became the instruction *Redemptionis Sacramentum* was in fact the document discussed in 1996 and 2001. Certainly at the 1996 Plenary Meeting there was a stated concern about liturgical abuses, drawn from the comments of ad limina visits, to which the dicastery responded: "There is no shortage of proposals for new documents, but we believe that the first responsibility lies with the bishops and their oversight". Ibid., 458: "Tra il notevole scambio di lettere che arrivano in Congregazione, come ho riferito, ci sono anche denunce e segnalazioni di abusi. Gli abusi che effettivamente si verificano sono frutto di intemperanze, spesso di formazione superficiale, di allontanamento da una normale vita ecclesiale, altri di ideologie arbitrarie, altri ancora di protagonismo. La giustificazione per tali abusi, spesso formulata nel ritenervi iniziative di frontiera, o considerare i protagonisti come pionieri di una nuova riforma liturgica, si rivela tristemente infondata. Non mancano le proposte per nuovi documenti, ma riteniamo che la prima responsabilità è propria dei Vescovi e della loro sorveglianza." Cf. CDWDS, Cronaca dei lavori della "Plenaria" 1996, in: Not. 37 (1996) 477–507, here: 486 f; EAD., Instruction *Liturgiam Authenticam* (28 March 2001), in: AAS 93 (2001) 685–726.

was “amongst the major issues” presented for discussion. An important intervention on the topic was given by Cardinal George Pell of Sydney, which James Moroney summarizes thus:

[The] *ars celebrandi* is not only a matter of preparation of mind, body, and heart, but also an appreciation of the gestures, the attitude of the body, and the dignity of a humble leadership that is evident to the people in a man who is loving and able to pray the liturgy, able not only to cover himself in sacred vestments, but above all, to be clothed with the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>35</sup>

In the ideas attributed to Pell we can see a deepening of the connection between the *ars celebrandi* and *participatio actuosa*, taking up the need for the priest to “set the tone” of the specific liturgical celebration by means of his personal disposition, interiorly and exteriorly. This approach, focussing in the first place on the actions of the priest within a given liturgical act, requires not only “humble leadership” on the part of the celebrant, but also implies prior formation in, and fidelity to, the liturgical norms.

## 2.2 *Encyclical Letter Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (2003)

Something of this sensibility is found in the 2003 encyclical letter of John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (EdE).<sup>36</sup> For instance, EdE 52 sets out the responsibility of priests to observe liturgical norms, relating the individual priest’s Eucharistic identity *in persona Christi* to the universal nature of the Church.

Touching on the dichotomy expressed in the theological literature reviewed above, the same paragraph laments that, after the introduction of the revised liturgical books, “a misguided sense of creativity and adaptation” led to a proliferation of liturgical abuses, and that “unauthorized

<sup>35</sup> James P. MORONEY, In Pursuit of an *Ars Celebrandi*. Presuppositions and Possibilities, in: Kenneth D. WHITEHEAD (ed.), *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and the Reform of the Liturgy. Proceedings from the 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars. Kansas City, Missouri. September 22–24, 2006, Chicago 2009, 27–35, here: 27.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical letter *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (17 April 2003), in: AAS 95 (2003) 433–447. On this, see also James J. CONN, Juridical Themes in Eucharistic Documents of the Pontificate of John Paul II, in: *Periodica* 94 (2005) 353–416.

innovations” attributed to a “reaction against ‘formalism’” and a parallel disregard for approved liturgical forms (EdE 52). To counter this approach, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* indicates that the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments would prepare a document to resolve such incongruities, and to address specific liturgical abuses (EdE 52). The result was the 2004 instruction *Redemptionis Sacramentum* (RS).<sup>37</sup>

### 2.3 *Instruction Redemptionis Sacramentum* (2004)

As with *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, the *ars celebrandi* as such is not named in *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, but the instruction does emphasize the need to observe sacramental and liturgical norms in the same general terms as the earlier document. In doing so it hints at the more developed idea of the *ars celebrandi* as it will come to be defined by later texts, going beyond the mere observance of the rubrics to achieve unity between the exterior and interior dimensions of the liturgical act, and thereby authentically fulfilling the mandate of SC 11. In fact, the instruction insists that “[the] observance of the norms published by the authority of the Church requires conformity of thought and of word, of external action and of the application of the heart” (RS 5). This unity of interior intention and external action means that “[a] merely external observation of norms would obviously be contrary to the nature of the Sacred Liturgy” (RS 5).

At the same time, fidelity to the norms is certainly not something to be jettisoned. As the instruction also makes clear: “liturgical words and rites [...] are a faithful expression, matured over the centuries, of the under-

<sup>37</sup> Cf. CDWDS, Instruction *Redemptionis Sacramentum* (25 March 2004), in: AAS 96 (2004) 549–601. On this see, *inter alia*, John M. HUELS, Canonical Observations on *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, in: *Worship* 78 (2004) 404–420; Robert J. RYAN, The 2004 Instruction *Redemptionis Sacramentum* on Abuses in the Celebration of the Eucharist. Background, Analysis, Reception and Interpretation [unpubl. dissertation St Paul University, Ottawa], 2009; Heribert SCHMITZ, Die Liturgie-Instruktion *Redemptionis sacramentum* von 2004. Kirchenrechtliche Anmerkungen zum Erlaß der Kongregation für den Gottesdienst und die Sakramentenordnung vom 25. März 2004 (AIC 36). Frankfurt a. M. et al. 2005.

standing of Christ, and they teach us to think as he himself does; by conforming our minds to these words, we raise our hearts to the Lord” (RS 5). Through the use of disciplinary terms, *Redemptionis Sacramentum* also relates obedience of liturgical norms to the *participatio actuosa*. This is couched not in the more liturgically apt terms of *ars celebrandi* and *participatio actuosa*, but as the juridical obligation of the minister to celebrate the rites as authorized by the Church, and the right of the faithful to worship according to their prescripts. Echoing canon 214, the instruction states: “it is the right of all of Christ’s faithful that the Liturgy, and in particular the celebration of Holy Mass, should truly be as the Church wishes, according to her stipulations as prescribed in the liturgical books and in the other laws and norms” (RS 12).<sup>38</sup>

## 2.4 Plenary Meeting (2005)

The Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments continued the discussion of the *ars celebrandi* at its 2005 Plenary Meeting, following the publication of *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, and with a renewed intention of producing a document on the subject.<sup>39</sup> In a letter to the gathering, John Paul II observed that the *ars celebrandi* is a topic “of great significance” which “expresses precisely the capacity of the ordained ministers and the entire assembly, gathered together for the cele-

<sup>38</sup> Cf. c. 214 CIC/1983: “Ius est christifidelibus, ut cultum Deo persolvant iuxta praescripta proprii ritus a legitimis Ecclesiae Pastoribus approbati, utque propriam vitae spiritualis formam sequantur, doctrinae quidem Ecclesiae consentaneam”. In English translation this reads: “The Christian faithful have the right to worship God according to the prescripts of their own rite approved by the legitimate pastors of the Church and to follow their own form of spiritual life so long as it is consonant with the doctrine of the Church”. All English translations taken from Code of Canon Law. Latin-English Edition. New English Translation, Washington, DC 2023.

<sup>39</sup> This meeting also took place following the publication of the *Lineamenta* for the XI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on “The Eucharist: Source and Summit of the Life and Mission of the Church”. *Vide infra*, 2.5.1.

bration, to bring about and to live the meaning of each liturgical act"<sup>40</sup>. In this vein, he explained that this "is an art that is at one with the Christian commitment to contemplation and coherence. Through rites and prayers, one must allow oneself to be reached and permeated intimately by the Mystery"<sup>41</sup>.

In this context, a substantial and – for reasons that would become very apparent – significant contribution was made by the meeting's *ponens*; a cardinal-member of the dicastery tasked with presiding over its deliberations: Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio of Buenos Aires.<sup>42</sup> Cardinal Bergoglio's *ponenza* address offers a synthesis of the various notions of the *ars celebrandi* reviewed above in the theological literature, as well as initial attempts to reconcile the idea of fidelity to the liturgical norms and

<sup>40</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Letter S.R.E. Card. Francisco Arinze, occasione Coetus plenarii Congregationis pro Cultu divino et Disciplina Sacramentorum missus (3 March 2005), in: AAS 97 (2005) 322–324, here: 323.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Bergoglio's *ponenza* address is understood to have been distributed to the clergy of the Diocese of Rome early in the pontificate of Pope Francis. It has since been published in its original Italian in GIAMPIETRO, *Arte del celebrare*, 65–70. An English translation of the address by the present author is appended to this article in the sincere hope that this will assist with the dissemination of this important contribution amongst English-speakers. Cf. CDWDS, *L'Ars Celebrandi*. Ponenza di S.E.R. il Signor Cardinale Jorge Mario Bergoglio, S.I., 1 March 2005 [unpublished]. For a synopsis of Bergoglio's text from the perspective of the dicastery, see CDWDS, *Relazione sui lavori di Mons. Mario Marini Sottosegretario*, in: *Not.* 41 (2005) 196–203, here: 197–199. See also Michael B. WURTZ, *Liturgical Formation for the Priest Candidate in the Modern Era. Theologia Prima et Secunda as an Integrated Approach* [unpubl. dissertation Pontifical Liturgical Institute, Rome], 2023, here: 146–148. The relevance of the *ponenza* text in relation to the teaching of Pope Francis may be viewed analogously with the liturgical writings of several other prominent churchmen who were later elected to the papacy, amongst them Pope Pius X (see, for instance, his teaching on sacred music as Bishop of Mantua, and then in *Tra le Sollecitudini*) and Benedict XVI (for example, in his important work, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*).

the *participatio actuosa* in official teaching.<sup>43</sup> Given the future importance of this text's author, we will now offer some comments on its content.

#### 2.4.1 Ponenza Address of Cardinal Bergoglio

In the introduction to his address,<sup>44</sup> Bergoglio notes the commonly-held view that many “feel the need to give greater attention to the so-called contemplative aspect of the liturgical celebration”. This longing for the contemplative, he suggests, is usually met by one of two responses: “the repristination of a celebration carried out according to the ideal model of past centuries”, or the “inculturation of the liturgy in different social contexts”. Bergoglio provides two examples to illustrate this point: first, that of sacred architecture and the introduction of the fine arts for their own sake; secondly, an imagined desire that popular music “could be capable of attracting the attention of young people”. Both approaches, he suggests, are insufficient by themselves.

From here Bergoglio discusses the doctrine of *ex opere operato*. As he makes clear, in the face of these contrasting approaches to liturgical renewal, the fundamental guarantee of the efficacy and validity of the liturgical-sacramental celebration provided by *ex opere operato* becomes an attractive “safe space” (as it were) for conversations on the liturgy to find common ground. The principle of *ex opere operato*, he affirms, holds good; it is even “truly important” when it comes to celebrations in places of

<sup>43</sup> Self-evidently this synthesis can be seen in a yet more distilled form in the section on the *ars celebrandi* in Pope Francis's apostolic letter *Desiderio Desideravi*, discussed below. Nevertheless, the 2005 intervention rewards our time here, not least because this text has not been made widely available nor in English. To this end we will quote the text of the document at some length.

<sup>44</sup> Bergoglio explicitly limits his consideration of the *ars celebrandi* to “the celebration of the Eucharist, and the public one, above all in the parish”. However, this is done in favour of “simplicity and linearity of expression” in his proposal for an ecclesiastical document on the *ars celebrandi*, rather than with the intention of limiting the scope of the notion. What is true of the *ars celebrandi* in respect of the Eucharistic celebration is true, *mutatis mutandis*, to the Church's liturgy as a whole, including the Liturgy of the Hours, the other sacraments, and sacramentals.

poverty or persecution. Yet, in ordinary circumstances “the effectiveness of *ex opere operato* is not enough to ensure a true involvement of the people”. In this statement we find a recapitulation of what we identified in earlier discussions of the relationship of liturgical norms to the *participatio actuosa*.<sup>45</sup> This is given voice in the theological writings of the immediately postconciliar period, where (as we saw) the fundamental requirement for validity is accepted, but other elements – related to “mere liceity” (as it might be characterized) – are open to subjective consideration, even alteration, to facilitate the *participatio actuosa*.<sup>46</sup>

To counter this, and with it the tendency (on the one hand) to be content with an *ex opere operato* approach to the liturgy and (on the other hand) an “excessivist” aesthetic consideration – whether maximalist or minimalist – Bergoglio proposes a recovery of the *stupor* (*stupore*) of beauty by means of an authentic *ars celebrandi*.<sup>47</sup> For Bergoglio, this first of all “concerns the priest” because “if one manages to define the attitude of the priest, this reflection will also help the people. It will help them to see in him what they have to see, and to deepen their own proper complementary role; but above all it will favour their prayer”. To this end, the priest must “be aware of the mandate received in priestly ordination: *agnosce quod agis, imitate quod tractas*”. In this way he may “grasp the sense of the mystery, that he may communicate it to the Christian community, and conform to the greatness of the mystery”<sup>48</sup>. For Bergoglio, this fundamentally

<sup>45</sup> On this, see Louis BOUYER, *The Liturgy Revived. A Doctrinal Commentary of the Conciliar Constitution on the Liturgy*, Notre Dame/IN 1964, 89–91.

<sup>46</sup> Here we recall the principle of Chesterton’s fence and the unintended consequences that may arise from a distortion of the Church’s received forms of worship, cf. Gilbert K. CHESTERTON, *The Thing*, London 1946, 29.

<sup>47</sup> Bergoglio in turn attributes this idea to EdE 6, which speaks of “eucharisticum ‘stuporem’”. Cf. EdE 5. This idea is also presented in the letter sent to the Christian faithful at the conclusion of the XI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, cf. SYNOD OF BISHOPS, XI ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY, *Message Pace a noi!* (22 October 2005), in: *EnchVat* 23 (2005–2006) 727–739, no. 10: “Desideriamo che lo ‘stupore eucaristico’ [...] provochi i fedeli a una vita di fede sempre più forte”.

<sup>48</sup> It is interesting to note that, in order to achieve this goal, Bergoglio’s address seems to use similar language to that related by Moroney of the intervention by Pell at the 2001 Plenary Meeting: “I am convinced that one

priestly mentality cannot be reduced to simple aestheticism, individual “devotionalism”, or clericalism. It is rather rooted in the fundamental identity of the ordained minister, configured to the priestly heart of Jesus Christ. As he makes clear: “what is at stake is a true pastoral ministry, deserving before God, but – in a way that is as true as it is difficult to define – perceptible by those who belong to our Christian communities”.

Secondly, in order to effect an authentic *ars celebrandi*, Bergoglio insists that the priest must adopt what he calls an *ars dicendi*, a concept that seems to originate in this intervention. The *ars dicendi* is for Bergoglio a twofold task. First of all, it is located in the actual pronouncement of the prescribed texts given in the liturgical rite. In this way the priest is simply to conform to the rites; to adhere to the texts as given in the liturgical books: “[the priest] does not simply speak with his private voice, rather his voice is properly the vehicle of the prayer of the Church and of the faithful gathered on that occasion. What he says is communication and testimony”. In this regard, and crucially given the earlier proposals for creativity seen above, Bergoglio insists (in the *ponenza* address) that “the variety of formularies that can be chosen, and which in fact already exist in the liturgical books of today [...] are more than sufficient”<sup>49</sup>. As he will go on to say as Pope Francis in *Desiderio Desideravi*, the *ars celebrandi* in this regard comprises neither “rigid austerity” nor “exasperating creativity” (DD 54). Rather (again, in the *ponenza* text) the rite itself suffices: “the priest must choose with care from the texts available to him and then, for the rest, know how to make the prayer of the Church live, bringing the people with him. If he knows how to do this, then the result is that all of miserable texts of ‘creativity’ are completely superfluous”.

Further, the *ars dicendi* is expressed not just through attentiveness to the prescribed liturgical texts, but in the appropriate use of language – and the use of appropriate language – in admonitions and preaching. To

could speak not only of preparation, but also of the care of gestures, of the attitude of the body, of dignity, of that humble but incisive leadership which consists in allowing the people to intuit that they love a man who knows how to pray the liturgy, who knows how to put on not only traditional vestments, but above all the person of the Lord Jesus Christ”.

<sup>49</sup> This is perhaps why Pope Francis often availed himself of the ordination homily given in the Roman Pontifical.



this end the priest is to distinguish between “‘vulgar language’ (in the sense of *vulgus*) and the ‘popular language’, in the sense of the language of the street”<sup>50</sup>. In this way the priest conforms not only to the received text of the rite, but more generally to its inherently sacred character; being attentive to the need to *suitably* and *from within the rite* assist the gathered faithful in their participation.

Bergoglio’s intervention is not just significant insofar as it represents something of a source for the ideas later presented in *Desiderio Desideravi*, but also because it seeks to draw together – as the role of a *ponens* in fact demands – the ideas attributed to the *ars celebrandi* in various writings to this point. In doing so it represents a significant attempt to establish a truly ecclesial definition of the *ars celebrandi*, in which the correlation between adherence to the liturgical norms and the *participatio actuosa* is not strained, but mutually enhancing and enriching.

## 2.5 *Synod of Bishops (2004–2005)*

A major discussion of the *ars celebrandi* came during the XI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on *The Eucharist: Source and Summit of the Life and Mission of the Church*. The synod assembly was preceded by the *Lineamenta* and *Instrumentum Laboris*, and followed by the apostolic exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* (SacCar).<sup>51</sup> These documents spanned the pontificates of John Paul II and Benedict XVI, and tracing the development of the *ars celebrandi* in the preparations for and deliberations of the synod assembly sheds light on the formulations in the final text of Benedict XVI’s apostolic exhortation.

<sup>50</sup> This is referred to later by Pope Francis as the *ars praedicandi*. FRANCIS, Apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), in: AAS 105/12 (2013) 1019–1137, nos. 135–144. An extended consideration of the *ars praedicandi* is found in: CDWDS, Homiletic Directory, Vatican City 2015.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. BENEDICT XVI, Post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* (22 February 2007), in: AAS 99 (2007) 105–180 [hereafter SacCar].

### 2.5.1 *Lineamenta*

The *Lineamenta* issued on 25 February 2004 presented the theme of the synod assembly and set questions for the members of the world's episcopal conferences, Eastern Catholic Churches *sui iuris*, dicasteries of the Roman Curia, and Union of Superiors General. The *Lineamenta* did not mention the *ars celebrandi* but nevertheless expressed concern for “an active, intelligible participation by the People of God in the Eucharistic mystery, reaching its fullness in the reception of Holy Communion”<sup>52</sup>.

The *Lineamenta* also touched on the questions raised by the idea of the *ars celebrandi* by linking mystagogy with fidelity to the rites, and specifically to external elements of the liturgical celebration such as images, symbols, prayers, and ritual acts.<sup>53</sup> Amongst its questions, the *Lineamenta* asked about the observance of liturgical norms at Mass:

In an attempt to be personal and *avant-garde*, do priests manifest any attitudes in their celebration of Mass which are explicitly or implicitly contrary to the liturgical norms established by the Catholic Church (cf. *The General Instruction on the Roman Missal*, Chapter IV; *Instruction for Applying the Liturgical Prescriptions of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*)? In your estimation, what are the underlying reasons for such behaviour? What elements or actions during the celebration of Holy Mass, and also in Eucharistic worship outside of Mass, according to their respective norms and dispositions, should receive attention so as to highlight the profound sense of this great Mystery of the faith hidden in the gift of the Eucharist?<sup>54</sup>

### 2.5.2 *Instrumentum Laboris*

The *Instrumentum Laboris* issued on 7 July 2005 spoke specifically of the *ars celebrandi* as a means of leading the faithful to “true worship, rever-

<sup>52</sup> SYNOD OF BISHOPS, XI ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY, *Lineamenta* (25 February 2004), no. 1. The documents relating to this synod assembly are found on the website of the Synod of Bishops [\[link\]](#), and unless otherwise noted it is these texts and their translations that are used in this article. See also Roberto NARDIN (ed.), *L'Eucaristia. Fonte e culmine della vita e missione Chiesa*, Rome 2008.

<sup>53</sup> SYNOD OF BISHOPS, XI ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY, *Lineamenta*, no. 47.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, q. 5.

ence and adoration”<sup>55</sup>. This again brought to the fore the link between the *ars celebrandi* and *participatio actuosa*, relating the former to outward gestures in general, and the gestures of the priest in particular, as discussed by Pell and Bergoglio:

The priest’s outstretched hands are a lowly, humble appeal; “we *humbly pray*”, is said in all the Eucharistic Prayers. For the priest, humility in word and disposition is consonant with Christ who is meek and humble of heart. He ought to increase and we decrease. If the celebration of the Eucharist is truly to express the *Catholic* faith, people urge that the priest-celebrant of the Mass possess *humility*. Only in this way will the celebration be a mystagogy and contribute to evangelization. The liturgical prayers do not speak of “I” but “we.” In those cases where the first person singular is used in the administration of the sacraments, the minister speaks in the Person of Christ, and not in his own name.<sup>56</sup>

This notion of the intimate union between the priest and Christ emphasizes (after the manner of EdE 52) that in the eucharistic celebration the priest stands as a true mediator between heaven and earth. Thus authentic humility in the priest’s *outward* gestures demonstrates his *inner* conformity to this sacred role – and so to his liturgical and sacramental personification of Jesus Christ – and thus offers the gathered faithful a more immediate awareness of the presence of God within the given act. Here again we can hear echoes of Baumgartner. So, in this way, the priest facilitates a more effective and proximate means of the faithful’s *participatio actuosa*.

### 2.5.3 *Relatio ante Disceptionem*

The synod assembly’s *Disceptatio in Aula* began with the *Relatio ante Disceptionem* of the Relator General, Cardinal Angelo Scola of Venice, on 5 October 2005. Scola described the relationship between the *ars celebrandi* and *participatio actuosa* as “necessary”, and highlighted the variety of experiences of the faithful “in the quality of participation in the Eucharist,

<sup>55</sup> SYNOD OF BISHOPS, XI ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY, *Instrumentum Laboris* (7 July 2005), no. 52. [↗](#)

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 51.

which, in turn, is connected to the authenticity of the *ars celebrandi*".<sup>57</sup> For Scola, the full, conscious, and active participation of the faithful in the liturgical celebration is dependent on "the adequate celebration of the mysteries"<sup>58</sup>. To this end there is a need "to overcome any dualism between the *ars celebrandi* and the *actuosa participatio*". Thus, "when the *arte celebrandi* is objectively considered, participation can truly become *plena, conscia ed actuosa*".

In this way, whilst acknowledging the breadth of legitimate cultural differences in the Church across time and place, Scola reasserts the primacy of the criterion of unity between the *ars celebrandi* and *participatio actuosa* which, importantly, ensures that the liturgical celebration is not reduced to the "mere repetition of formulas and gestures", but instead demands that every member of the Christian faithful realizes his or her baptismal identity within its proper, ecclesial, and liturgical setting.<sup>59</sup> In this light, Scola insists on a clear understanding of the various liturgical ministries, which are not given for the personal gratification of the minister, but rather to guarantee "the beauty and objective dignity of the celebration for the whole assembly"<sup>60</sup>.

This unified approach to the *ars celebrandi* and *participatio actuosa* also extends for Scola to ecclesiastical furnishings, vestments, and music; all of which can assist – or hinder – the participation of the faithful, depending on the fidelity of these externals to the intentions of the Church, and her given and received forms.<sup>61</sup> In all of this there is to be a "primacy of the *traditio* over the *receptio*" in the assessment of different liturgical forms, and so also of liturgical reforms.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>57</sup> SYNOD OF BISHOPS, XI ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY, *Relatio ante disceptionem* (3 October 2005), Prooemium, I. [↗](#)

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.


<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

### 2.5.4 *Relatio post Disceptionem*

In his *Relatio post Disceptionem*, closing the *Disceptatio in Aula* on 12 October 2005, Scola observed that the *ars celebrandi* “depends in large part on the maturity of the eucharistic faith of those who participate in the celebration, especially the minister who presides”.<sup>63</sup> This in turn demands fidelity to the rites as given by the Church – “which is most certainly always due” – whilst requiring “a lively eucharistic spirit and appropriate theological and liturgical preparation”. The combination of these two approaches – fidelity to the norms and a lively eucharistic spirit engendered by sound theological and liturgical preparation, which both incidentally demand a certain technical knowledge and competence – is proposed as an antidote to both rubricism (on the one hand) and a lackadaisical attitude to the rite (on the other).

63

SYNOD OF BISHOPS, XI ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY, *Relatio post disceptionem* (12 October 2005), no. 43.  It is beyond our scope to present more specific deliberations on this matter, but of particular note is the intervention of Monsignor Peter Elliott: “In reference to the ‘Instrumentum Laboris,’ nos. 43 and 52, re the *Ars Celebrandi* and the eucharistic spirituality of priests. The Roman Rite currently lacks prescribed preparation and a gradual approach to the Eucharistic celebration, as is found in the Eastern Rites. Therefore I make practical suggestions: that prescribed prayers for vesting be said in the sacristy before all Masses, including concelebrations; that the competent Dicasteries of the Roman Curia prepare a ‘Eucharistic Vademecum’ for priests, including prayers for preparation and thanksgiving and eucharistic adoration; that all editions of the Liturgy of the Hours include the prayers of preparation and thanksgiving for Mass. During Mass a celebrant’s prayer should animate his faithful observance of the rubrics, for example, a subtle use of the voice and taking time to consecrate the Sacred Species and elevate the Host and Chalice. Rubrics should be interpreted in terms of leadership in prayer. With reference to *Instrumentum Laboris*, no. 66, like the Bishops of the United States, Episcopal Conferences or Ordinaries might publish adaptations of the Forty Hours Devotion, or the annual solemn exposition envisaged in the Code of Canon Law. Altar manuals for the rites of public adoration would also be welcomed by many priests.” The Eucharistic vademecum called for by Elliott was published as CDWDS, *Compendium Eucharisticum*, Rome 2009. An English translation of this work was also published as ID., *Compendium on the Eucharist*, Rome 2009.

Finally, in the Italian text of the propositions placed before the synod assembly, the Fathers are recorded as having recalled the benefits of the postconciliar liturgical reform, whilst calling for “greater attention to the *ars celebrandi* from which the *actuosa participatio* is fully promoted”<sup>64</sup>.

## 2.6 Address to Priests of the Diocese of Albano (2006)

Without seeking to identify every single mention of the *ars celebrandi* in recent years, a particularly noteworthy intervention on this topic was made by Benedict XVI during a meeting with priests of the Diocese of Albano in 2006, between the end of the synod assembly and the publication of *Sacramentum Caritatis*.<sup>65</sup>

Benedict XVI begins with the maxim of St Benedict, *mens concordet voci*, underlining that whilst in most activities thought precedes words, in the liturgy “words come first”<sup>66</sup>. This underscores the “givenness” of the rite, and its ecclesial nature as seen in its authorized form. Authentic participation in the liturgical rite therefore presumes, in the first place, acknowledgment that (in the words of Benedict XVI) the “liturgy gives us the words; we must enter into these words, find a harmony with this reality that precedes us”.<sup>67</sup> This conforms to the concept of the *ars celebrandi* outlined above, particularly in the synod interventions, demanding unity between the interior and exterior dimensions of worship. This in turn suggests a specific knowledge of, technical competence with, and inherent respect for the actual words of the liturgical books; going beyond their merely correct pronunciation by means of a certain attentiveness. Echoing Bergoglio’s earlier notion of an *ars dicendi*, Benedict XVI thus demands that, in particular, “the Eucharistic Prayer is said well and with correct pauses for silence, if it is said with interiority but also with the art of

<sup>64</sup> SYNOD OF BISHOPS, XI ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY, *Proposizioni del sinodo sull’eucaristia* (22 October 2005), in: *EnchVat* 23 (2005–2006) 740–771, no. 2.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. BENEDICT XVI, *Allocution Ad presbyteros diocesis Albanensis* (31 August 2006), in: *AAS* 98 (2006) 668–683, especially 676–678.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 676 f.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 677.

speaking [*arte di parlare*]”, which itself requires (again) “an adequate preparation”<sup>68</sup>.

## 2.7 *Apostolic Exhortation Sacramentum Caritatis* (2007)

The post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* treats the *ars celebrandi* in five paragraphs (SacCar 38–42) within a discrete section entitled, *Ars Celebrandi*. In keeping with the *Lineamenta*, as seen above, the *ars celebrandi* is also mentioned in connection to mystagogical catechesis and interior participation in the liturgical celebration (SacCar 64). Together, these paragraphs provide statements on the nature of the *ars celebrandi*, clarifying with a new authority the relationship between liturgical norms and the *participatio actuosa*.

SacCar 38 sets out this apparent dichotomy, reporting that during the synod assembly “there was frequent insistence on the need to avoid any antithesis between the *ars celebrandi*, the art of proper celebration, and the full, active and fruitful participation of all the faithful” (SacCar 38). Benedict XVI explains that the resolution of any such conflict is found in the connection between the *ars celebrandi* and *participatio actuosa*: “[the] primary way to foster the participation of the People of God in the sacred rite is the proper celebration of the rite itself. The *ars celebrandi* is the best way to ensure their *actuosa participatio*. The *ars celebrandi* is the fruit of faithful adherence to the liturgical norms in all their richness” (SacCar 38). The same paragraph takes up *Propositio* 2, approved by the synod assembly, as a “doctrinal innovation [...] aimed at encouraging a further deepening of the liturgical reform and the renewal of practical celebrations” (SacCar 38).<sup>69</sup>

Having established the connection between “the participation of the People of God in the sacred rite” and “faithful adherence to the liturgical norms in all their richness”, the subsequent paragraphs of the section on the *ars celebrandi* offer four practical aids to bridge any divide between

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 678.

<sup>69</sup> Conferenza stampa di presentazione dell’Esortazione Apostolica Postsinodale *Sacramentum Caritatis* del Santo Padre Benedetto XVI sull’Eucaristia fonte e culmine della vita e della missione della Chiesa (13 March 2007) [a](#), II, no. 2.

the norms and participation in the rites: 1) the celebrations of the diocesan bishop; 2) the “grammar” of liturgical worship; 3) visual arts and architecture; 4) liturgical song.

In 2008, Archbishop Malcolm Ranjith explained that Benedict XVI’s intervention in SacCar 38 should be understood as a “clarification” in the light of false interpretations of the *ars celebrandi*, that are instead “a glorification of a sense of horizontalism”<sup>70</sup>. According to Ranjith, Benedict XVI affirmed that the *ars celebrandi* is a prerequisite for an authentic *participatio actiosa*, and that this “could not really happen *unless* the harmonious, beautiful, and orderly celebration of the liturgy was ensured”.<sup>71</sup> This also has a cosmic dimension: orienting the specific celebration to the heavenly liturgy. As Ranjith explains: “everything we do should help us to achieve that and that alone is the true meaning of *participatio*: a taking part in a bigger *actio*”<sup>72</sup>.

To Ranjith’s concern that this ordering of the liturgy by means of norms avoids the celebration descending into “a series of meaningless, chaotic, and insipid actions”, we can note certain juridical considerations that arise from, and are guaranteed by, the proper celebration of the liturgical rites: the guarantee of the right of the Christian faithful to participate in the celebration *as such* (c. 214); the conforming of the specific celebration to the Church’s rites and thus to the mystery of Christ in divine revelation and the deposit of faith (c. 760); and the reassurance that the given liturgical act is a truly ecclesial act (c. 834).

## 2.8 Plenary Meeting (2019)

At its next Plenary Meeting in 2019, the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments decided to produce a document to “revive commitment to the liturgy fifty years on from *Sacrosanctum Concilium*” and “invest in the thorough liturgical formation of the People of

<sup>70</sup> Ranjith served as the Secretary of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments from 2005–2009. RANJITH, *Ars Celebrandi*, 8.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. Author’s emphasis.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 9.



God”<sup>73</sup>. The meeting heard several interventions on the topic of liturgical formation from different perspectives, touching on the *ars celebrandi* in reference to both the local church and the formation of clergy.

In his address to the meeting, Pope Francis insisted that “for ordained ministers, and in view of a healthy *ars celebrandi*, the Council’s call is valid: ‘It is absolutely necessary to give first place to the liturgical formation of the clergy.’”<sup>74</sup> This idea was taken up by Cardinal Robert Sarah, who (in keeping with Bergoglio’s 2005 *ponenza* address) cautioned against two extremes: on the one hand, an attachment to the rubrics that risks a cold and detached liturgical celebration, and on the other hand, a sentimental individualism.<sup>75</sup>

Cardinal Ricardo Blázquez Pérez of Valladolid spoke of liturgical formation and its connection to *participatio actiosa*, insisting (in line with SacCar 38 and 64) that the quality of participation by the Christian faithful in the liturgical action is guaranteed by its proper celebration.<sup>76</sup> In particular, Blázquez Pérez stated that there is a need to foster appropriate liturgical music “as a manifestation of the ‘*ars celebrandi*’”<sup>77</sup>, which is in turn a kind of “professionalism” (or, again, technical skill) that allows the priest to celebrate with “dignity” and “respect for the mysteries”<sup>78</sup>.

Archbishop Dominic Jala of Shillong expressed similar sentiments in his discussion of liturgical formation for seminarians: “The proper cele-

<sup>73</sup> CDWDS, Cronaca dei Giorni della Plenaria, in: Not. 55 (2019) 89–93, here: 91.

<sup>74</sup> FRANCIS, Discorso del Santo Padre alla Plenaria della Congregazione per il Culto Divino e la Disciplina dei Sacramenti (14 February 2019), in: Not. 55 (2019) 5–8, here: 8. Cf. SC 14.

<sup>75</sup> Sarah served as the Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments from 2014–2021. Robert SARAH, Discorso introduttivo del Card. Prefetto Robert Sarah, in: Not. 55 (2019) 94–100, here: 96.

<sup>76</sup> Ricardo BLÁZQUEZ PÉREZ, La liturgia forma la Iglesia particular, in: Not. 55 (2019) 115–124, here: 116.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 120.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 120 f.

bration of the liturgy depends on the observation of set norms.”<sup>79</sup> This is communicated to seminarians by faculty responsible for their formation through an “attitude of one who respects these norms” and who “bows down before the mystery”, allowing future priests “to grow in that conviction that the priest is not the owner of the liturgy but its servant”<sup>80</sup>. This need to ensure that seminarians acquire a proper *ars celebrandi* demands, in turn, a dependence on “the liturgical books and the richness of signs” in seminary education and worship.<sup>81</sup> This approach is to “foster a sense of the sacred and the use of outward signs which help to cultivate this sense, such as, for example, the harmony of the rite, the liturgical vestments, the furnishings and the sacred space”, and be attentive to “the various kinds of language that the liturgy employs: words and music, gestures and silence, movement, the liturgical colours of the vestments”, which facilitate the participation of the whole person in the liturgical act.<sup>82</sup> Each of these points once more underscores the need for a certain knowledge, competence, and skill.

## 2.9 Apostolic Letter *Desiderio Desideravi* (2022)

The result of the 2019 Plenary Meeting was not a new curial text, but the 2022 apostolic letter *Desiderio Desideravi*; a document that (as mentioned) owes much to Bergoglio’s 2005 intervention. Whilst *Desiderio Desideravi*, somewhat surprisingly, does not cite or reference any prior synod or papal pronouncements on the *ars celebrandi*, it offers a synthetic and authoritative discussion of the notion of the *ars celebrandi* over thirteen paragraphs.

<sup>79</sup> Dominic JALA, *Spiritual and Academic Liturgical Formation of Seminarians*, in: *Not.* 55 (2019) 125–142, here: 131. Archbishop Jala was very sadly killed in a motoring accident on 10 October 2019.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

Pope Francis proposes three key ideas.<sup>83</sup> First, as DD 48 acknowledges, whilst the *ars celebrandi* has been “subject to different interpretations” (as seen above) Pope Francis insists: “The *ars celebrandi* cannot be reduced to only a rubrical mechanism, much less should it be thought of as imaginative – sometimes wild – creativity without rules. The rite is in itself a norm, and the norm is never an end in itself, but it is always at the service of a higher reality that it means to protect”. The consequence of this first point is that, in line with SacCar 38, an authentic *ars celebrandi* demands neither spontaneity nor a formalist positivism, but a true *going beyond the norms*, not by leaving them behind, but by entering more profoundly into their inherent purpose; the “higher reality” of which he writes. As we will see in our conclusion, this perspective both contributes to a correct understanding of liturgical law in the postconciliar rites, and depends on the general normative principles of interpretation common to the Church’s entire legal tradition.

Secondly, DD 49 speaks of the knowledge required for a faithful expression of the *ars celebrandi*: “an understanding of the dynamism that unfolds through the Liturgy”<sup>84</sup>. This presents the liturgical celebration as a participation in the paschal mystery, a cooperation with the Holy Spirit, and dependent on “the dynamics of symbolic language”. Each of these characteristics precedes the celebration, and so “the art of celebration is not something that can be improvised” (DD 50. 57). As Pope Francis explains: “Only in this way will [the liturgy] be free from the subjectivisms that are the fruit of individual tastes dominating. Only in this way will it be free from the invasion of cultural elements that are taken on without dis-

<sup>83</sup> For a more detailed consideration, see FRANCIS, The Apostolic Letter *Desiderio Desideravi*. On the Liturgical Formation of the People of God. Introduction and Commentary by Kevin W. IRWIN, Mahweh 2023; Rita FERRONE, Pastoral Guide to Pope Francis’s *Desiderio Desideravi*, Collegeville 2023.

<sup>84</sup> Here the word “dynamism”, as used by Baumgartner, reappears. To reiterate what we have already said above, this suggests not a newness *per se*, that is neither innovation nor creativity, but an awareness that the specific liturgical celebration takes place in a certain context. The relative rubrical flexibility of the postconciliar Roman Missal provides the celebrant with options precisely with this in mind. This is discussed in Bergoglio’s *ponenza* address.

cernment and that have nothing to do with a correct understanding of inculturation.”<sup>85</sup> These characteristics are, again, dependent on a set of certain learned and applied aptitudes: knowledge, competence, and skill.

Thirdly, whilst the *ars celebrandi* is “an attitude that all the baptized are called to live” (DD 51), it is a particular concern for ordained ministers (DD 54). Focussing on this, Pope Francis calls out various “inadequate” models of liturgical presidency, which have “a heightened personalism” in common (DD 54). In place of such attitudes, he proposes that an authentic priestly disposition for the liturgy arises from sacred ordination: “The priest lives his characteristic participation in the celebration in virtue of the gift received in the sacrament of Holy Orders, and this is expressed precisely in presiding” (DD 56).<sup>86</sup> By ordination the priest becomes “a particular presence of the risen Lord” (DD 57), and as such he is to celebrate with “humility and contrition”, just as he is himself “formed by presiding over the words and by the gestures that the Liturgy places on his lips and in his hands” (DD 60). Significantly for our consideration, DD 57 notes: “The highest norm, and therefore the most demanding, is the reality itself of the Eucharistic celebration, which selects words, gestures, feelings that will make us understand whether or not our use of these are at the level of the reality they serve.”

## 2.10 *Note Gestis Verbisque* (2024)

The 2024 note of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Gestis Verbisque* (GV) is principally concerned with sacramental validity, yet in its consideration of the matter and form of the sacraments it dedicates five paragraphs to the *ars celebrandi*, elaborating on the need for both validity and *fittingness* in liturgical celebrations.<sup>87</sup> This consideration of the *ars*

<sup>85</sup> On the regulation of adaptation and inculturation in the liturgy, see CDWDS, Decree *Postquam Summus Pontifex* (22 October 2021), in: AAS 113 (2021) 1180–1206; James BRADLEY, *Postquam Summus Pontifex*. Further Observations and Questions, in: *The Jurist* 78 (2022) 203–229.

<sup>86</sup> This resonates with a similar remark made in Bergoglio’s *ponenza* address that priest’s should “be aware of the mandate received in priestly ordination: agnosce quod agis, imitate quod tractas.” *Vide supra*, 2.4.1.

<sup>87</sup> For a detailed study, see BRADLEY, *Note Gestis verbisque*, 651–658.

*celebrandi* in such a document underscores the inadequacy of an approach to the liturgical act which relies merely on the goal of achieving a valid and licit celebration; what Bergoglio viewed as an over-reliance on the principle of *ex opere operato*.

*Gestis Verbisque* establishes the ecclesial basis of all liturgical acts in the celebrations of the diocesan bishop, who presides *in persona Christi* and *in nomine Ecclesiae* (GV 23).<sup>88</sup> By extension, presbyters also celebrate configured to Christ and his Church (GV 24), something established inwardly by their sufficient intention, and expressed outwardly by their fidelity to the liturgical rite (GV 25). As GV 26 makes clear, this also reflects the relationship between the baptismal and the ministerial priesthood, in that the ordained priest's fidelity to the liturgical rite manifests its fundamentally public nature: "the minister should understand that the authentic *ars celebrandi* [...] is one that respects and exalts the primacy of Christ and the *actuosa participatio* [...] of the entire liturgical assembly, including through humble obedience to the liturgical norms"<sup>89</sup>.

This point underscores once more the responsibility of the priest to embody an *ars celebrandi* that is not reliant on improvisation, but on the dynamism of the liturgical celebration itself, preceded by a knowledge of, fundamental respect for, and technical competence in the norms governing the liturgical act. Thus the note concludes with a specific call "to develop an *ars celebrandi* that – keeping itself equally distant from a rigid rubricism, on the one hand, and a limitless imagination, on the other hand – leads to a discipline we are to follow, precisely to be authentic disciples" (GV 27).

<sup>88</sup> On this, see especially Bernard Dominique MARLIANGEAS, *Clés pour une théologie du ministère. In persona Christi, in persona Ecclesiae* (Théologie historique 51), Paris 1978.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. SC 26. As canon 834 §1 states: "In the sacred liturgy, the whole public worship of God is carried out by the Head and members of the mystical Body of Jesus Christ" See also PAUL VI, Encyclical letter *Mysterium Fidei* (3 September 1965), in: AAS 57 (1965) 753–774, especially nos. 10. 11. 32.

### 3 *Some Conclusions*

This essay's review of the origins and development of the notion of the *ars celebrandi* in the immediately postconciliar theological literature sheds new light on the nuances and formulations found in the later authoritative promotion of the *ars celebrandi* in magisterial teaching.<sup>90</sup> As we have seen, the perceived tension between fidelity to liturgical norms and the *participatio actuosa* in SC 11 has been resolved in these latter documents, not by an *ars celebrandi* dependent on either creative improvisation or positivist rigidity, but by an attitude towards the norms which receives its authenticity and dynamism from a well-formed knowledge of the rites – historically, theologically, and canonically – and from an equally necessary interior disposition that ultimately causes the priest to “disappear” behind the liturgical action in favour of the principal actor in the liturgy, Jesus Christ.<sup>91</sup>

In his 1960 article, “The Law, the Liturgy, and Participation”, the American canonist Frederick R. McManus anticipated this point when he wrote: “The law, the rubric, the rule is something outside of the act of worship itself. The liturgical law governs, directs, guides the liturgical celebration. The law is not the same as the worship of Christ and His Church which it regulates and determines.”<sup>92</sup> McManus's words conform to what was later to be stated in SC 11, and to the still more recent proposal of the *ars celebrandi* as the definitive bridge between the *givenness* of the liturgi-

<sup>90</sup> For another theological consideration of the notion of the *ars celebrandi*, see RAU, *Ars celebrandi*.

<sup>91</sup> On this interpretation, see CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, *Directory for the Ministry and the Life of Priests*. New Edition, Vatican City 2013, no. 67: “[...] the priest, while placing at the service of the Eucharistic celebration all his talents to make it come alive in the participation of the faithful, must abide by the rite stipulated in the liturgical books approved by the competent authority, without adding, removing or changing anything at all. Thus his celebrating truly becomes a celebration of and with the Church: he does not do ‘something of his own’, but is with the Church in dialogue with God. This also promotes adequate active participation on the part of the faithful in the sacred liturgy [...]”.

<sup>92</sup> Frederick R. McMANUS, *The Law, the Liturgy, and Participation*, in: *The Jurist* 20 (1960) 42–54, here: 44.

cal rite and the *dynamism* of its actual celebration. An approach to the liturgical celebration which ignores, or unduly promotes one of these factors over the other, risks a distortion: either positivist rigidity, or *laissez-faire* creativity.

Yet despite the developments in understanding of an *ars celebrandi*, criteria for judgements regarding its precise application remain largely undefined. The narrative before us is as follows: *participatio actuosa* is paramount; norms must be followed; *ars celebrandi* is the fruit. But without stating more fully *how* the priest is to both embody fidelity to the norms, and go beyond them *without* invoking creativity, the fundamental issues are not truly resolved. The destination is set, but the course is far from clear. Here, by drawing on what is implied in the magisterial teaching to date, the canonical tradition (from which, ultimately, the liturgical law emerges) can offer a response, by means of a consideration of the nature of liturgical norms as such. To put this in its simplest terms: rubrics and other disciplinary instructions are *liturgical*, and they are *norms*.

First, as they are *liturgical* they must be understood according to the internal logic of all acts of divine worship. Just as other liturgical institutes – music, art, text, vesture, ritual – do not by themselves represent or embody the extent of the liturgy, so also liturgical laws are not an end in themselves. Liturgical norms cannot of course be jettisoned, or even set aside at personal whim, and in fact their observance greatly assists the given liturgical celebration in adhering to its inherent purpose: the glorification of God and the sanctification and edification of the faithful (SC 10. 61. 112) by means of a proper *participatio actuosa*.<sup>93</sup> Yet, as Bergoglio argues, obedience to the letter of the law is but *the very necessary minimum* to ensure a valid and licit celebration.<sup>94</sup> Just as the quality of diction and attentive annunciation of liturgical texts by the priest – and not just the

<sup>93</sup> Cf. Pius X, *Motu proprio Tra le sollecitudini* (22 November 1903), in: ASS 36 (1903) 329–339, no. 1. This text includes the notion of the edification of the faithful, absent from the formulation in SC. On this, see also c. 846 §1 CIC/1983.

<sup>94</sup> This phrase is taken from a description of the precepts of the Church in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2041. *Catechismus Catholicae Ecclesiae*, Vatican City 1997. English translation from Catechism of the Catholic Church. Revised, Vatican City 2019.

fact of their reading – assists the faithful in their participation, so also fidelity to the liturgical norms that goes beyond their merely performative fulfilment assists with this lofty goal.

A rather mundane example helps elaborate this point. The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, no. 337, states that a chasuble is to be worn by a priest for Mass. In most circumstances, however, the use of a dignified vestment – of proper proportions and worthy design – is *more fitting* than one that is perhaps stained at the collar and accompanied by a mismatched stole. Both garments likely, in fact, fulfil the simple requirements of the legislation – the letter of the law – but only one does so in a way that goes beyond the written norms, demonstrating by its use more completely the nature of the rite, offering something more fitting – and more just – in the worship of God, and inviting a more fulsome *participatio actuosa* on the part of the gathered faithful.

Every external element of the liturgical celebration contributes in a similar way to a better realization of what precisely the sacred liturgy is. No element alone achieves this: the quality and appropriateness of sacred music, and not just the fact of it; the proportions and integrity of ecclesiastical architecture, and not a just hall with a roof.<sup>95</sup> So also, as essentially human signs that point to a heavenly reality, the broadly sacramental character of liturgical norms must become better known, so that *liturgical* acts (necessarily governed and delineated by such laws) are not reduced to merely *functional* acts, but embody in their enactment the true nature of the liturgy.

Secondly, they are *norms*, and are therefore to be understood within the broader canonical legal tradition. This means that liturgical law must be interpreted according to the principles common to all law in the Church. Liturgical norms are emphatically not fundamentally different

<sup>95</sup> On this, see Bishop Erik VARDEN's recent lecture entitled, "A la altura de la tormenta del corazón humano". Evangelización en tiempos de olvido (8 February 2024), University of Navarre. An English translation of this text is available here. [🔗](#) Varden suggests: "In order to unlock that door of perception, double-bolted in an atheistic age, the Church's heritage of music, visual art, and the *ars celebrandi* may be at least as effective as a multitude of words, as was the case with St Augustine in Milan or, five centuries later, with King Vladimir's envoys to the Constantinopolitan court".



from other kind of canonical norms; they are part of the *ius canonicum*; they are canon law.<sup>96</sup> A sound approach to their interpretation and application must therefore not only be liturgically, but canonically rigorous; considerate of the role of legislation (*lex*) within that which is just (*ius*) in the Church. The above example of the chasuble holds true also in this regard. The rubrics require a chasuble to be worn; what is *just* in the application of that norm, however, transcends this simple demand to meet a deeper sense of right action – what is *dignum et iustum* – toward God, and toward the Christian faithful. An interpretation of liturgical norms which lacks this properly juridical context risks (again) reducing the rite to mere functionality, diluting the full value of the Church's liturgical worship, and inhibiting the *participatio actuosa* of the gathered worshippers.<sup>97</sup>

This is also the case with the resolution of (on the face of it) uncertain norms. An approach to liturgical law which presumes the abrogation of a prior norm (e. g., "We don't do that anymore"),<sup>98</sup> or that perceives ambiguity in the text of the norm as an opportunity for speculative or creative resolution (e. g., "It doesn't say we can't..."),<sup>99</sup> not only risks being at odds

<sup>96</sup> Huels makes this point when he says, quite simply: "Liturgical law (*ius liturgicum*) is the body of canon law regulating the liturgy." HUELS, *Liturgy and Law*, 64. See also Stefan RAU, *Die Feiern der Gemeinden und das Recht der Kirche. Zu Aufgabe, Form und Ebenen liturgischer Gesetzgebung in der katholischen Kirche* (MThA 12), Altenberge 1990.

<sup>97</sup> Alcuin Reid draws attention to the more radical approach of Walter Kelly, who argues for the application of canonical principles such as epikeia, presumptive revocation, and presumptive cessation, for the opposite end, namely the setting aside of liturgical norms that (as Kelly perceives it) lack sufficiently pastoral application. REID, *Ars Celebrandi*, 18–21. Walter J. KELLY, *The Authority of Liturgical Laws*, in: *The Jurist* 28 (1968) 397–424. This idea seems to express, in the canonical literature, what is found in some of the earlier theological literature on the *ars celebrandi* and the relationship between liturgical norms and creativity.

<sup>98</sup> Cf. c. 21 CIC/1983: "In dubio revocatio legis praeexistentis non praesumitur, sed leges posteriores ad priores trahendae sunt et his, quantum fieri potest, conciliandae."


<sup>99</sup> Cf. c. 17 CIC/1983: "Leges ecclesiasticae intellegendae sunt secundum propriam verborum significationem in textu et contextu consideratam; quae si dubia et obscura manserit, ad locos parallelus, si qui sint, ad legis finem ac circumstantias et ad mentem legislatoris est recurrendum."

with the notion of the *ars celebrandi* that we have reviewed above, but more fundamentally being contrary to the principle of continuity that undergirds the interpretation of all ecclesiastical laws. In fact, on the contrary, the way in which an action has been consistently understood and carried out in customary and traditional practice is determinative, unless and until this can be shown to be otherwise; an approach supported both by the code,<sup>100</sup> and by the current postconciliar liturgical norms.<sup>101</sup>

Finally, as we have seen, the idea of an authentic *ars celebrandi* depends significantly on technical notions of *art* and *celebration*, even if these are not referred to directly in the documents promoting this approach. The *ars celebrandi* presumes knowledge, competence, and skill. A useful development of this present study would therefore consider the relationship of *ars* to *technê*, and the etymology of *celebrare*. The Greek notion of art present in *technê* is itself dependent not merely on creativity, but on skill or craft,<sup>102</sup> which in turn presumes a certain knowledge and competence.<sup>103</sup> The sense of the Latin *celebratio* in turn suggests not sim-

<sup>100</sup> Cf. c. 27 CIC/1983: “Consuetudo est optima legum interpret.”

<sup>101</sup> Cf. Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani, Vatican City 2009, no. 42: “Gestus et corporis habitus tum sacerdotis, diaconi, et ministrorum, tum populi eo contendere debent ut tota celebratio decore nobilique simplicitate fulgeat, diversarum eius partium vera pleneque significatio percipiatur et omnium participatio foveatur. Attendendum igitur erit ad ea quae a lege liturgica et tradita praxi Ritus Romani definiuntur, et quae ad commune bonum spirituale populi Dei conferant, potius quam ad suam propensionem aut arbitrium [...]” See, inter alia, Michael Casey SANDERS, *An Interpretation of 1983 CIC Canon 846 1 in the Light of GIRM 42* [unpubl. thesis The Catholic University of America, Washington/DC], 2021; CARON, *Ceremonial for Priests*, 5–11.

<sup>102</sup> Joris Geldhof has identified this sense of *ars* as “craft”. Joris GELDHOF, *Tot waarachtig vieren vormen. Over liturgie en catechese als mystagogie*, in: ID. (ed.), *De bisschop van Rome en de theologen van Leuven* (IT 43), Leuven 2024, 137–144, here: 141. An English translation of this text has been published online: Joris GELDHOF, *Formed to truly celebrate. On liturgy and catechesis as mystagogy*.  See also, CARDÓ, *Ars Celebrandi*, 78–81.

<sup>103</sup> This is the sense in the phrase *ars moriendi* or “art of dying”. The notion does not suggest a need to find creative ways of dying (!) but of the benefits of dying in a way that conforms to the Christian ethic: the art of dying well.

ply a joyful, commemorative gathering – a “celebration” in the mode of a party – but the observance and performance of a given and received ritual act, which again presumes an awareness of what that act actually is – and conversely what it is not – as well as a certain proficiency in its enactment. These two ideas point again to the objectivity of the liturgical act, and so also the interpretative principles that are rightly applied to their norms.

### *Abbreviations*

AAS	Acta Apostolicae Sedis
ACR	Australasian Catholic Record
AIC	Adnotationes in Ius Canonicum
ASS	Acta Sanctae Sedis
BEL.S	Bibliotheca “Ephemerides Liturgicae”. Subsidia
BiLi	Bibel und Liturgie
CDWDS	Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments
EnchVat	Enchiridion Vaticanum
HID	Heiliger Dienst
IT	Instrumenta Theologica
MThA	Münsteraner Theologische Abhandlungen
Not.	Notitiae
TEL	Textes et études liturgiques / Studies in Liturgy
ThRev	Theologische Revue

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## Appendix<sup>104</sup>

### *The Ars Celebrandi by Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio, S.J.*

#### *Introduction*

In today's Church, many bishops, priests, and lay people feel the need to give greater attention to the so-called contemplative aspect of the liturgical celebration, that is, to that dimension of interiority which would open the mind and heart to the mystery being celebrated, which is Christ our *Pascha*. This sensitivity is expressed in different ways according to circumstances, places, generations, and tastes. There are those who argue that we should insist on the repristination of a celebration carried out according to the ideal model of the past centuries; and those who speak, instead, of inculturation of the liturgy in different social contexts. Many focus on the artistic quality of the interior of our churches, on architectural harmony, on fine materials, on the ingenuity of sculptors and painters. Above all there is a focus on music that takes the participants "*in alto*", beyond the passing sentiments of the individual, above the usual difficulties and preoccupations of everyday life. Some imagine that a "popular" music could be capable of attracting the attention of young people, so as to favour their religious desire. Then there is the perception of an un-reached goal which pushes many others to become impatient with the framing of liturgical books or with the constant tradition of the Church. Consequently, by free innovations they seek an improvement of the celebration, a greater involvement of the people.

In the face of these and many other proposals, one can certainly argue for a more lively sense of the *ex opere operato*, that is, starting from the efficacy of the celebration of the sacraments, which flows from the fact that they were instituted by the Saviour and that they emanate from his glorious and saving passion. It is in this way that we get the symbolism of the water and blood flowing from the side of Jesus Christ, crucified for us. It is truly important to take this vision of the unfailing "universal" efficacy of the sacraments into account when it comes to celebrations in the

<sup>104</sup>

Translation by James Bradley.

midst of people's poverty, in circumstances of humility, far from pomp, in persecution and clandestinely, where one celebrates with the *pusillus grex*.

However, in normal circumstances, in the parishes of our cities and in the countryside, on Sundays and holy days, simply reaffirming the effectiveness of *ex opere operato* is not enough to ensure a true involvement of people. Thus we return to the earlier proposals: the embellishment of the celebratory space, and of the decorations, with vases, vestments, music capable of attracting the attention of the people, and of suggesting a certain "richness" of the religious experience. There would certainly be much to be gained from a more careful meditation and application of the sound norms which, for more than a generation, have been found in the liturgical books, and in the documents of the Holy See on these and other similar topics. But this risks touching human reality only superficially, and touching the reality of faith even less.

### *Recover the "stupor" (the charm of beauty)*

Thus in the discourse about interiority, and the impression that despite all the efforts of these years, even generous and well-intentioned, in favour of a more beautiful, comprehensible, and engaging, we have often missed something very important in practice.

The Holy Father himself has grasped this sense, recently addressing on various occasions the need to recover the sense of "stupor" of the Christian towards the mystery of salvation in Christ and, in particular, towards the Eucharist (cf. *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 6). But simple people also say it, mothers of families and young people.

In fact, even interiority runs the risk of remaining at the level of an empty subjectivity if the discourse of the Christian mystery is not firmly raised.

Recover "stupor" before the mystery. How do we achieve this? A concept that has been talked about in various circles for years now is the *ars celebrandi*. The exact notion remains to be defined. But in general the idea is of a document, of guidelines, capable of highlighting the need to impose certain elements of the liturgical celebration in order to increase its quality.

In the last decade, much emphasis has been given in pontifical documents to the responsibility of the Bishop, also in liturgical matters. And for just cause. However, in practice, from the point of view of the people, it is the priest who is the essential point of reference.

Therefore, in the *ars celebrandi*, I think we need to deal above all with what concerns the priest. This does not mean that the document should be a text only for priests. In fact, if one manages to define the attitude of the priest, this reflection will also help the people. It will help them to see in him what they have to see, and to deepen their own proper complementary role; but above all it will favour their prayer.

In the context of the campaign that the Church has implemented for renewed attention to the Eucharistic mystery and, in any case, in view of a simplicity and linearity of expression, I would limit the *ars celebrandi* to the celebration of the Eucharist, and the public one, above all in the parish.

### *A carefully targeted style*

I would hope for a limpid and clear document from an expressive point of view, with a biblical and liturgical text style; a text of meditation, rather than a treatise on theology; exhortative or, better, able to offer motivations, rather than juridical or rubrical. However, it should be distinguished from a generic exposition on priestly spirituality, so as to be nevertheless a practical text, which considers the celebration of the Eucharist and, in particular, the different aspects of what the priest must do.

Above all, the priest celebrant must be aware of the mandate received in priestly ordination: *agnosce quod agis, imitate quod tractas*. May he first grasp the sense of the mystery, that he may communicate it to the Christian community, and conform to the greatness of the mystery. This requires a lively, nurtured faith, and a steadfast spirit of prayer.

For the rest, you don't need a ceremonial, but you do have to deal with the external aspects of the celebration as it concerns the priest. I am convinced that one could speak not only of preparation, but also of the care of gestures, of the attitude of the body, of dignity, of that humble but incisive *leadership* which consists in allowing the people to intuit that they love a man who knows how to pray the liturgy, who knows how to put on

not only traditional vestments, but above all the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. In all of this, it is not a question of refinement, of aestheticism; it is not a question of individualistic devotionism and clericalism. Rather, what is at stake is a true pastoral ministry, deserving before God, but—in a way that is as true as it is difficult to define—perceptible by those who belong to our Christian communities; by those who go to the celebration of the Eucharist to receive and to give; by those who, with the grace of God, truly desire to make the Eucharist the *fons et culmen* of their own existence.

It is clear that all of this must allow the priest to appear in close relationship with the people of which he is the pastor and to whom, by celebrating the Eucharist, he does not perform an act of charity, but rather an act of justice

### *An “ars dicendi”*

This is where the question of what I would call an *ars dicendi* comes into play.

I would attribute two meanings to this expression. The first is the way in which the priest speaks, when he pronounces the prescribed texts. In this case, he does not simply speak with his private voice, Rather his voice is properly the vehicle of the prayer of the Church and of the faithful gathered on that occasion. What he says is communication and testimony. The priest must be aware of this; on the contrary, he must make it a theme of his meditations on him, in which he must also deepen the meaning of the various liturgical texts. Furthermore, the priest also through the tone of his voice, his rhythm and the relative speed with which he speaks, must in some way bring the people with him in prayer. A way of speaking is needed which is not simply reading, preaching, or announcing, but rather a sincere prayer.

The second meaning that I would like to attribute to the expression *ars dicendi* intercepts in some aspect the discourse of the homily which will be the subject of particular attention in this Plenary. Here I intend more specifically to evoke the need for the priest to pay close attention to the use of those parts where free formulation is required by him. He must be able to distinguish between the “vulgar language” (in the sense of *vul-*

gus) and the “popular language”, in the sense of the language of the street, i.e. of private conversations. He must communicate in a living and accessible language. He must speak to the heart. However, he must not distance himself from what the circumstances and the celebration of the mystery require.

### *A movement that starts from the priest*

If a document on the *ars celebrandi* could help the priest to celebrate with the right awareness (*agnosce quod agis*), it would also trigger in the people, *ipso facto*, a greater awareness of the liturgical celebration. It would also condition—in the best sense of the term—the deacon, the lectors, and the ministers. This awareness is a gift from God which must be implored in prayer and which is granted by God to the Saints. It is said, for example, that Blessed Ildefonso Schuster had it, but Christian art attributes it to many saints such as Saint Gregory the Great, Saint Bernard, Saint Ignatius.

Returning to the first meaning I gave to the expression *ars dicendi*, that is to say the way in which the priest pronounces the prescribed texts, I would also insist on the variety of formularies that can be chosen, and which in fact already exist in the liturgical books of today. For me they are more than sufficient. This possibility of choice has greatly increased since the Council and constitutes a notable fact with respect to, for example, various Oriental Rites. Therefore, the priest must choose with care from the texts available to him and then, for the rest, know how to make the prayer of the Church live, bringing the people with him. If he knows how to do this, then the result is that all of miserable texts of “creativity” are completely superfluous. It is a great art to pronounce properly those liturgical texts that are repeated very frequently, such as the Eucharistic Prayer.

In my opinion, we need to find a way to lightly touch — undoubtedly without giving in to controversy — the attitudes to be avoided, such as that of the priest with rigid gestures who seems almost unaware of the presence of the people, or the bearing of the priest “master of spectacle”, a “showman” who invests energy in a kind of superficial animation. We also meet the busy priest who doesn't have time for a worthy celebration in a reasonable time (the “Martha syndrome”). However, in my opinion, it

would be a mistake to transform the *ars celebrandi* into a treatise on abuses. Offering reasons for good practice is already a powerful action against abuse, without making it explicit.

I expressed above my conviction that the *ars celebrandi* should not have a juridical imprint. An approach of a juridical or disciplinary type, even if it is legitimate in its way, would be out of place in this case. Also, the text should not have a heavy apparatus of footnotes. For the same reason, I am of the opinion that a *collage* of conciliar or pontifical passages should be avoided.

Even if it is limited to dealing with the celebration of the Eucharist, the *ars celebrandi* cannot, it seems to me, simply take up the *Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani*. It should neither become a kind of handbook nor handbook of the contents of this *Institutio*, nor should it deal with topics such as sacred music or sacred art. To be successful, on the contrary, it must serenely resist the temptation not only to say everything about everything, but also a lot about a lot: let us say a little in a targeted way; say it well, in a confident and convincing way.

## Conclusion

Putting the subject of the *ars celebrandi* on the agenda of this Plenary Assembly, the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments has distributed, to illustrate what was in the pipeline several years ago, two drafts of text which propose to deal with this question. As has been explained, the texts are collegial in the origins. Neither one nor the other is being proposed as a definitive final draft. However, both can be useful to stir up the topic and offer a first example. In accordance with the task of *ponens* that has been entrusted to me, I deem it convenient not to try to comment on these texts, since they are within everyone's reach. Instead, I would like to propose for the discussion of the Fathers some criteria for progressing towards the redaction of a definitive text.

I am of the opinion that the time has indeed come to proceed with the drafting of a document on the *ars celebrandi*.

I believe that such a document should be brief, focused on essential arguments, according to a precisely defined perspective.



It should, in my opinion, also take on a pastoral and spiritual tone, indeed meditative, leaving out an approach of a juridical or disciplinary type. The style should be blunt, direct and simple, excluding *recherché* expressions; but also avoiding the usual excerpts and exaggerated phrases of official documents.

To avoid wasting attention, I would propose negotiating solely the celebration of Holy Mass, in the awareness that such a reflection will naturally and inevitably exert an influence on all liturgical celebrations.

For the same reason, I consider that a text is needed which explains the pastoral and spiritual attitude that the priest celebrant must assume in the very act of the celebration, in the awareness that this will also be of help to the people and, in their midst, to those who have a particular role.

However, I consider it necessary to pay great attention not to go even in the line of drafting any text on priestly spirituality. On the contrary, it must be kept in mind that we are dealing with the practical action of the priest, in the specific context of the celebration of the Eucharist.

While appreciating the work of those who have contributed to the drafting of one or the other text made available to us by the Congregation's archive, it seems to me that the criteria set out here would lead us to put both aside and start a new redaction from scratch, one which is more meditative, fresh, and vital.

I think such a document cannot be an Instruction, and probably not even a Directory, which would be too heavy. On the contrary, it could be published as a *sui generis* text with an appropriate concluding formula indicating the approval of the Holy Father.

Rome, March 1, 2005

Card. Jorge Mario Bergoglio, S.J.