

# origins

CNS documentary service

## Promoting Women's Rights in Society

Marilyn Martone

*Attempts to replace present inequalities between men and women must be undertaken "in a timely and bold manner, as well as with great care," the Vatican's U.N. observer mission said in a March 2 intervention to the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women. The intervention was delivered by Marilyn Martone, a moral theology professor at St. John's University in New York. "Ideally, policies should be designed that restore balance and fairness to social and political structures in such a way that their very success persuades all people to work toward the true advancement of women," she said. Her intervention discussed the rights of elderly women and migrants, and the injustice of human trafficking and the sexual exploitation of*

*"Trafficking in human beings has a particularly negative impact on women. In some cases there are women and girls who are exploited almost like slaves."*

*women and girls. Particular attention was given to the situation of women and girls in armed conflicts where they "are also victims of systematic rape for political purposes." The intervention pointed to the continuing rise in the use of microcredit, the loaning of small amounts of money to often poor or low-income clients by banks or other institutions, to better women's economic lives. "This is a phenomenon which has had the support of local Catholic churches for many years," Martone said. She added, "It is most encouraging to see poor women's patience, honesty and hard work rewarded in this way in many places, and it is to be encouraged by attention to the reform of structures that will in turn assist the spread and continued success of new initiatives in this field." The intervention follows.*

**O**n the occasion of the 50th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, my delegation takes the floor to acknowledge the progress made in favor of women during these important debates and deliberations as well as the setbacks in certain spheres.

Looking back for a moment, the commission may be pleased with the growing profile that women's issues have on the world political stage. This was eloquently illustrated in the recent World Summit outcome document, in which leaders expressed their conviction that "progress for women is progress for all." Among other things, the World Summit rightly underlined

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dialogue. This dialogue will take place today in the context of cultural diversity and pluralism. The church should not be afraid of pluralism. Truth can only be attained with the space of liberty. Church should always be a place which sets people free. Jesus always combined his preaching of the word with the care of the sick and the freeing of those whose lives were possessed by various idols or demons.

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*"The freedom we attain is the specific freedom of the children of God. It is a liberty which is sacrificial rather than self-centered."*

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In the period immediately after the Second Vatican Council, the people of God was seen very much in terms of a people able to dialogue around the signs of the time with all those who cared for the good of humankind and of creation. The church understands herself as an ally of all those who sought the rights and the good of others. The church had to learn that it could thrive in pluralism, perhaps better than when it had cozy relationships with power.

New challenges emerge today when the church has to face what Cardinal Kasper calls "pluralistic totalitarianism." The church must never renounce her mission of proclaiming the uniqueness of Jesus Christ in history and realize that the message of Jesus must be a message that goes against the stream. The church must proclaim the word of God without fear and not allow others to determine the framework in which its message is taught.

The concept of the people of God is fundamentally a theological reality and not a sociological one. The structuring of the people of God is therefore not to be modeled on relationships as they exist in any other situation. Above all, being a listening church means recognizing that the church is not ours, not a human invention, not an institution created by the Christian community but a community that comes into being through opening ourselves to the word of God and the love of God.

The first task of the church then is

to proclaim above all the essence of the Christian message as a message of love. This may sound too simple, almost naive and banal to many. But without that fundamental realization Christianity will be reduced to an ideology or an empty rule book.

On the other hand, as Pope Benedict notes, "Love is the light — and in the end the only light — that can always illuminate a world grown dim and give us the courage to keep living and working." The mission of the people of God is to "experience love and in this way to cause the light of God to enter into the world."

A world grown dim, but also a church in many ways grown dim! Many of the questions asked in the years after Vatican II have remained unanswered. But in the radically changed cultural context in which we live today, it may be that these questions have in any case become yesterday's questions. Rereading Vatican II today means that we may have to begin posing our questioning anew and listening more attentively to those for whom Vatican II is more than a distant memory. ■

## Scripture and the Liturgy: Inseparably United

Scott Hahn

*"The Scriptures illuminate the mystery of the eucharist, just as the eucharist is what actualizes and fulfills the saving truth of Scripture. The Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist are inseparably united," theologian Scott Hahn said in a lecture Nov. 28 at Benedictine-run St. Vincent Seminary in Latrobe, Pa. Hahn, a professor of theology and Scripture at Franciscan University of Steubenville in Steubenville, Ohio, delivered his inaugural lecture as holder of the Pope Benedict XVI Chair of Biblical Theology and Liturgical Proclamation at St. Vincent Seminary. "Pope Benedict XVI," Hahn said, "has retrieved for us the sacramental, incarnational nature of holy Scripture — helping us to see it as a great union of the divine and the*

*human." The pope has shown that "the culmination of the biblical story ... is to be found in the 'today' of the liturgy," Hahn said. And for the pope, the liturgy is the Bible's true, living environment. Hahn said that "all of this has profound implications for the future of biblical theology and our liturgical proclamation." First, he said, it means the formation of priests "must be based on in-depth study of sacred Scripture, a study ordered to 'lectio divina.'" It means "the proclamation of the word, especially in the homily, must truly become a breaking of the bread, a making present and efficacious of the divine gifts." This proclamation, "especially in the homily, is not to be informative or even merely an exposition of the readings," but "is to be transformative, the catalyst for our encounter with our Redeemer." Hahn said that this proclamation "must take a 'mystagogical turn.'" Hahn's text follows.*

Scripture and liturgy have ever been hallmarks of the Benedictine life. Benedict himself placed liturgy, the great "work of God," as the monk's chief occupation and source of life. And, for him, the public worship of the monks was inseparable from its scriptural voice. A monk who lives by the rule lives by the Scriptures, and his days proceed at the pace of psalms, canticles and Gospels, all liturgically arranged.

Yet we need not stop at Benedict as we trace the history of "biblical theology and liturgical proclamation" in the monasteries. Benedict, after all, wished to establish nothing more than a life that was faithful to the tradition he had inherited, the tradition of the "holy fathers." And most historians trace that tradition to a man, St. Anthony of Egypt, and to a precise moment in his life. The Athanasian *Life of Anthony* gives us the classic form of the story.

"Not six months after the death of his parents, he went according to custom to the Lord's house. ... He entered the church, and it happened the Gospel was being read, and he heard the Lord saying to the rich man, 'If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven' (Mt. 19:21).

"Anthony, ... as if the passage had been read on his account, went out immediately from the church and gave the possessions of his forefathers to the

villagers. ... All the rest that was movable he sold, and having got together much money he gave it to the poor, reserving a little, however, for his sister's sake. ...

"And again he went into the church, and he heard the Lord say in the Gospel, 'Do not be anxious about your life' (Mt. 6:25), he could stay no longer but went out and gave those things also to the poor. ... He henceforth devoted himself outside his house to discipline."<sup>1</sup>

It is a rich passage for those who wish to understand not only the history of monasticism, but also the history of biblical interpretation. Athanasius shows us that the ordinary place of biblical interpretation was the church and the ordinary time was the liturgy. In the ancient world, the church's liturgy — its public, ritual worship — was the natural and supernatural habitat of the church's Scriptures.

For both Jews and the early Christians, the scriptural texts, though historical in character, were not merely records of past events. Their public reading was more than just the preservation of a national saga. The Scriptures were intended to sweep the worshiper into their action — "as if the passage had been read on his account."

More than two centuries after Jesus spoke his words to the rich young man and to the crowd, Anthony assumed that the words were addressed directly to him. The historical words were actualized again in the life of a contemporary listener, a contemporary worshiper. And Anthony's own participation in salvation history was itself history-making for future generations.

There is ample precedent for Anthony's experience in both the Old and New Testaments. Consider one dramatic turning point early in Luke's Gospel (Lk. 4:16ff). Jesus announced his mission in the midst of the Sabbath liturgy of the synagogue, which it was "his custom" to attend. Jesus "stood up to read" a passage from the prophet Isaiah (Is. 61:1-2; 58:6). After reading, "he closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed upon him."

Then Jesus preached the homily that established the course of his ministry: "And he began to say to them, 'Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing'" (Lk. 4:21). Once again, something

was actualized in the liturgical proclamation. Despite the congregation's incomprehension, the Scripture was fulfilled in their hearing. The fulfillment did not depend upon their response, but upon their liturgical hearing of the proclamation.

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The church publicly proclaims the Scriptures in the liturgy because they are the documents of the covenant, which is solemnly renewed in the ritual worship of God's people. The church requires only "canonical" texts to be read in the liturgy, because only they set the terms of the covenant in a divinely authoritative way. Only "the word of the Lord" is appropriate for liturgical proclamation because only "the word of the Lord" — the word that created the cosmos — can be a word that is "living and active" (Heb. 4:12).

Scripture is in this sense profoundly sacramental. Augustine spoke of each of the church's sacraments as a "visible word" (*verbum visibile*), and of the word as an "audible sacrament" (*sacramentum audibile*).<sup>2</sup> In the last generation, theologians such as Lucien Deiss and FX. Durrwell described a "real presence" of Christ in the Scriptures.<sup>3</sup> Martimort made the necessary distinctions: "While the word of God is not a sacrament in the strict sense, its proclamation in the liturgy has a special and unmatched authority and power. Moreover, it is the power exerted by this word in the saving actions of Christ that founds the efficacy of the church's sacramental actions."<sup>4</sup>

The idea of Scripture's divine authority exercised a profound influence on early Christian liturgy. The church venerated the sacred page because of its sacramentality, which was analogous to that of the eucharist. The first millennium of Christianity was characterized by a consistently high view of scriptural inspiration and a consistently high sacramentology. Word and sacrament commanded reverence both in doctrinal

expression and in devotional life. The custom of kissing the book of Gospels, which remains with the church today, arose in those early centuries, as did the custom of "enthroning" the biblical books in the church.

The word is the Lord's, but it is revealed to mankind. It must be written, but primarily so that it can be proclaimed "in the midst of the assembly" (Sir. 15:5) in every generation. Theologian Jeremy Driscoll said it with startling simplicity: "The book is a means to an end." And the end, he explained, is "the presence of the living word in the midst of the believing assembly, accomplishing and extending to that assembly what has been accomplished in concrete historical events."<sup>5</sup> Put by Driscoll into even more lapidary terms: "Scripture is the announcement of the word of God; liturgy is its actualization."<sup>6</sup>

Ordinary human language, no matter how beautiful or persuasive, cannot do this. The Pontifical Biblical Commission made this point forcefully in its 1993 document "The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church":

"It is above all through the liturgy that Christians come into contact with Scripture. ... In principle, the liturgy, and especially the sacramental liturgy, the high point of which is the eucharistic celebration, brings about the most perfect actualization of the biblical texts. ... Christ is then 'present in his word, because it is he himself who speaks when sacred Scripture is read in the church' (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 7). Written text thus becomes living word."

In Christian lives the Scriptures are actualized, and that is how the kingdom comes to earth. Actualization is infinitely more than a private act of piety. It is transformative not just of the believer, but of the world.

But what is it, actually, that is actualized in the liturgical proclamation? Tradition tells us that it is nothing less than the Parousia.

Christians have always used the word Parousia to denote the coming of Christ, with all its attendant events, such as the judgment, the end of the world and the renewal of the world. The word has become problematic in recent generations, however, because it evokes an ever-growing complex of associations even among scholars.

Some of these associated ideas have

their origin in antiquity. Others are of a more recent vintage: for example, from the millennialist controversies of the ninth or the 19th centuries. For our purposes it will be helpful to study the first-century usage of the word.

The Greek word *parousia* means, literally, "presence, coming, arrival or advent." In popular Christian parlance it has come to mean specifically Christ's return in glory at the end of time. Jesus himself used the term many times in describing that eschatological event. For example: "As the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming [*parousia*] of the Son of Man" (Mt. 24:27).

Because of such passages it can be difficult for us to think of *parousia* as meaning anything but a "coming in glory" — a dramatic divine interruption of history. But that is a theological projection onto a fairly common and even mundane Greek word. "Coming in glory" was not the meaning of the word in its original usage. *Parousia* could describe the visit of an emperor or king, and it was sometimes used that way. But it could also describe a much less impressive event.

When St. Paul, for example, speaks of his own *parousia*, he gives it a decidedly self-deprecating cast: "For they [Paul's critics] say, 'His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence [*parousia*] is weak, and his speech of no account'" (2 Cor. 10:10). Note that here all Paul means by his own *parousia* is his "bodily presence," which he insists is unimpressive.

He uses the word in the same sense in his letter to the Philippians: "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence [*parousia*] but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12). In both passages, Paul uses *parousia* to mean an immediate bodily presence — a presence that is real, though visually and aurally unimposing.

It is surely possible and even probable that Jesus used the word *parousia* to connote the same things — to mean a bodily presence that was real but unimposing to the senses: a liturgical *parousia*.

This, of course, is not the reading of *parousia* given by some modern interpreters, especially among fundamen-

talists. But consider the expectations of Jesus' own generation. The Jews of his time read the Old Testament prophecies as predictions of a messiah who would come with military power, overwhelming his enemies with spectacular victories. They were not prepared for a carpenter who laid down his life as a victim.

Jesus had promised repeatedly that the kingdom was coming without delay. Midway through the "little apocalypse" of Matthew's Gospel, Jesus says, "Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away till all these things take place" (Mt. 24:35). Yet those utterances were canonized as Scripture and read in the liturgy without hesitation or interruption even as Jesus' own generation receded into history.

None of this precludes a Parousia of Christ at the end of history. Theologians call that "coming" of Christ the "final advent" or "plenary Parousia" — not because Christ will have a greater fullness then, but rather because humankind will be able to behold him in his fullness, with senses unveiled. "Beloved, we are God's children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1 Jn. 3:2).

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*"His parousia — his liturgical presence — remained with Christians even as they prayed for its plenitude."*

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Since Christ's coming, he is present in the world in a way that he was not in the old covenant; yet he remains veiled in a way that he will not be veiled at the consummation of history. In its interpretation of the phrase *thy kingdom come*, the Catechism of the Catholic Church states: "The kingdom of God has been coming since the Last Supper, and in the eucharist, it is in our midst. The kingdom will come in glory when Christ hands it over to his Father" (No. 2816).<sup>7</sup>

In his incarnation, Jesus came. And as he passed from human sight, he promised to sustain his presence forever: "I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Mt. 28:20). Thus, his parousia

— his liturgical presence — remained with Christians even as they prayed for its plenitude.

The pedigree of this idea in Christian antiquity has been amply documented by historians and exegetes from Gregory Dix to Jaroslav Pelikan. What they consistently find is that the earliest Christian vision was of Christ ascended as the heavenly high priest, offering a liturgy of praise that somehow resembled the liturgy of God's people on earth.

Jewish scholar Alan Segal observed that this notion — of a mediating priest at the right hand of God — was a motif common in Hellenistic and mystical Judaism as well. Both Jews and Christians interpreted Psalm 110 as a prophecy of the Messiah who would rule as king and officiate as "a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek" (Ps. 110:4). Segal found confirmation of this priestly ascension motif in the Letter to the Hebrews, which quotes Psalm 110:4 and comments, "He entered once for all into the holy place" (Heb. 9:12).<sup>8</sup>

The earliest Christian vision, then, bore striking similarities to the apocalyptic visions of Stephen in Acts and John in Revelation. Christ the eternal priest stood, like Stephen's "Son of Man," at God's right hand, fulfilling the liturgy of the ancient temple and officiating at the liturgy of the church. This is not a novelty with Christianity, but rather a profound development of ancient Israel's understanding of divine worship.

The people of Israel considered their earthly liturgy to be a divinely inspired imitation of heavenly worship. Both Moses and Solomon constructed God's earthly dwellings — the tabernacle and the temple — according to a heavenly archetype revealed by God himself (see Ex. 25-27, Chr. 28, Wis. 9:8). The prophets expressed this belief in a mystical way, as they depicted the angels worshipping amid songs and trappings that were clearly recognizable from the Jerusalem temple (see Is. 6 and Ez. 1). The hymns sung by the angels were the same songs the Levites sang before the earthly sanctuary.

We find the idea in full flower at the time of Jesus Christ and expressed in the noncanonical books of Enoch and Jubilees as well as in the Dead Sea Scrolls. What the priests did in the temple sanctuary was an earthly imitation

of what the angels did in heaven.

And none of this was mere pagantry. Both the heavenly and earthly liturgies had more than a ceremonial purpose. The angelic liturgy preserved a certain order not only in the courts of the Almighty, but in the entire universe. God had given over the governance of creation to his angels, and so the world itself was caught up in a cosmic liturgy: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory" (Is. 6:3). As Israel's priests performed their temple liturgy, they — like their counterparts in heaven — preserved and sanctified the order of the cosmos.

Thus, Israel's worship overflowed to form Israel's culture. This is what made David a man after God's own heart. He wanted to configure earthly space and time so that all of the kingdom's temporal works flowed from worship and returned to God as a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. He moved the ark of the covenant to rest at the center of his capital city, and he planned a magnificent temple as its home. He endowed the priests and their attendants richly, and he himself composed beautiful liturgies for their use.

With all of that in their cultural and historical background, the Jews of Jesus' time would have recognized the beauty of his petition in the Lord's Prayer, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," in a way that many today might not.

To the ancient people of God, heaven and earth were distinct but not separate, with the earth tracing the motions of heaven most clearly in the rites of the temple. They recognized that to worship God in this way was an awesome gift. Yet it was still only a shadow of the angels' worship — and only a shadow of the earthly worship that would be inaugurated by Jesus Christ.

When Christ assumed flesh, he brought heaven to earth. Moreover, with his very flesh he fulfilled and perfected the worship of ancient Israel. No longer must the covenant people worship in imitation of angels. In the liturgy of the new covenant, the renewed Israel — the church — worshiped together with the angels.<sup>9</sup>

In the New Testament, the Book of Revelation revealed the shared liturgy of heaven and earth. Around the throne of God, men and angels bowed down and worshiped together (see Rv. 5:14); an

angel lifted the seer up to stand beside him (Rv. 19:10). Moreover, the renewed Israel — the Christian church — was portrayed as a kingdom of priests (Rv. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6), so that all were admitted to the holiest inner sanctum of the temple.

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger himself noted that the New Testament's apocalyptic imagery is overwhelmingly liturgical, and the church's liturgical language is overwhelmingly apocalyptic. "The Parousia is the highest intensification and fulfillment of the liturgy," he writes. "And the liturgy is Parousia. ... Every eucharist is Parousia, the Lord's coming, and yet the eucharist is even more truly the tensed yearning that he would reveal his hidden glory."<sup>10</sup>

The eucharist is the Parousia. The catechism returns to this idea repeatedly:

"The church knows that the Lord comes even now in his eucharist and that he is there in our midst. However, his presence is veiled. Therefore we celebrate the eucharist 'awaiting the blessed hope and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ'" (No. 1404; see also No. 2816).

Catholic theology since the Protestant Reformation has understandably emphasized the real presence of Christ in the eucharistic elements under the appearance of bread and wine. That doctrine, after all, was the object of attacks by Calvin, Luther and Zwingli. But the Second Vatican Council moved the church beyond timely apologetics and spoke of the timeless truth of Christ's presence in the Mass.

The constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium* pointed out four modes of Christ's presence there. He is especially present, said the council fathers, in the eucharistic species; but he is also present in the person of the officiating priest. Third, "he is present in his word, since it is he himself who speaks when the holy Scriptures are read in the church." Last, he is present when the church prays and sings.<sup>11</sup>

Liturgy is the place where the stream of salvation history runs swift and clear — sweeping Christians into the current of the divine and sacramental economy. Liturgy is the place where Christians, many millennia after the fall, the flood, the exodus and the passion can participate directly in the fulfillment of the biblical types.

And it is the presence of Christ — as "a high priest forever" (Heb. 6:20) and a sacrifice "without blemish" (Heb. 9:14) — that makes that possible. This is what both Hebrews and Revelation communicate in their visions of the heavenly liturgy. Both books provide Christianity's first and foundational mystagogy — a divinely revealed "guidance in the mysteries." Both present a vision of the sacramental economy as it came to fulfillment in heaven and on earth.

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Now we may anticipate the most obvious objection. Some may scoff at this suggestion with Martin Luther, who went so far as to question the canonical status of John's Apocalypse. Luther complained, "A revelation should reveal something."<sup>12</sup> Revelation is indeed a difficult and sometimes obscure book.

The purpose of mystagogy, however, is not to dispel the divine mystery. Still less should a mystagogical work rationalize mystery away — or function as an extended exercise in cryptography. True mystagogy respects the divine mystery even as it guides Christians into a more profound experience of and participation in that very mystery. The catechism (No. 2777) captures this sense beautifully:

"From the burning bush Moses heard a voice saying to him, 'Do not come near; put off your shoes from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground' (Ex. 3:5). Only Jesus could cross that threshold of the divine holiness, for 'when he had made purification for sins, he brought us into the Father's presence: 'Here am I and the children God has given me' (Heb 1:3; 2:13)."

For those charged with being ministers or teachers of the word, this is your life's work: to unveil this mystery, a mystery at once scriptural and liturgical — a divine mystery. Your life's work, to borrow a term from the fathers, is a work of

mystagogy. You must guide God's people and one another in the ways of God, in the church's mysteries of Scripture and sacrament, in the mysteries of God.

Begin with the biblical end in view. What the Book of Revelation shows is the definitive consummation of the covenant. In Revelation we see the perfect fulfillment of God's covenant with his people. Every previous fulfillment in the Old Testament had been real but also partial, and thus incomplete. So each covenant fulfillment was a type driven forward, by way of anticipation, toward something greater — yet still only partial, still incomplete, still pointing to the future.

Ultimately, the Parousia stands as the final cause, the cause of all previous causes. It is the eucharistic Parousia, in which Christ comes and breaks open the Scriptures (Rv. 6). But even the eucharistic Parousia points forward to a plenary Parousia — a day when Christ will come in glory, and we will see him as he is. G.K. Beale speaks of this final Parousia in profound and moving terms:

"When Christ appears, he will not descend from the sky over Boston or London or New York City or Hong Kong or any other localized area. When he appears, the present dimension will be ripped away, and Christ will be manifest to all eyes throughout the earth (see Mt. 24:27). ... If John were living today, he might use the analogy of a stage curtain with pictures on it which is drawn from both sides to reveal the actors behind it. In short, the present physical reality will in some way disappear and the formerly hidden heavenly dimension, where Christ and God dwell, will be revealed."<sup>13</sup>

Yet on that day — the day when Christ comes in his fullness — he won't have a drop more glory than he has today on our altars. The difference will be in us: We will see him as he is.

His present glory, though, is something we already know and already love. We should never cease thanking God for that knowledge, that grace. If there is a knowledge that sets us free, this is it: that Christ has died, Christ is risen and Christ comes again to us in the liturgy. Knowing that truth — about the liturgy, about the Scriptures, about the apocalypse, about the coming of Jesus Christ — does not make the truth any more real. But not knowing it makes it much

less efficacious.

Catholics differ from one another in many ways, but we have one thing in common — the Mass. As a Catholic, we don't have to root for the Steelers, we don't have to enjoy opera and we don't have to enjoy the theater. But we must attend and participate in the Mass every week and in every year of our lives. Moreover, the only thing that has to be read in every Mass is the sacred Scripture. And you'll notice, it's always the Old Testament and the New.

Through the reading of those two testaments we see that the promises God revealed in the Old are what Christ is fulfilling in the New. And in hearing the Liturgy of the Word, our hearts should start burning within us, just like the hearts of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus.

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On that day those two disciples walked with Jesus. They listened to him as he explained how the law and the prophets showed that the Christ must suffer in order to enter into glory. Their hearts were burning as he spoke, but they did not realize it was Jesus until he took bread, blessed, broke and gave it to them. They reported back to the other disciples, "Our hearts were burning within us, but our eyes were opened in the breaking of the bread."

So it is that the Scriptures illuminate the mystery of the eucharist, just as the eucharist is what actualizes and fulfills the saving truth of Scripture. The Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist are inseparably united. But again, the Liturgy of the Word is a means to an end, and that end is fostering a deeper eucharistic communion. That is why it is so tragic for Catholics to remain ignorant of the Scriptures.

The fact is, every Catholic I know wants to go to heaven. We just don't want to die first. Well, the good news is we don't have to die in order to go to heaven. All we have to do is go to Mass.

Then heaven is where we are. The angels and saints are who we're with, and their songs and prayers are the same as ours. For us to know this is for us to lay hold of our legacy, of our birthright, as Catholics.

We must enable more and more ordinary Catholics to discover the extraordinary graces that come from heaven down to earth and that lift earth up to heaven in every Mass in every parish in every place. This is the dynamism that drives salvation history. And this is why salvation history didn't end with the death of the last apostle. It continues every day as much as it did then. Christ fulfilled the old, but that process of fulfillment didn't end with his death and resurrection. The process of fulfillment continues today.

What Christ performed through his actions and ministry is now what he accomplishes through his priests and deacons by way of the sacraments in our own lives. The blind see, and the lame walk — naturally and supernaturally. This is what drove St. Anthony to sell all that he had. This is what drove St. Benedict to place Scripture and liturgy at the beating heart of monastic life. And this is also the unifying principle in the work of another Benedict, our new pope.

Pope Benedict XVI has retrieved for us the sacramental, incarnational nature of holy Scripture — helping us to see it as a great union of the divine and the human, as "the discourse of God rendered in human words." In his words, the biblical authors, writing freely with all the gifts at their disposal as human authors, become through the cooperation of the Almighty "those through whom God as subject, as word, that speaks itself, enters history" (*Principles of Catholic Theology*).

In the Bible, "the great book of Christ," as he has called it in his introduction to Guardini's *The Lord*, Benedict sees the unity of salvation history, of the Old and New covenants. And the culmination of the biblical story, he has shown us, is to be found in the "today" of the liturgy.

As Scripture, for him, is "the model of all theology" and the biblical authors the "normative theologians," the liturgy for Benedict is "the true, living environment for the Bible," the living context outside of which the Bible cannot be properly understood (Introduction to

Guardini's *The Lord*).

All of this has profound implications for the future of biblical theology and our liturgical proclamation.

First, it means that the formation of our priests must be based on in-depth study of sacred Scripture, a study ordered to *lectio divina* — to intimate dialogue with the risen Lord who reveals himself in the sacred page, a study that seeks the mind of Christ.

Benedict's vision means also that the proclamation of the word, especially in the homily, must truly become a breaking of the bread, a making present and efficacious of the divine gifts.

That proclamation, again most especially in the homily, is not to be informative or even merely an exposition of the readings for the Mass. It is to be transformative, to be the catalyst for our encounter with our Redeemer.

This proclamation must take a "mystagogical turn," in which the word proclaimed becomes the announcement of what is realized in the sacrament. Priests and teachers must guide the people of God into the mystery of salvation.

Theologians, pastors and catechists must see their work as the work of making saints. They must enable the people of God to hear the call that St. Anthony, Benedict and saints down through the ages have heard in the Divine Liturgy.

They must show people that this is what Scripture and liturgy were made for. Indeed, this is what the human person and the whole cosmos were made for. "For the creation waits with eager longing," said St. Paul, "for the apocalypse — the revealing — of the children of God" (Rom. 8:19).

The liturgy reveals the children of God. The liturgy reveals the kingdom of God. The liturgy reveals the word of God most perfectly because in the liturgy the Word of God himself is present as the hermeneutical key, the agent of actualization. ■

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Athanasius, *Life of Anthony* 2-3.

<sup>2</sup> Augustine, cited in Karl Hermann Schelkle, "Sacred Scripture and Word of God," in *Dogmatic vs. Biblical Theology*. Edited by Herbert Vorgrimler. (London: Burns and Oates, 1964), pp. 11-30.

<sup>3</sup> See Lucien Deiss, CSSP, *God's Word and God's People*, tr. Matthew J. O'Connell (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1976), pp. 256-257, and EX. Durrwell, *FX Durrwell CSSR*. (Theologians Today series, London: Sheed and Ward, 1972), pp. 62-65.

<sup>4</sup> Martimort 1:247.

<sup>5</sup> Jeremy Driscoll, OSB. *Theology at the Eucharistic Table* (Rome: Studia Anselmiana, 2003), p. 165.

<sup>6</sup> Driscoll, 103.

<sup>7</sup> It is interesting to note, with EX. Durrwell that "Scripture speaks only of the 'coming' of Christ; it ignores any mention whatsoever of a 'return.'" Durrwell EPC 18 The word *parousia* occurs in only one place in the Gospels, in Matthew 24, and there it does not mean "second coming" (a term that occurs nowhere in the Bible).

<sup>8</sup> Segal, 87-89.

<sup>9</sup> Martimort 1:248.

<sup>10</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Eschatology* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1988), p. 203.

<sup>11</sup> SC 7

<sup>12</sup> For Luther on Revelation, see Roland Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* (New York: Mentor, 1950), p. 261.

<sup>13</sup> G.K. Beale, *1-2 Thessalonians* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003), p. 138.

## Discovering How Faith and Reason Are Compatible

### Benedict XVI

*"Nothing succeeds as well as love for the truth in impelling the human mind toward unexplored horizons," Pope Benedict XVI said Feb. 10 when he addressed 98 officials, members and consultants of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the office he led for more than 20 years before becoming pope. He said, "The church welcomes with joy the authentic breakthroughs of human knowledge and recognizes that evangelization also demands a proper grasp of the horizons and the challenges that modern knowledge is unfolding." But, the pope said, "scientific advances have sometimes been so rapid as to make it very difficult to discern whether they are compatible with the truths about man and the world that God has revealed." Thus, he added, "every study that aims to deepen the knowledge of the truths discovered by reason is vitally important in the certainty that there is no 'competition of any kind between reason and faith.'" The pope said: "The dialogue between faith and reason, religion and science, does not only make it possible to show people of our time the reasonableness of faith in God as effectively and convincingly as possible, but also to demonstrate that the definitive fulfillment of every authentic human aspiration rests in Jesus Christ. In this regard a serious evangelizing effort cannot ignore the questions that arise also*

*from today's scientific and philosophical discoveries." The pope spoke in Italian. A Vatican translation of his text, copyright (c) 2006 by the Libreria Editrice Vaticana, follows.*

I am pleased to meet the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith at the end of its plenary meeting, a congregation over which I had the joy to preside for more than 20 years through the mandate of my predecessor, the venerable Pope John Paul II.

Your faces also make me think of all those who collaborated with the dicastery in those years: I remember them all with gratitude and affection. Indeed, I cannot but recall with a certain emotion the very intense and fruitful period which I spent with the congregation, whose task is to promote and safeguard the doctrine on faith and morals in the entire Catholic Church (cf. *Pastor Bonus*, 48).

Faith has a fundamental importance in the life of the church because the gift that God makes of himself in revelation is fundamental, and God's gift of himself is accepted through faith.

Here the importance of your congregation comes to the fore. Through its service to the whole church and to the bishops in particular as teachers of the faith and pastors, it is precisely called in a spirit of collegiality to encourage and to recall the centrality of the Catholic faith in its authentic expression.

Whenever, moreover, the perception of this centrality weakens, the fabric of ecclesial life loses its original brightness and wears thin: It degenerates into sterile activism or is reduced to political expediency with a worldly flavor.

If, instead, the truth of the faith is placed simply and decisively at the heart of Christian existence, human life is innovated and revived by a love that knows no rest or bounds, as I also had the opportunity to recall in my recent encyclical letter *Deus Caritas Est*.

Charity, like love that renews all things, moves from God's heart to the heart of Jesus Christ and through his Spirit across the world. This love is born from the encounter with Christ in faith: "Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction" (*Deus Caritas Est*, 1).