

## Appendix B

### CONVENTION LITURGY

*The following introductory call to prayer and homily were offered by Michael J. Buckley, S.J., CTSA president, who was the presider at the liturgy. The liturgy was held in Pittsburgh at the Duquesne University Chapel on June 13, 1992. The Mass celebrated was that of Trinity Sunday.*

#### INTRODUCTORY CALL TO PRAYER

When the Judeo-Christian tradition wanted to express the transcendent reality of the all-encompassing God, it frequently took words from the pagan culture of its time: *El Elyon* and *Adonai*, *Theos* and *Kurios*, *Deus* and *Dominus*. And such words from that patriarchal culture were in gender masculine.

But out of the experience of the Christian God—the God who was so interpersonal that the highest divine name was Love—out of that experience emerged a new name, one uniquely Christian and attempting to express the history of salvation as the self-giving of God. So Theophilus of Antioch introduced the term *trias*, and Tertullian the Latin *trinitas*. And both are feminine.

The uniquely Christian term for the divine reality and for the economy of our salvation, in gender feminine, is Trinity, the term that emphasizes the inter-relatedness and dynamic self-giving of God.

This is the profound mystery which this liturgy recalls: both the unspeakable reality of God and the manner in which this mystery has been given to us.

Before we listen to the word of God and enter into the Eucharist of Christ, let us bring ourselves here and pray that, in forgiveness, the One who has brought us together might touch our hearts so that we might hear this word.

#### HOMILY

##### *The Trinity and the Vocation of the Theologian*

*Texts: Proverbs 8:22-31; Romans 5:1-5; John 16:12-15*

Over the past centuries, historians have attempted to assess the profound changes and compromises worked in the Church by the Constantinian settlement.

Changes? For the Gospel could now be preached with an openness it had not previously enjoyed. By law the treatment of slaves was made more humane, and gradually Europe would become the only continent from which chattel slavery had virtually disappeared. Orphanages and hospitals became an increasing part

of every city. Bishops, such as Ambrose, could correct and censure the highest figures in the Empire for the abuse of power and the slaughter of innocent life.

But not without cost! There were also compromises. Bishops moved to become figures of considerable secular power, the social status and ambitions of the higher clergy were acknowledged with titles of honor, and the opulence of the court of Pope Damasus was said to surpass the imperial household.<sup>1</sup>

Christianity itself became gradually socially established and its external acceptance helpful for advancement into positions of political influence.

The later establishment of the Church by Theodosius led to its sense of investment in this social order, to its intolerance of public contradictions; and this in turn led to moments of connivance in the destruction of pagan temples, the legitimation of war, the persecution of other religions, and the suppression of heretics.

Theologians and Church leaders have submitted these centuries and their contemporary consequences to searching criticisms, certainly as early as John Chrysostom. Part of the hope evoked by the Second Vatican Council lay with its increased freeing of the Church from those compromises that its inculturation through the Constantinian settlement had worked. For the Church needs continually to be reformed—to be called beyond—to be called to what we are.

But I wonder if a similar critique could not be made of the assimilation of theology into the American academy.

If the Church accepted then its responsibility for the social order, theologians today have accepted their responsibility to the academy as one of the three publics to which they are answerable. Both decisions seem to me obviously warranted. The woeful teaching of religion which once marked and shamed Catholic colleges and universities has given way to theologizing as a profession in American academic life—a profession which we are understandably anxious to legitimate.

But does not this settlement also carry its own inherent liabilities, its structures of assimilation that can inhibit what the theologian is principally about? Is it an unmixed blessing that we have adopted the same *cursus honorum* and many of the same ambitions that inform American higher education?—the same identification with a middle class career, the struggles for professional recognition, and an institutional isolation from much of human misery and poverty as we search out the meaning and implications of revelation in an academic establishment?

For like any settlement, the interests of the academy can become overgrown, engrossing—cancerous—defining the work, the struggles, and so much of the self-understanding and self-evaluation of a theologian through its own politics, its own anxieties for promotion and advancement, its own determination of what

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<sup>1</sup>Henry Chadwick, *The Early Church, The Pelican History of the Church*, vol. 1 (London: Penguin, 1967) 161-73.

constitutes serious accomplishment in the field.

If one looks at this settlement in its worst development, is it alien from our own histories that an initial promise for research and graduate excellence in some universities has been blighted by intractable hostilities that could rival stories coming out of Harvard Law?—as if the Gospel did not have its own resources, its unyielding summons to reconciliation and healing and to a charity that is so much deeper than our insights?

The Constantinian settlement and the Hellenistic transposition of the Gospels have come periodically under heavy attack, but the Church need not apologize for its general willingness to become incarnate within the European world.

So also with us. There is no mistake in moving out of academic irresponsibility and isolation into American academic culture. Only in this way could the reflection upon revelation become incarnate within that locus of American life most alienated from religion.

The terrible mistake would be to make this indicated move naively unaware of the liabilities inherent in any such translation and its need for continual critique. For theology must always push beyond the very culture that has given it home and linguistic intelligibility. *Evangelium semper maius*. The Gospel is always greater, and theologians—like the Church itself—need to be called beyond, to become what we are.

Perhaps in this context, the liturgy of this afternoon can challenge us, can call us beyond, can recall the sacredness of what we are about.

For we celebrate the essential and interpersonal love that is God's Trinity; and as the Trinity is finally the reality of God, so is it finally the ultimate intelligibility of everything that is. If we would understand ourselves as Christian theologians, we must see our lives and vocation as an expression within the history of the life of the Trinity.

The Gospel of John we have just read centers upon the Spirit of God as teacher—one could almost say as theologian.

Three times this Spirit of truth is said to engage the Church. And how?

- The Spirit will "declare" to you what is to come.
- The Spirit will "declare" to you what the Spirit has taken from Christ.
- And repeated: The Spirit will take what is of Christ and "declare" it to you.

Three times, the same verb; three times, the same activity, *anaggellein*: to announce or to proclaim something again. It means that the Spirit will continue what has been realized in Christ—yes, but also that the Spirit will interpret it for us, will probe its deeper meaning, will make it understood in different cultures and contexts. The Spirit leads the Church into truth through this ceaseless activity, through the *declarative interpretation* of what is of Christ, so that the experience that is the faith of the community might move towards a deeper understanding of what is in Christ.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 3 vols. (New

Is that not profoundly what we are about—as theologians, as scholars or teachers, i.e. an interpretation of the experience of faith that allows for a deeper understanding? Is it not here—in embodying this work of the Spirit of God—that we find the meaning and the sacredness of our own vocation “to take what is of Christ and to declare it,” to interpret it, to profess it?

One thinks of the years of study that each of us has gone through to be in this chapel this afternoon: the hours of hard work as students, the anxiety about examinations, the discouragement over intractable moments in the dissertation, the search for a place to teach, waiting for the reaction of editors to our first submissions, the concern with which we check the reviews of our first book.

Is the meaning of all of this not found here: that we might be caught up in the work of the Spirit of God?

And now as professors—the time we give to preparing our classes and articles, the hours at our desks and in our offices, the concern we have for our students, the carefulness with which we try to enter into issues that trouble us and ideas that seem initially so foreign: Is not all of this that we might “take what is of Christ and declare it?”

“To take what is of Christ”: Such a vocation indicates a profoundly personal contact with Christ—through prayer and contemplation, and study, but also, as we have been so often called over these past days, through a serious commitment to the poor and the marginalized, to find Christ where He has promised to be.

In the Spirit, we are to bring what is of Christ to a new understanding, to a new realization in the temporal order, to a new love. In this way, in and through the Spirit, our vocation is to transform human life and, perhaps above all, human hope, through that creative wisdom that Proverbs says is always an accomplishment of the presence and the action of God.

In the Gospel we have just read, Jesus says that this action of the Spirit is His glory:

The Spirit will glorify me  
Because the Spirit will take what is of me  
And declare to you. (Jn 16:14)

Jesus glorifies the Father, John will write, by disclosing the Father to human beings (Jn 17:4). And the Spirit will glorify Jesus, says the Gospel we just read, by taking what is of Christ and making it known to human beings. The increasing glory of God is this progressive revelation of the Trinity.

Glory? For God is always present in our lives. But when that presence comes to dominate our consciousness and our loves, when it becomes almost palpably present with the intensity of deeper meaning and love, then we talk about glory.

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York: Crossroads, 1990) 3:135-37; Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John XIII-XXI, The Anchor Bible*, vol. 29a (Garden City NY: Doubleday and Company, 1970) 714-17.

This is how Jesus reads the work of the Spirit: a teaching of the divine reality that is His glory.

Can we not find the meaning and the sacredness of our own vocation here as well?

The pedestrian work of the day-by-day, the monotony of fidelity in teaching and in scholarship, the relentless asceticism of speaking the truth and as we know it irrespective of its current acceptance: Is not all of this so that Christ would be glorified through our lives?

Theology itself is called to become that manifestation of the Trinity within human life that is the divine glory.

Paul says that this is the hope for the glory in which human beings are called to exult. So great a gift of God is this that every Sunday the Church prays: "We give you thanks for your great glory."<sup>1</sup>

Such is our vocation. Beyond the promise and the limitation of any academic establishment, beyond our personal limitations and sins—and those of the Church itself—we are to find the pattern of our lives and the coherence of our vocation in the Trinity which is the reality of God.

May then, God's Trinity—in her unspeakable goodness and mystery—teach us and guide us in the life that is ours, and may we grow in "God's love poured forth into our hearts by the Spirit that has been given to us" (Rom 5:5).

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<sup>1</sup>This is a literal translation of the official Latin: *Gratiam agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam*. Unfortunately the current English translation misses this nuance and replaces thanksgiving with praise.