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# NARRATIVE SIGNIFICATION AND THE PASCHAL MYSTERY

## Liturgy, Participation, and Hermeneutics

This investigation brings together key concepts in the thought of Karl Rahner, Stephen Crites, Mark Searle, and Paul Ricoeur in an attempt to understand better the workings of Christian liturgy by attending to the way its narrative features can engage its practitioners. The term "narrative signification" is used as shorthand for the idea that something can be considered meaningful only when placed within a narrative context. When one contextualizes something, one seeks a coherent story within which to locate it and a manageable view of the (for all practical purposes) infinite web of relations within which the reality in question is embedded, allowing one better to identify it and appropriate its meaning. If at one time Ricoeur could say, "The symbol gives rise to thought,"[1] later he would say that no symbol can do so without its contextualization in narrative.

Our approach is in part an exercise in liturgical hermeneutics understood in two senses – both as a hermeneutics *of* liturgy (i.e. the science of interpretation of sacramental, ritual activity) and as a conception of liturgy that considers such activity *itself* to be a hermeneutical enterprise. The former sense is perhaps familiar enough so as not to require much explanation, so my focus will be on the latter, on liturgy itself as a form of hermeneutics. The first section introduces the three theological voices that inspire this effort. The second consists in highlighting some principle ideas in Ricoeur's narrative thought. The third section explores the implications of a narrative approach for considering that primary concern of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the faithful's full, conscious, and active participation in the liturgy.[2]

1. See *The Symbolism of Evil*, trans. Emerson Buchanan (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1967) 347-357.

2. See *Sacrosanctum Concilium* [SC] 14.

## 1. The Liturgy of the World and the Narrative Quality of Experience

### *1.1. Rahner: The Liturgy of the World*

The first voice, and the foremost in terms of offering a broad theological framework and in raising early on a view of the liturgy itself as a form of interpretation, belongs to Karl Rahner. Rahner asserts his conception of worship as an alternative to the view of human life and history that can see the sacred only within the temple, that perceives the world beyond the temple (pro-fane) as intrinsically sinful, and that hence understands the sacraments as moments of access to a divine grace not otherwise available. He shifts the model of sacramentality from one "based on the implicit assumption that grace can be an unmerited gift of God only if it becomes present in a secular and sinful world to which it is mostly denied," to one which "starts out from the assumption that the secular world from the outset is always encompassed and permeated with the grace of the divine self-communication": "The sacraments accordingly are not really to be understood as successive individual incursions of God into a secular world, but as 'outbursts' … of the innermost, ever present gracious endowment of the world with God himself into history."[3]

For Rahner, the celebration of the sacraments makes explicit the cosmic proportions of the on-going relationship to all creation of the God who is its source, sustainer, and goal. He speaks of this divine involvement with the created world – an involvement culminating in the cross of Christ – as the "terrible and sublime" liturgy, "the true liturgy of the world."[4] The liturgy of the church, the celebrations of sacramental rites by the Body of Christ, are *interpretations* of human life and history, of that primordial liturgy which God has been celebrating since the dawn of creation and which has made its clearest manifestation in the saving Paschal Mystery. In fact, it is our participation in this worldly liturgy of God's celebration which enables our authentic engagement in the liturgy of the church – liturgy "in the more usual sense."[5]

3. Karl Rahner, "On the Theology of Worship," *Theological Investigations*, vol. 19 (New York: Crossroad, 1983) 142-143.

4. Karl Rahner, "Considerations on the Active Role of the Person in the Sacramental Event," *Theological Investigations*, vol. 14 (New York: The Seabury Press, 1976) 161-184, especially 169-170.

5. *Ibid*.

### *1.2. Crites: Sacred and Mundane Stories*

Our second theological voice, an early one in the sub-discipline that came to be known as narrative theology, belongs to Stephen Crites.[6] A general survey of the various writings placed under the umbrella term "narrative theology" reveals that they typically focus on the ways in which biblical stories become paradigmatic for a community's theological understanding and ethics, as numerous commentators on narrative approaches to Christianity will attest.[7] More fundamentally for our purposes, and apart from the question of their content, narrative theologies also typically flow from the conviction, articulated so well by Crites in his seminal article, "The Narrative Quality of Experience," that a certain logical and theological priority must be granted to *human experience* – its inherently temporal, narrative capacities and expressions ("first-level" reflections) – over discursive arguments or propositional formulations ("second-level" reflections).[8] In this respect, the premise of most narrative theologies bears at least a family resemblance to the conception of liturgical theology that gives priority to prayer over doctrine, an idea captured in the ancient adage attributed to Prosper of Aquitaine (d. ca. 463), *ut legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi* – "that the law of praying may establish the law of believing."[9] The narrative priority given to first-level reflections is reminiscent also of the concern of Paul Ricoeur that the human capacity for interpreting symbols is a presupposition of human cognition ("the symbol gives rise to thought"). We will see in the second section below that Ricoeur's hermeneutical focus shifted from sign and symbol to metaphor to narrative and how this trajectory in his thought both parallels and holds out promise for liturgical theology.

6. For descriptions of narrative theology, see *The New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Joseph A. Komonchak (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1987) s.v. "Narrative Theology;" Michael Downey (ed.), *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1987) s.vv. "Myth," "Narrative," and "Story."

7. To offer just one example here: "The canonical Scriptures provide the basic narratives for how the Church imagines the world and itself in the world … ; the Christian takes the biblical narratives, above all the narratives of Christ, as the fundamental story by which all others are to be understood, including his or her own story." Gerard Loughlin, *Telling God's Story* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 19-20.

8. Stephen Crites, "The Narrative Quality of Experience," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 39 (1971) 291-311, reprinted in *Why Narrative? Readings in Narrative Theology*, ed. Stanley Hauerwas – L. Gregory Jones (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989; reprinted Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1997) 65-88. Citations below to Crites' article are from the 1997 reprint.

9. *Capitula Celestini*, in *Patrologia Latina* 51, 209; see Paul De Clerck, "*Lex orandi, lex credendi*: Sens original et avatars historiques d'un adage equivoque," *Questions liturgiques* 59 (1978) 193-212.

The human experience that precedes discursive argument is always set, contends Crites, more broadly within a cultural framework that gives shape to the particular narrative expressions he calls "mundane stories" ("the stories that are told, all stories directly seen or heard").[10] They are "mundane" in the sense that their objectified images, "to be capable of being plausible objects of consciousness, must be placed within that world, that phenomenological *mundus*, which defines the objective horizon of a particular form of consciousness. In order to be told, a story must be set within a world," whether this be an "everyday" world or one that has been "imaginatively augmented."[11] Unlike a mundane story – even a highly treasured one within the Christian tradition, such as one of the Genesis creation accounts, or a Lukan parable, or the Passion as portrayed in any of the four gospels – a "sacred story" is not something that can be directly told; rather, through the telling of certain mundane stories, it is something to which people "awaken,"

> … and their most significant mundane stories are told in the effort, never fully successful, to articulate it. For the sacred story does not transpire within a conscious world. It forms the very consciousness that projects a total world horizon, and therefore informs the intentions by which actions are projected into that world … One may attempt to name a sacred story … But such naming misleads as much as it illuminates, since its meaning is contained – and concealed – in the unutterable cadences and revelations of the story itself…
>
> Between sacred and mundane stories there is distinction without separation. From the sublime to the ridiculous, all a people's mundane stories are implicit in its sacred story, and every mundane story takes soundings in the sacred story. But some mundane stories sound out greater depths than others… People are able to feel [the resonance of sacred stories in the mundane stories], because the unutterable stories are those they know best of all.[12]

This distinction between mundane story and sacred story is an essential aspect of the narrative approach to liturgical theology that I am proposing. We cannot fail to miss its deep resonance with Rahner's notion of the relationship between the liturgy of the Church, analogous to Crites' *mundane* story – albeit one of those that can "sound out greater depths than others" – and the liturgy of the world, which I take to be one way in which Rahner would attempt to name the Christian equivalent of Crites' *sacred* story. Even the intrinsic relationship between, if you will, the depth and surface aspects of their respective depictions and the coterminous quality of human

10. Crites, "Narrative Quality," 70.
11. *Ibid*.
12. *Ibid*., 71.

life with the depth aspect are points of agreement. For Crites, the sacred story is implicit in every mundane story, "distinction without separation," because the sacred story, though unutterable, is best known; for Rahner, because the liturgy of the world is "identical with the history of the world as rightly enacted,"[13] it is the source of our ability to participate authentically in the liturgy of the church, which is its expression, its "manifestation."

Briefly to take stock, then, of our first two voices: with Karl Rahner, we see that the one sublime reality of the divinely celebrated liturgy of the world, lying deep within and constitutive of authentically human life and history, is definitively made known in history through the Paschal Mystery, the life (especially ministry and teaching), passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This liturgy of the world is remembered (*anamnesis*) in the liturgy of the church, a ritual marker utilized by humanity, especially Christian believers, to interpret human life and history in its depths through the lens of this Paschal Mystery, in such a way that the liturgy is itself a hermeneutics of life. Important, even essential dimensions of this dynamic relationship between the liturgy of the church (liturgy "in the usual sense") and the liturgy of the world may be drawn out further by bringing the narrative insights of Stephen Crites to bear on this dynamic. The liturgy of the church may be seen as one of those mundane stories that "sound out greater depths" of the sacred story, that of the liturgy of the world, which cannot be fully told because the sacred story "does not transpire within a conscious world." Shortly we will take up the narrative dimensions in greater detail with Ricoeur, but before doing so let us first hear from one more theological voice.

### *1.3. Searle: Liturgical Participation and the Narrative Quality of Liturgy*

That third voice, and the most suggestive one for my proposal, belongs to pastoral/liturgical theologian Mark Searle, who in separate writings made reference to both Crites' and Rahner's above-quoted paragraphs. He borrowed quite directly from Crites in titling a 1982 article "The Narrative Quality of Christian Liturgy,"[14] wherein he offered a description of Crites' main thesis ("that narrativity – the ordering and reordering of memories in an intelligible sequence – is inherent in human beings' continual quest for meaning") and sketched out some of its potential pastoral applications to liturgical participation: "It is therefore to be expected that religious inter-

13. Rahner, "Considerations," 170.

14. Mark Searle, "The Narrative Quality of Christian Liturgy," *Chicago Studies* 21 (1982) 73-84.

pretations of the world should take narrative form; and … that such narrativity should be reflected in the prayer offered by believers."[15] Searle goes on to address how that narrative approach assists our understanding of the way liturgical collects and Eucharistic prayers, for example, proclaim the Christian story, how the medieval imposition of allegorical interpretations of the liturgy obscured that proclamation by turning the liturgy into a dramatic re-enactment of the past, and how the attempt to recover that proclamation through liturgical participation can be aided through the use of structural analysis.

Searle also refers to Rahner's notion of the liturgy of the world in at least two of his writings. He introduces it in a paper on liturgy and culture in the context of describing the dramatic fundamental changes ("a conversion of outlook and of language, a re-conceiving of the role of the parish and of the Christian community, and a reformulation by each of us of our Christian identity") that would be necessary for Christian worshippers to attain to truly "public" worship.[16] In order better to understand how Searle utilizes Rahner's notion, it is helpful to see it within the broad context of Searle's approach to liturgical participation as outlined in *Called to Participate*.

In the first chapter of this book, Searle distinguishes within the late 19th- and 20th-century Liturgical Movement what he sees as actually "two liturgical movements" with different trajectories envisioned for liturgical participation. In the earlier movement, the intention was to help the people better understand the liturgy so that they might be adapted to its rhythms and cadences, allowing the liturgy to do its work on them. In this period, in the United States in particular, there was a pronounced connection between how this transforming effect of the liturgy on the faithful would lead to their having a transforming effect on society. That connection, in Searle's view, was diminished in the later movement, where the paradigm shifted to liturgical reform – instead of the people adapting to the liturgy through deeper understanding resulting in personal and social renewal, the liturgy was adapting to the people, albeit with the intention expressed in SC that this deepen their participation, in particular where the focus was

15. *Ibid*., 74.

16. "Private Religion, Individualistic Society, and Common Worship," *Liturgy and Spirituality in Context: Perspectives on Prayer and Culture*, ed. Eleanor Bernstein (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1990) 27-46, reprinted in *Vision: The Scholarly Contributions of Mark Searle to Liturgical Renewal*, ed. Anne Y. Koester – Barbara Searle (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004) 185-203, quotation at 197-198. Searle also refers to Rahner's "liturgy of the world" in *Called to Participate: Theological, Ritual, and Social Perspectives*, ed. Barbara Searle – Anne Y. Koester (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2006); Searle's reference in both is to Rahner's earlier essay, "Secular Life and the Sacraments: The Mass and the World," *The Tablet* 225 (13 March 1971) 267-268.

on greater intelligibility (use of the vernacular, cutting out repetitious prayers and gestures or elements that obscured the basic structure and meaning, etc.).

The second chapter of *Called to Participate* depicts three levels of liturgical participation corresponding to the distinctions drawn in scholastic theology among the *sacramentum tantum*, the *res et sacramentum*, and the *res tantum* of a sacrament. The first level of participation is taking one's part in the ritual itself; the second is participating in the Christian economy, "in the *priestly work of Christ* on behalf of the world before the throne of God and thus identifying with Christ dead and risen;" the third is "the level of divine life" where participation "in the *trinitarian life of God* as human beings" may take place.[17] Here Searle goes to the theological heart of participation, first by laying out the many ways in which the ritual level has its formative effects on the assembly and its members, all with the intention, at the second level, of greater incorporation into Christ, through Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit. He describes Christ's role as mediator:

> [W]e should not think of Christ as coming *between* us and God, as a go-between accentuating our continuing distance from God even as he bridges it. Rather we come to God *in* Christ, where Christ is the holy ground, the very place of encounter, the way into the abyss of the mystery of God … The pattern of Christ's life and death is the expression (in the form of a human life) of the Son's relationship to the Father. It is the pattern of our own approach to God: the journey of a lifetime that is recapitulated, rehearsed, and advanced whenever we come to the liturgy.[18]

Searle goes on to say that this is all the work of the Spirit of God, the same Spirit that is the eternal bond between the Father and the Son, "this same creative Spirit of love that hovered over the chaos in the beginning of creation and that now transforms the broken shards of our humanity into a new creation. It is this same Spirit that brings us together in Christ and in Christ brings us together in God … Thus the Spirit may be thought of as the principle of relatedness."[19]

Finally, according to Searle, this entire process takes place in human history, as an historical unfolding. "The human race, and especially though not exclusively those of us who are believers, are in process of being changed … into the image of Christ."[20] We are gradually being restored to "our original likeness to God" as we allow the Spirit to transform us in this

17. Searle, *Called to Participate*, 18 and 44, emphasis in the original.
18. *Ibid*., 41.
19. *Ibid*., 42.
20. *Ibid*., 43.

process that "the Latins call 'sanctification' and the Greeks call 'divinization,' and it occurs in history, over the course of centuries, as God gathers a people 'from age to age' in Christ."[21]

Chapters Three and Four address the implications of this liturgical/theological vision for, respectively, the inward/contemplative and the outward/public dimensions of liturgy. In Chapter Three, Searle associates the deepened understanding of liturgy with what Romano Guardini in his famous open letter (1964) spoke of as the "lost attitudes" and the "forgotten way of doing things" in the "liturgical act," lost and forgotten largely because of the individualistic mentality of modern culture.[22] Searle goes on to describe what recovery of such a loss might look like if "contemplative" engagement with liturgical scriptures, prayers, gestures and time were to take place. In Chapter Four, he takes up the outward, public dimension of liturgy, reminding the reader that the connection between worship and social existence is intrinsic. He draws on the work of Virgil Michel, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Robert Bellah, and Parker Palmer to analyze North American culture's ambiguity toward the ideal of "community," and the hindrance this can be to realizing authentic public worship.[23] He contends that our modern parishes function too much like "lifestyle enclaves" (Bellah); the assembly needs rather to be re-envisioned as a "company of strangers" (Palmer) and a genuine "community of memory" (Bellah), which also owns the "dangerous memories [that] call the community to alter ancient evils [and that] turn us to the future as [a community] of hope."[24]

It is finally at this point in *Called to Participate* that Searle turns explicitly to Rahner's conception of the liturgy of the world. It exemplifies, for Searle, what is essential for truly public worship, namely, "to recognize that the salvation we remember and celebrate is the salvation won for the whole human race, the redemption of the *whole* human story."[25] He quotes Rahner's description of how a person with this true liturgical mind-set might participate:

> He is profoundly aware of the drama into which his life is unceasingly drawn … He thinks of the dying … and he knows that this fate has already taken up lodging in his own being. He feels in himself the groaning of the creature and the world … He grasps something of the burden of the statesman … He bears within himself something of the laughter of children …;

21. *Ibid*.

22. "A Letter from Romano Guardini," *Herder Correspondence* (August 1964) 237-239.

23. For the specific works referenced, see *Called to Participate*, 88, nn. 1-14.

24. Robert Bellah *et al*., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984) 153; quoted in *Called to Participate*, 77.

25. *Called to Participate*, 78.

> within him resounds also the weeping of the starving children, the agony of the sick … The dispassionate seriousness of the scientist …, the hard determination of those struggling to liberate [hu]mankind – all these find their echo in him.[26]

Searle asks, recalling the words of the Christmas collect and at the preparation of the cup, "Is there any other way to share the divinity of Christ than by way of identification of all that makes up the human experience? Is there any other way to remember Christ except by remembering the world with which he identified?" He concludes that in order "to overcome the cultural momentum toward religious individualism, we would need forms of worship that actually cultivated such an awareness of the 'liturgy of the world';" in such public worship, we would no longer "tend to judge liturgies by what we get out of them and to think of participation as what we put into them."[27] We would, in short, become a priestly people – a concept we will revisit below. For the moment, it is important to see that Searle has taken seriously both Crites' call for a narrative approach and Rahner's idea of the liturgy of the world, contending that our celebration of the liturgy "must not be for our own benefit so much as an exercise of our vocation to represent humanity before God."[28]

## 2. Paul Ricoeur: A Narrative Horizon

### *2.1. Sign – Symbol – Metaphor – Text: the Narrative Trajectory*

What we have seen from Rahner, Crites, and Searle suggests that a deepened appreciation of narrativity and an exploration of its various dimensions hold much promise for liturgical interpretation, theology, and practice. And there is no better avenue to such a narrative investigation than the thought of Paul Ricoeur. The overall thrust of Ricoeur's narrative approach and hints of its import for liturgical and theological traditions come through in his own words:

> [I]t is possible to apply the play of sedimentation and innovation, which we recognized in the works of every tradition, to our understanding of ourselves. In the same manner we do not cease to re-interpret the narrative identity that constitutes us in the light of stories handed down to us by our

26. Rahner, "Secular Life and the Sacraments," 267, quoted in *Called to Participate*, 80-81.

27. Searle, *Called to Participate*, 80.

28. *Ibid*., 81.

> culture. In this sense our self-understanding presents the same traits of traditionality as the understanding of a literary work does. In this way we learn to become the *narrator of our own story* without completely becoming the author of our life.[29]

I propose to bring Ricoeur's narrative theory to bear on the liturgical act not only because his approach is in itself enlightening but also because the trajectory of his hermeneutic thought parallels that of developments in twentieth-century understanding of sacramental liturgy: from sign and symbol, to metaphor, to narrative text.[30] Let us take a brief run through this itinerary.

Ricoeur's early and continuing focus on *signs* is tantamount to a focus on language in general.[31] One experiences the verbal and non-verbal signs of the community, which have been historically developed and handed down (*traditio*) through previous generations, before one begins to produce speech or other human-specific signs on one's own. Self-understanding is dependent upon one's prior awareness and comprehension of external signs and language (produced by *others*) before one even comes to consciousness of one's "self." The notion of linguistic mediation also presumes, against the modern analytic view of society and culture as an aggregate of individuals who are the starting points for investigation, that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, that no notion of "individual" is sufficient without the recognition of the essentially communal character of human existence.

When it comes to the question of *symbol*, the same social and cultural dynamic holds, but Ricoeur's notion of a "surplus of meaning" now emerges. Symbols as particularly dense and even ambiguous cultural signs "mean more than we can say;" while symbols help to structure meaning (they do not mean just anything, nor merely whatever we want them to mean), no single interpretation exhausts their meaning, and their effect on

29. Paul Ricoeur, "Life: A Story in Search of a Narrator," *A Ricoeur Reader*, ed. Mario J. Valdés (Toronto – Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1991) 425-437, at 437.

30. Cf. Ricoeur's own description of this trajectory in "On Interpretation," *The Continental Philosophy Reader*, ed. Richard Kearney – Mara Rainwater (London – New York: Routledge, 1996) 136-155, reprinted from *Philosophy in France Today*, ed. Alan Montefiore (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983) 175-197. See especially 151-152 in *The Continental Philosophy Reader*. Sacramental theologians whose approaches to utilize symbol and metaphor include Raymond Vaillancourt, Tad Guzie, George S. Worgul, Kenan B. Osborne, and Gail Ramshaw. Liturgical theologians who have, in varying ways and degrees, begun the move in the direction of narrative approaches to liturgy and sacrament include David Power, Peter Fink, Louis-Marie Chauvet, Edward Kilmartin, Bruce Morrill, Joyce Ann Zimmerman, and Brian Anastasi Butcher.

31. Compare Ricoeur's approach to Chauvet's treatment of "language as mediation" in "The Human Subject in Language and Culture," *The Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001) 3-17.

understanding (including self-understanding) is to mediate this unified but complex richness, which cannot be replaced through explanation or capsulated in any other way. Symbolic meaning is irreducible. This surplus will also allow us to – in fact, demands that we – interpret them, hear them in a different key than pre-modern persons would have; such interpretation directs us to the "second naïveté" Ricoeur famously describes in *The Symbolism of Evil*.[32]

The principle of a surplus of meaning holds for *metaphor* as well, but here Ricoeur's emphasis is on the *innovation* in meaning that is communicated by the juxtaposition of elements from different semantic realms.[33] New meaning emerges, which would remain unknown without the divergent known fields interacting through the metaphoric relation. Ricoeur's study of metaphor brings to light the metaphorical nature of language in general: wherever new meaning emerges, this metaphorical dynamic is at play.[34] As important as repetition is in the appropriation and use of language (without repetition there is no sedimentation into a linguistic system [*langue*] or passing on [*traditio*] of language), meaning only emerges when the familiar words repeated are used in fresh contexts (without applicability to new situations there is no speech-event [*parole*] or discourse).[35] The importance of *text* as context becomes clear: the plurivocity of meaning in symbolic and metaphorical words in literature and elsewhere demands that the reference of the words be not only to their "dictionary" meanings but also to their textual world. The power of a word to communicate meaning depends on its being placed in relation to other words in the sentence and the larger work of which it is a part.

Ricoeur picks up with *narrative* where his earlier work on metaphor left off, noting that the semantic production of narrative is similar to the way in which metaphor produces new meaning. In *Time and Narrative* he describes the "semantic innovation" effected by narrative as having yet another, temporal dimension:

> With narrative, the semantic innovation lies in the inventing of another work of synthesis – a plot. By means of the plot, goals, causes, and chance are brought together within the temporal unity of a whole and complete action. It is this synthesis of the heterogeneous that brings narrative close

32. Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 351.

33. Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, trans. Robert Czerny with Kathleen McLaughlin and John Costello (Toronto – Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1977).

34. See, for example, *The Rule of Metaphor*, Study 8: "Metaphor and Philosophical Discourse," where Ricoeur engages with the thought of Jean Ladrière, especially 295-303.

35. See Ricoeur, "The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation," *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action, and Interpretation*, ed. and trans. John B. Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) 131-144, especially 132-136.

> to metaphor. In both cases, the new thing – the as yet unsaid, the unwritten – springs up in language.[36]

The paradoxes or "aporias" of temporality form the backdrop to Ricoeur's entire investigation in *Time and Narrative*, the thesis of which he puts succinctly: "time becomes human time to the extent that it is organized after the manner of a narrative; narrative, in turn, is meaningful to the extent that it portrays the features of temporal existence."[37] These aporias, in brief, have to do with the unity of the self through the diverse experiences of personal past, present and future; the perceived unity of time itself in personal, communal and global perspectives of history; and the resistance of time to human attempts to master it (its "inscrutability").[38] Ricoeur contends that these aporias cannot be resolved speculatively, but that narrative can reply to them in such a way that they are "put to work" and made productive.[39]

A comprehensive description of Ricoeur's work on narrative and its application to liturgical understanding is hardly feasible here. Readers familiar with the significant discussion of the incorporation of performance theory into liturgical/ritual interpretation[40] might especially question whether utilizing Ricoeur's approach, with its strong emphasis on written text, does a disservice to liturgy as performance/action. The question deserves fuller treatment than space here permits. For the time being it must suffice to propose that a justification for utilizing Ricoeur can be made, first, due to his own awareness of the pros and cons of an intensified focus on written discourse indicated in his essay "On Interpretation;"[41] second,

36. Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 3 vols., vols. 1-2 trans. Kathleen McLaughlin – David Pellauer, vol. 3 trans. Kathleen Blamey – David Pellauer (Chicago, IL – London: University of Chicago Press, 1984-1988) [hereafter cited as TN with volume and page number], at 1: ix.

37. TN 1: 3.

38. See the helpful overview of Ricoeur's narrative theory in William Schweiker, "Narrative as Mimesis of Time," *Mimetic Reflections: A Study in Hermeneutics, Theology, and Ethics* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1990) 88-132, especially 118-127.

39. TN 3: 261.

40. This question is central to the work of liturgical theologian Margaret Mary Kelleher. See "Liturgy: An Ecclesial Act of Meaning," *Worship* 59 (1985) 482-497, "Liturgical Theology: A Task and Method," *Worship* 62 (1988) 2-25, "Hermeneutics in the Study of Liturgical Performance," *Worship* 67 (1993) 292-318, and "Ritual Studies and the Eucharist: Paying Attention to Performance," in Gerard Austin *et al*., *Eucharist: Toward the Third Millenium* (Chicago, IL: Liturgy Training Publications, 1997) 51-64. An excellent summary of the use of performance theory by ritual theorists may be found in Catherine Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (New York – Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) 72-76, with comparisons to the related area of ritual practice at 76-83.

41. Cited above, n. 28. Ricoeur writes: "[A]t first sight [the] mediation [of self-understanding by texts] seems more limited than the mediation by signs and by symbols, which can be simply oral or even non-verbal. Mediation by texts seems to restrict the sphere of

on the basis of the analogy between text and action that Ricoeur explicitly draws in another important essay, "The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as a Text;"[42] and finally, in virtue of the fact that with Ricoeur's shift to narrative comes a concomitant emphasis and re-evaluation of the essential role of human *action* in the articulation of personal and communal identity, as will be explored below.

In the remainder of this section I will outline Ricoeur's narrative theory depicted as a threefold *mimesis*, including some brief treatment of his view of narrative temporality. Some insights and examples for liturgical theology and practice reframed on the basis of narrative signification are indicated along the way.

### *2.2. Threefold* Mimesis*: Emplotment as "Imitation of Action" (*mimesis praxeos*)*

Ricoeur's narrative theory continues his long-running exploration of discourse, in particular its representational aspect.[43] His strategy is to undertake an analysis of *mimesis* (usually translated "representation" or "imitation" but preferably left untranslated by Ricoeur) that breaks the constraints of the Platonic understanding that has dominated Western thought. For Plato and his adherents, contends Ricoeur, a representation is always a "redoubled presence,"[44] a copy of something weaker and subordinate to – at a further remove from the reality or presence of – the original, which itself is already an imitation of the "most" real Form or Idea.

Ricoeur sees Aristotle's *Poetics* parting ways with Plato primarily in two respects. First, "for Aristotle *mimesis* takes place only within the area of human action, or production, or *poiesis*. It is an operation, as is indicated by the *-sis* ending that it shares with *poiesis*…."[45] Rather than communicating something static, it communicates something active and in motion, a productive process. Second, "far from producing a weakened image of pre-existing things, *mimesis* brings about an augmentation of meaning in the field of action which is its privileged field. It does not equate itself with something already given. Rather, it produces what it imitates."[46] Ricoeur's

interpretation to writing and to literature to the detriment of oral cultures. This is true. But what the definition loses in extension, it gains in intensity. Indeed, writing opens up new and original resources for discourse. Thanks to writing, discourse acquires a threefold semantic autonomy: in relation to the speaker's intention, to its reception by its original audience, and to the economic, social, and cultural circumstances of its production" [152].

42. *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, 197-221.

43. See Ricoeur, "Mimesis and Representation," *A Ricoeur Reader*, 137-155.

44. *Ibid*., 138.

45. *Ibid*.

46. *Ibid*.

narrative theory relies on this notion of *mimesis* as creative imitation/production. Central to this is another concept borrowed from the *Poetics*, that of *mythos* or emplotment which Aristotle defined there as "*sýnthesis tôn pragmáton*, the arrangement of the incidents."[47] It is in the realm of *praxis* above all that *mimesis* as *mythos* or emplotment (rather than "plot" – a process rather than a "thing") creatively produces its augmentation of meaning.

Ricoeurian *mimesis* has manifold implications for liturgical theology and practice. The divergence from the Platonic "specular" conception of representation in favor of the semantically creative, augmentative Aristotelian view brings to mind one of the more controversial debates in Roman Catholic liturgical circles, namely, the role and value of Eucharistic adoration. It may be enlightening to consider whether those who promote practices such as "perpetual adoration" are operating more out of the Platonic understanding of representation than out of the Aristotelian/Ricoeurian. Conversely, with respect to a practical liturgical/theological issue related to adoration, Ricoeur's Aristotelian view of *mimesis* has appeal for those who contend (as I do) that the central placement of a tabernacle is a distraction to the practical flow of the assembly's celebration of Eucharist. The representation of Christ in the action of the Eucharistic rite is here understood as more significant than the localized presence of Christ in the tabernacle.[48] The poetic aspect of this action (the "Do this" – *toûto poieîte* – of Luke 22:19) comes into play, such that new meaning emerges from a creative process; such anamnetic *poiesis* is productive and augmentative of the meaning of the Eucharistic activity, not a static conceptualization that measures its reality against "the original." The theological implications of this difference in emphasis between the two views are quite striking. For example, how does one understand Christ as represented in the Eucharist? Is his "real presence" augmented or diminished by a narrative understanding of *mimesis*? Does a male presbyter better represent Christ (because closer in physical form to the "original"), or is the presider's sex irrelevant because it is the *mimesis praxeos*, the creative "imitation of the action," that matters in representing Christ? Such questions, it is hoped, can be addressed with greater nuance through a more detailed understanding of Ricoeur's mimetic approach to a literary work.[49]

Ricoeur's depiction of the *mimesis* of action is threefold: *prefiguration* ($\text{mimesis}_1$) as the practical/semantic, cultural/symbolic and temporal order

47. *Ibid*., 138-139.

48. In a similar vein, see Rosemary Haughton, *The Transformation of Man* (Springfield, IL: Templegate, 1967, 1980) 267.

49. See David N. Power, "Liturgical Praxis: A New Consciousness at the Eye of Worship," Ch. 8 in *Worship: Culture and Theology* (Washington, DC: The Pastoral Press, 1990) 127-142, especially the section entitled "Representation," 134-137.

of human action constituting the preconditions that make a narrative work possible for an author and intelligible to a reader; *configuration* (mimesis$_2$) as the narrative emplotment offered by the work and reconstituted or completed by the reader; and *refiguration* (mimesis$_3$) as the transformation of the reader's understanding and acting made possible through engagement with and appropriation of the narrative. Because the threefold mimetic process is so central to Ricoeur's overarching narrative theory, a closer look at these three senses of *mimesis* is warranted here.

Ricoeur describes mimesis$_1$ or "prefiguration" as the "pre-understanding of what human action is, of its semantics, its symbolism, its temporality."[50] What he says of the *semantic* aspect of mimesis$_1$ is significant as a basic argument for what I have been calling "narrative signification": the semantics of mimesis$_1$ refers to the narrative framework presupposed in the order of human action that allows us to distinguish between the occurrences of nature, as subject to the laws of physics, for example, and action as specifically human. This basic narrative intelligibility, the meaningfulness of human action, is anchored "in our competence for using such terms as project and intention, motive and reason for action, circumstance, obstacle and occasion, agent and capacity to do something … success and failure, happiness and misfortune." The proper use of these terms "implies having mastered the whole network of categories by means of which the semantics of action is distinguished from that of physical movement and even from psychophysiological behaviour."[51] These and similar terms taken in relation to each other can be understood as answering the basic questions "'what', 'why', 'who', 'how', 'with whom', or 'against whom' in regard to any action. … To master the conceptual network as a whole, and each term as one member of the set, is to have that competence we call practical understanding."[52] This conceptual network, it is important to note, incorporates the idea of "agency" in both the active and passive senses, i.e., as "acting" or "doing" as well as "undergoing" or "suffering": "these agents act and suffer in circumstances they did not make that nevertheless do belong to the practical field."[53]

"Configuration" or mimesis$_2$ is the pivotal point in Ricoeur's mimetic process. It provides the mediating function of emplotment (*muthos*), relying upon all the prefigurative traits of mimesis$_1$ for its basis of intelligibility. Configuration orders or organizes events into a plot that is the "imitation of the action" (*mimesis praxeos*), "[opening] the kingdom of the *as if"*[54] created and produced by the poet and completed in the act of reading

50. Ricoeur, "Mimesis and Representation," 142.
51. *Ibid*., 141.
52. TN 1: 55.
53. *Ibid*.
54. *Ibid.*, 64.

by an audience, who in turn become, through the mimetic act of "following" the story, primed for refiguration (mimesis$_3$).

Mimesis$_2$ provides a mediating function in three respects: the configuration of part-to-whole, of diversity of narrative factors, and of temporal characteristics. First, it mediates both ways between the integrity of the story as a whole and the individual events depicted in it: "we may say equivalently that it draws a meaningful story from a diversity of events or incidents (Aristotle's *pragmata*) or that it transforms the events or incidents into a story." Emplotment, for Ricoeur, "is the operation that draws a configuration out of a succession [of events]."[55]

This configurating sense of mimesis$_2$, secondly, mediates heterogeneous elements, providing an intelligible synthesis of such diverse factors as "agents, goals, means, interactions, circumstances, unexpected results."[56] Emplotment, in other words, has a compositional character that allows one to "follow a story,"[57] and that is characterized by Aristotle as "concordant discordance."[58]

Finally, mimesis$_2$ enables the "grasping together" (com-prehending) of the discrete or even successive incidents and the narrative factors into "the unity of one *temporal* whole."[59] The notion of an "end point" figures significantly here. Configuration enables us to speak of the story's beginning, middle and end, but this temporal unity also allows us to see the "point" of the story – and Ricoeur insists that such a point is anything but "atemporal." In fact, for Ricoeur the processes of "retelling" (rather than simply telling) and repeating a story, which stem from the temporal unity gathered up in its end point, give rise to a productive creativity (with special significance for our concern with liturgical and ritual "retelling"). A well-known story permits us to "follow" it in such a way that we no longer, as in the first hearing or reading, are concerned with what happens next; rather, aware of the outcome, we can now attend to the ways the various "episodes" within the story conspire to reach the ending we already know. "A new quality of time emerges from this understanding," states Ricoeur, and the story's repetition also

> constitutes an alternative to the representation of time as flowing from the past toward the future, following the [well-known] metaphor of the "arrow of time." It is as though recollection inverted the so-called "natural" order of time. In reading the ending in the beginning and the beginning in the

55. *Ibid*., 65.
56. *Ibid*.
57. Ricoeur, "Mimesis and Representation," 146.
58. TN 1: 66; Ricoeur views this characterization as a reply to Augustine's temporal aporia of the soul, which Ricoeur describes as "discordant concordance."
59. *Ibid*., 67.

> ending, we also learn to read time itself backwards, as the recapitulation of the initial conditions of a course of action in its terminal consequences. In short, the act of narrating, reflected in the act of following a story, makes productive the paradoxes that disquieted Augustine…[60]

The notions of "following a story" and of "retelling" will offer valuable insights to our treatment of liturgical participation below. But an example of the liturgical significance of the temporal quality of narrative, one that dovetails nicely with Rahner's "liturgy of the world," is worth a brief excursus here. In his treatment of historical narrative, Ricoeur points to several "connectors" that link human/mortal time with natural/cosmic time, among which is the connector he calls "calendar time," and in this regard he gives special attention to "the fundamental phenomenon … of *dating*":

> …in assigning to each significant event a place in the ultimate scheme of all possible dates (a reference to and a distance from the temporal axis) calendar time reinscribes lived time as private or common destiny upon cosmic time. This reinscription is the first response of historical practice to the major aporia brought to light by the phenomenology of time.[61]

It hardly seems necessary to point out how relevant this reflection on calendar time is to the development of the Christian liturgical calendar, with its "temporal cycle" tied to the seasons and seasonal feasts and to cosmic elements, along with its sanctoral cycle tying the individual lives of Christian "heroes" to specified days of the year. Ricoeur's comments on dating are also a helpful reminder that the seasonal/cyclic aspects of time in Christian liturgy must be viewed in relation to the linear aspects. This dimension of liturgical-temporal significance is vividly ritualized in the Easter Vigil, with the inscription of the letters *alpha* and *omega* along with the numerals of the current year on the paschal candle, simultaneously "a reference to and a distance from" a significant fixed point on "the temporal axis" of the Christian calendar – i.e., the demarcation point between the years "B.C." (B.C.E.) from those "A.D." (C.E.). The rubrics and accompanying words in the rite of the "Preparation of the Candle" are striking in this regard:

> After the blessing of the new fire, an acolyte or one of the ministers brings the Easter candle to the celebrant, who cuts a cross in the wax with a stylus. Then he traces the Greek letter alpha above the cross, the letter omega below, and the numerals of the current year between the arms of the cross. Meanwhile, he says:

60. *Ibid*., 67-68.
61. Ricoeur, "Narrated Time," *A Ricoeur Reader*, 338-354, at 344.

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. Christ yesterday and today | (as he traces the vertical arm of the cross), |
| 2. the beginning and the end | (the horizontal arm), |
| 3. Alpha | (alpha, above the cross), |
| 4. and Omega | (omega, below the cross), |
| 5. all time belongs to him | (the first numeral, in the upper left corner of the cross), |
| 6. and all the ages | (the second numeral in the upper right corner), |
| 7. to him be glory and power | (the third numeral in the lower left corner), |
| 8. through every age for ever. Amen. | (the last numeral in the lower right corner).[62] |

It would be difficult to find a better ritual-narrative example of how a "mundane" liturgical story can resonate with the "sacred" story of "the liturgy of the world," at the very center of which is the Paschal Mystery.

Let us return to our explication of mimesis$_2$. Ricoeur introduces here the notions of narrative *schematism* and narrative *traditionality*. The act of configuration is compared to the working of the transcendental faculty of the productive imagination in Kant's conception of judgment: "The productive imagination is not only rule-governed, it constitutes the generative matrix of rules. In Kant's first *Critique*, the categories of the understanding are first schematized by the productive imagination," the power of which is primarily to synthesize understanding and intuition. "Emplotment, too, engenders a mixed intelligibility between what has been called the point, theme or thought of a story, and the intuitive presentation of circumstances, characters, episodes, and changes of fortune that make up the denouement. In this way, we may speak of a *schematism* of the narrative function."[63]

The fact that this narrative schematism is itself "constituted within a history" opens up Ricoeur's discussion of configuration to his notion of *traditionality*. Rather than "the inert transmission of some already dead deposit of material," Ricoeur takes tradition to be "the living transmission of an innovation always capable of being reactivated by a return to the most creative moments of poetic activity."[64] He views any tradition to be "constituted by the interplay of innovation and sedimentation," the latter having to do with the paradigmatic features (form, genre, type) that have "issued from a sedimented history whose genesis has been covered over" (even if their genesis was in fact "a previous innovation"). With respect to innova-

62. *The Roman Missal: The Sacramentary*, trans. ICEL (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1985) 172.

63. TN 1: 68, emphasis added.

64. *Ibid*.

tion as "the other pole of tradition," Ricoeur reminds us that even as a tradition has paradigmatic features that have sedimented in the community's history, they "furnish the rules for a subsequent experimentation within the narrative field. … [W]hat is produced, in the *poiesis* of the poem, is always, in the last analysis, a singular work," a new work.[65]

Mimesis$_3$ is the "refiguration" that occurs as a result of the reader's appropriation of the world configured by the text. Corresponding to what Gadamerian hermeneutics calls "application," refiguration "marks the intersection of the world of the text and the world of the hearer or reader; the intersection, therefore, of the world configured by the poem [or any work as product of *poiesis*] and the world wherein real action occurs and unfolds its specific temporality."[66] It is "the power of revelation and transformation achieved by narrative configurations when they are 'applied' to actual acting and suffering."[67]

Ricoeur here refers back to the features of schematization and traditionality, which "contribute particularly to breaking down the [structuralist] prejudice that opposes an 'inside' and an 'outside' of a text … The notion of a structuring activity … transcends this opposition. Schematization and traditionality are thus from the start categories of the interaction and operations [*operativité*] of writing and reading."[68] The narrative schematism "furnish[es] guidelines" for the narrative configuration and for reading as well, and the innovative-sedimentative interplay, from which the author's configurational, imaginative process of augmentation of meaning proceeds, is at the same time an invitation to the reader to enter the narrative's "gaps" and play with its "constraints." In this way, "the act of reading that accompanies the narrative configuration [also] actualizes its capacity to be followed. To follow a story is to actualize it by reading it."[69] The representative illusion that plagues the Platonic view of *mimesis* is what, in the first place, gave rise to an opposition between "an inside of fiction" and an "outside of life;" this opposition is dissolved in mimesis$_3$, the consequence of "accompany[ing] that structuring operation that begins in life, is invested in the text, then returns to life."[70]

65. *Ibid*., 68-69.
66. *Ibid*., 70-71; see also Ricoeur, "Mimesis and Representation," 148.
67. Ricoeur, "Narrated Time," *A Ricoeur Reader*, 338-354, at 339.
68. TN 1: 76.
69. TN 1: 76-77.
70. Ricoeur, "Mimesis and Representation," 151.

## 3. Refiguring Liturgical Participation: Liturgy as Second Naïveté

Ricoeur's depiction of a threefold *mimesis* can illuminate the individual's and the community's continuing appropriation of the living liturgical tradition. The interplay between acting and suffering, doing and undergoing, that is intrinsic to the notion of emplotment as the imitation of action has a particular resonance when it is *ritual participation* – and not simply the *reading* of a story or even the *observing* of a drama – that is at stake. In the 21st century, we need to develop an understanding of liturgy analogous to the "second naïveté" that Ricoeur spoke of with respect to symbols, one that, in fact, understands *the liturgy itself* to be such a second naïveté. I suggest that a similar threefold *mimesis* – which is also an *anamnesis* – offers a helpful starting place.

The emphasis in Christian ritual as participatory activity, which is simultaneously and intrinsically personal and ecclesial in all its aspects, involves a history and a contemporary *context* (prominent features of liturgical prefiguration "that begins in life"), an ordered and embodied *vision* (a projection of the "world" of the liturgy – liturgical configuration that "is invested in a text" – here, the "text" is in fact a performed ritual), and an on-going call to *conversion* and *mission* (liturgical refiguration that "returns to life"). In this concluding section, I would like to suggest ways in which the insights of Rahner, Crites and Searle that we have examined can connect with Ricoeur's threefold narrative *mimesis* so as to bring the question of full, conscious and active liturgical participation into sharper focus.

### *3.1. Liturgical Prefiguration*

A liturgical mimesis$_1$ "begins from the world." It is everything that the assembly as a community and within each of its members brings to their worship, everything in their lives and hearts and minds and spirits. It is the stuff out of which, along with their traditionality (both official and unofficial), they as the assembly/ritual "author" configure their worship, and the stuff with which each of them as members/ritual "readers" will follow the story that the ritual puts before them. Here we see how very important for their participation in the liturgy are the presuppositions or "dispositions" (to echo a word from classical sacramental theology) with which they gather. A primary question is how they, as a body or in their individuality, understand the relationship of this liturgy to the lives they actively live and the events in life they undergo. We may ask with Rahner, do they see the liturgy as basically the only place where God is accessible, or do they see it as the place where they recall the world permeated by God in its very depths? In Crites' terms, do they come to worship predisposed to its celebration as one of those special mundane stories that "sound out greater

depths" in the sacred story of which they are already a part (and an expectation that this will lead them deeper into the mystery of this great story that they cannot tell), or do they conceive of the liturgy as itself the only sacred story there is and hence as an escape from the mundane stories of an always "profane" world? We may ask with Searle, are they still largely "allegorical" in their expectations of the liturgy, framing the liturgical experience as the observation of a drama about the past, or do they perceive themselves as beholding the living, risen Christ and involved with him in making something new? The differences in these attitudes cannot be underestimated in determining what, in fact, the next mimetic dimension has in store.

### *3.2. Liturgical Configuration*

A liturgical mimesis$_2$ "is invested in the text," or in this case, in the rite. Participation in the liturgy itself on this configurational level also has the dual aspect of the assembly's role as "author" in configuring the rite, i.e., being the ones (individually and collectively) to perform it and "activate" it (with more or less conformity to ritual texts and directives more or less prescribed by the authority of the liturgical tradition and/or by liturgical authorities), but also being the ones (individually and collectively) to "read" or "hear" it. Let us presume in what follows, for the sake of brevity and for that of the understanding of liturgy I am attempting to promote, that they do indeed gather to configure the liturgical act with the predisposition that it reflects and interprets a world already graced, and thus have a sense of the liturgy of the world about which Rahner speaks. (We do well, though, not to forget that the effects of liturgical configuration are quite different when such is not the case.)

We need also to recall that the repetitive nature of ritual is such that the various members of the assembly enter its threefold *mimesis* at differing points in their personal narrative histories, none having had the identical number and kind of liturgical experiences, with very few if any never having experienced it before. That is to say, while this particular ritual configuration is unique and unrepeatable, part of the prefiguration brought to this configuration involves innumerable previous liturgical configurations and refigurations. So another aspect of the need for a "second naïveté" is openness to experiencing this configuration "as if" something new is in store.

Liturgical mimesis$_2$ is the act of emplotment, the process of arranging the incidents of human life and history (which emerge from the liturgy of the world) into a coherent ritual/narrative configuration that frames the assembly's viewing of that very human life and history through the lens of the Paschal Mystery. Though a mundane story, it nonetheless "sounds out

greater depths" of the sacred story than others – and there are many culturally competing narratives that prefiguratively accompany the members of the assembly to this configuration. In liturgical mimesis$_2$ they are called to become, for each other and for the world, the primary "as if," the new creation deeply configured to Christ.

Searle's notion of the participatory level corresponding to the *res et sacramentum* is especially helpful here. Classically, the sacramental character of baptism (and confirmation) and of orders is designated as the *res et sacramentum* of those sacraments, and it is this level of sacramental participation that Searle, explicating SC 7, describes as participation in the priestly office of Christ. By "following" the ritual story in liturgical mimesis$_2$, the "as if" that their own liturgical configuration proclaims to them, they become "a priestly people": "We do not stand around the altar simply for our own benefit but because it is our vocation to stand before God on behalf of the world … We thank you [God] that you have counted us worthy

> to serve you on behalf of those who do not know you;
> to pray on behalf of those who do not know how to pray;
> to intercede for those who cannot plead for themselves;
> to hear the word for those whose ears are attuned elsewhere;
> to cry for mercy for those who do not know they need it;
> to offer sacrifice on behalf of those who do not know that death and suffering have been redeemed;
> to celebrate communion for the lost and the lonely;
> to serve you for those who do not know how to serve;
> to thank you on behalf of those who do not know the name that is blessed above all other names."[71]

### *3.3. Liturgical Refiguration*

Liturgical mimesis$_3$ "returns to life." Having been configured through mimesis$_2$ into this priestly people, having viewed the world through the lens of the Paschal Mystery, the faithful have opened or re-opened their eyes and hearts to the liturgy of the world. "As if" having attained the summit, they return to the source, hopefully better able to see the summit in the source and the source in the summit.[72] In other words, this change in perception allows them to see and to be Christ in the world of ordinary existence, which has been rediscovered as a world truly permeated by God. It also allows them to bring to their next celebration of the church's liturgy the "stuff" of this (now extraordinary) ordinary existence, thus to deepen

71. Searle, *Called to Participate*, 84-85.
72. Cf. SC 10.

their priestly identity as the Body of Christ and truly celebrate the liturgy of the church as a "foretaste" of the heavenly banquet, [73] a con-celebration with God of the liturgy of the world.

Such transformation does not occur all at once, and because once is not enough, it must continue to be rehearsed.[74] The actualization, in the power of the Spirit, of the assembly becoming the Body of Christ in the world, a new creation in communion (*koinonia*, *participatio*) with the trinitarian God (*theosis*, *deificatio*), is typically gradual, so gradual that it is sometimes undetected even by those for whom it is a reality. We might say that they have been refigured (a process never complete, or a story not fully told until the parousial denouement) to the extent that the "rehearsal" of the liturgy of the world in the liturgy of the church gives way to *living* the liturgy of the world: the life of the assembly and its members becomes grateful life lived for others, always and everywhere.

## 4. Conclusion

This article configures a view of liturgy and liturgical participation that attempts to enhance the reader's appreciation for the value of narrative signification in deepening liturgical understanding – both the hermeneutics of liturgy, and the liturgy as hermeneutics of life. It has been a "short story," especially in regard to Ricoeur's narrative approach, so much of which was left untreated. As for liturgical renewal, it is hoped that the reader may find in such a narrative liturgical theology a way to sound out greater depths in the liturgy of the world. Regarding future liturgical reform, potential liturgical configurations might take better account of this sacred story, the liturgy of the world, if those responsible for reform will strive to find ways more fully to access and appreciate the faithful's many "prefigurative" dispositions so as to help them open themselves to the world so sorely in need of being nourished by the Body of Christ, whom the Spirit, both through the liturgy of the church and wherever the Spirit wills, configures them to be.

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73. Cf. SC 8.

74. Searle, *Called to Participate*, 25f. A recent in-depth study of Searle's liturgical vision reflects this concept of rehearsal and its connection to justice; see Stephen S. Wilbricht, *Rehearsing God's Just Kingdom: The Eucharistic Vision of Mark Searle* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2013).