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Participatory Knowledge of God in the Liturgy

by

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I. Introduction

How do we know God? Can we acquire a dispassionate, objective knowledge of God? Do we know God in order to have faith, or do we have faith in order to know God? Do we know God only with our mind or with our whole body? This essay responds to these questions by claiming that our participation in the liturgy gives us access to a certain kind of knowledge of God which I am identifying as participatory knowledge. This knowledge is mediated through the symbol system of the liturgy including the scriptures, liturgical actions, sacraments, and prayers. It requires the commitment of faith in order to work. It takes place not individually, but in the context of community. It is primarily a knowledge of who God is for us within a trinitarian economy wherein God sends the Son to give the Spirit that we may be constituted into the body of the Son and return to the Father in his gift of himself and our gift of ourselves. In learning who God is for us, we know indirectly who God is in Godself, for they are one and the same.[1] Although not irrational or without reason, reason is not the primary avenue through which this knowledge is acquired since God is not a consequent idea. Rather, we acquire this knowledge by entering into the symbolic time and space of liturgical action. Within the liturgy we enter a formative environment which shapes our vision, our relationships, and our knowing.

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[1] The Arian controversy illustrates this. Athanasius championed the divinity of Christ because if Christ were not God he could not save. We also have Karl Rahner's famous dictum, "The economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity," in *The Trinity* (New York: Crossroad 1974) 22.

Participatory knowledge of God within the liturgy is more analogous to kinesthetic knowledge than rational knowledge. It is knowledge gained through action.[2] It is an incarnate, embodied knowledge. Theodore Jennings characterizes ritual knowledge as primarily corporeal rather than cerebral, primarily active rather than contemplative, primarily transformative rather than speculative.[3] We learn what balance feels like by riding a bicycle rather than listening to explanations. By being fed, by hearing the words of forgiveness, by being caught up in the paschal events of death and resurrection liturgically made present, we learn by experience God's sustaining, self-diffusive love. By entering into praise and thanksgiving we know who we are in relationship to God and God's sovereignty. Within the liturgy we come to know ourselves and God because the liturgy orders our relationships: my relationship to others within the body of Christ sacramentally constituted within the eucharist, my relationship to God as recipient of God's graciousness, my relationship to the world by being not only sent, but missioned and commissioned to live ethically within history what has been experienced in the metahistorical time and space of the liturgy. In short, in the liturgy we do not acquire knowledge *about* God; we acquire knowledge *of* God.

Participatory knowledge within the liturgy is a personal knowledge in the biblical sense of knowing. It is experiential knowledge acquired by entering into a relationship. We cannot know without being known. We cannot know or be known without being transformed. Thus it is not an acquisition of an object, something we call knowledge, but an expansion of relationship, a broadening of horizon, a creation of something new within us. When we know God within the liturgy, we know God as Godself in relation, in creative and transformative activity. We also know ourselves in God. Personal knowledge is characterized by this reciprocity.

Two clarifications are required to clarify the claims made here: to note what is *not* implied in this thesis and to define what is meant by liturgical prayer. This claim does not mean that we do not have a knowledge of God outside the liturgy. It does not imply that the content of this knowledge of God is different in the liturgy than it is outside the liturgy. This claim does mean, however, that the manner in which we know God within the liturgy is

[2] This is also a characteristic of ritual knowledge identified by Theodore W. Jennings in "On Ritual Knowledge," *Journal of Religion* 62 (1982) 116. What Jennings describes as ritual knowledge would include knowledge within the liturgy although he situates ritual more broadly and generally.

[3] Ibid., 115.

different. In other words, *what* we know about God is not different, unique or only accessible through the liturgy, but *how* we know God is different within participatory knowledge of God within the liturgy.

II. Liturgical Prayer

Within the Roman Catholic tradition liturgical prayer is the official public worship of the church.[4] Although the summit and center of the liturgy is the eucharist or Lord's Supper, liturgical prayer also includes official rites and the other sacraments of the church as well as the Liturgy of the Hours, the prayer consisting of the psalms, canticles, hymns, and readings which sanctifies life by turning to God at "ritual moments symbolic of the whole of time."[5] Although there is a variety of prayer and ritual that is liturgical, in this essay I will tend to refer to the eucharist most often as paradigmatic of liturgical prayer.

Because it is official, liturgical prayer is under the official regulation or recognition of the church. This means that the church recognizes it as its official prayer and oversees it. It also means that it takes place in communion with the local bishop.

Because it is public, it normally requires an assembly of believers visibly gathered together. This, however, has not been without interesting exceptions in the history of the church. Peter Damian is reported to have asked whether a hermit celebrating Mass alone should say, "The Lord be with you." He replied to his own question with a resounding "yes," with the implication that there is a public dimension to this prayer even when celebrated alone. The Constitution on the Liturgy, the first document promulgated by the Second Vatican Council in 1964, emphasizes that liturgical services are not private functions. It stipulates that "rites which are meant to be celebrated in common, with the faithful present and actively participating, should as far as possible be celebrated in that way rather than by an individual and quasi-privately."[6] In another vein, Roman Catholic priests are required to pray the Divine Office, the Liturgy of the Hours, one of the liturgical prayers of the church, privately if they do not pray it in common. It is not considered to be

[4] For a good overview of what constitutes the liturgy, see Mary Collins, "Liturgy" in Joseph Komonchak, Mary Collins, and Dermot Lane, eds, *The New Dictionary of Theology* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press/Michael Glazier 1987) 591-601.

[5] Robert Taft, *The Liturgy of the Hours in East and West: The Origins of the Divine Office and Its Meaning for Today* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press 1986) 361.

[6] *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 26-27.

any less liturgical even though it does not occur in the context of an assembly. However, even when recited individually, it remains "the voice of the Church" rather than the voice of an individual.[7] Even clerics who are not obliged to attend office in choir are encouraged to pray at least some part of the divine office in common. Thus is seems fair to observe that the church's daily prayer, the Liturgy of the Hours, presumes a gathering of the Christian people at various times of the day in households, monasteries, and local churches. As Robert Taft notes, "traditionally the Liturgy of the Hours is something that a *group celebrates,* not something an *individual reads.*"[8]

What distinguishes liturgical prayer from other prayer of the church is that it is a *corporate* gesture of praise of God neither originating from nor directed toward any one individual or group in the church. It is the church as church glorifying God. Individuals who participate in the liturgy participate on behalf of and in the name of the church. It is an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ by the whole Christ, his mystical Body, including the head, that is, Christ, and the members, baptized Christians. Thus it is the prayer of Christ carried on in his body, the church.

Individual piety is subsumed into the corporate prayer of the church. Henri de Lubac, in his book on the Apostle's Creed, notes that the subject of "Credo," the subject who professes faith in the creed, the "I" in "I believe," is not the individual believer in isolation, but the church. It is first the church as a community which believes in its Lord, then with it and in it I as an individual am led to proclaim personally "I believe."[9] Here we recall that the context of the creed is liturgical: either baptism or the eucharist. Additionally, in the liturgical revision the congregation now recites "We believe." Clearly, the individual professes faith, but the liturgical context of this profession emphasizes the ecclesial role in an individual Christian's faith formation as well as an individual's interconnectedness with other Christians.

The liturgy is more than a certain kind of prayer service where we worship God according to certain rubrics. The liturgy is really the Christian economy enacted and realized symbolically. It is the Father coming to us in Christ who gives us the Spirit so that we may be united in Christ and return to the Father. The *exitus-reditus* of the Christian economy is not only recounted within the readings of the liturgy and commemorated according to

[7] *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 99.

[8] Taft, *The Liturgy of the Hours in East and West,* 362.

[9] Henri de Lubac, *La Foi chrétienne: essai sur la structure du Symbole des Apôtres* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne 1970) 227.

the liturgical year, but our own participation in those events is made possible sacramentally.[10] Liturgical prayer is related to the paschal mystery, an expression which refers to the mystery of our salvation through the power of Christ's life, death, and resurrection. The eucharist or Lord's Supper proclaims and celebrates the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and thus is the summit of liturgical worship. However, this same paschal mystery of Christ's dying and rising is also evident in a principal way in baptism, Sunday, and Easter, and also commemorated in matins and vespers, funerals and feasts. The annual cycle of the liturgical year celebrates successive aspects of the mystery of salvation in Christ.

Liturgical prayer encompasses more than ritual prayers addressed to God. It is more than a collection of prayers printed on paper. In addition to the text of the rite, liturgical prayer includes an assembly of believers, the public reading of scripture, music, gesture and movements, vesture, various ritual objects, and the ordering of ritual space and its furnishings. It is the liturgical *event,* encompassing a ritual whole inclusive of ritual and symbolic gestures as well as the liturgical text, that discloses theological and spiritual meanings. Finally, although prayers of lament and supplication are common in liturgical prayer, the dominant sentiments expressed within this prayer are praise and thanksgiving for God's deeds on behalf of God's people and eschatological hope for the final realization of the kingdom of God.[11]

Although some ecclesial communions are more liturgical than others—here one thinks of the Orthodox, Roman Catholics, and Anglicans—many communions issuing from the Reformation are reviving their practice and theology of liturgical prayer. One sign of this is a more frequent celebration of the Lord's Supper. However, even if a particular Sunday service consists of readings, sermon, and hymns, this is arguably "liturgy" in that it is the activity of an assembly of baptized Christians, involves an order of worship, and an observation of the paschal mystery around the great feasts of Christmas and Easter as well as other biblical feasts. Thus there may be "high" or "low" liturgical sensibilities among Christian denominations, but what is meant in this essay as "participatory knowledge of God in the liturgy" is accessible to all Christians within their communal worship. What is necessary

[10] In other words, "what was visible in our Redeemer has passed into the sacraments" (Leo I, *Sermo de ascensione* 2).

[11] See Thomas J. Madden, "Liturgy" in Peter E. Fink, ed., *The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press/Michael Glazier 1990) 741.

is an assembly of Christians who intend to pray, a connection between this prayer and the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the recognition on behalf of a church that this prayer is its official prayer.

Thus bible study in and of itself would not meet these criteria, because the intention is study rather than prayer, even though there might be a prayer to the Spirit for guidance. A bible study group is also most likely not a church's official assembly of Sunday worship. There is a continuum between liturgical prayer and many other church activities since an interpretation of a biblical text is influenced by a church's liturgical use of it, and even the self-identity of a church is derived from its self-expression in its public, official prayer. It is not the intent of this essay to determine precisely which activities might be termed "liturgical" for churches that do not routinely use the word "liturgy" to describe their prayer. It is the intent, however, to be inclusive in the sense that the way of knowing God within the liturgy, which is to say within a complexus of symbols including biblical text, preaching, song, gesture, etc., applies to the public worship of these groups as well.

In the final analysis, the liturgy is the place where an ecclesial group preserves its traditions, symbols, and texts and expresses its self-identity. These traditions, symbols, and texts are also operative extra-liturgically, but they derive their primary meaning from their liturgical context. The liturgy is also the place where the community enacts the truth it knows about God. In the words of Gordon Lathrop:

> Whatever else the Sunday assembly of Christians is intended to do, there can be wide ecumenical agreement on this: the Sunday assembly means to say the truth about God. Indeed, we hold the gathering intending to proclaim the truth about God to whoever will listen—the assembly, visitors, the larger world, ourselves—and thereby to re-immerse those listeners in a view of the world as it stands before God.[12]

III. Tacit Knowledge

The participatory knowledge acquired within the liturgy is similar to what Michael Polanyi calls "tacit knowledge." It is not really a question of tacit knowledge *versus* another kind of knowledge, though, since for Polanyi all knowledge is either tacit knowledge or rooted in tacit knowledge.[13] In tacit

[12] Gordon Lathrop, "At Least Two Words: The Liturgy as Proclamation," *Liturgy: We Proclaim* 11 (1993) 1.

[13] Michael Polanyi, *Knowing and Being* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1969) 193.

knowing there is an attending from and an attending toward. We interiorize particulars to which we are not attending and which therefore remain unspecified for us. We attend from these particulars towards a comprehensive entity which connects them in a way we cannot identify.[14] Yet, paradoxically, the whole does not exist apart from the particulars which comprise it. In other words, we only notice the whole when we are not fixated on the details within it. Polanyi cites our perception of a physiognomy or the production of vocal sound as examples. It is the interplay of features which comprise a physiognomy, but we cannot perceive the whole if we focus too closely on any individual feature. We do not see a face if we focus on the nose. Sound loses meaning if we attend to the motion of tongue and lips. Polanyi notes that "the belief that, since particulars are more tangible, their knowledge offers a true conception of things is fundamentally mistaken."[15] To Polanyi's example we can add the example cited earlier of riding a bicycle. It is not by attending to the tensions within muscles that we learn balance. It is the *Gestalt,* the perception of the whole in the interplay of the particulars, that is the true conception of things.

It is not by looking at things, but by *dwelling* in them that we understand them.[16] Indwelling constitutes a type of empathetic knowledge. I have identified this empathetic knowledge with a kind of kinesthetic knowledge. We sense the movements within ourselves, without attending to the particulars. This allows us to experience the world from another perspective. Another way of saying this is to say we "indwell" a complexus of particulars and in this indwelling we can perceive the whole. Polanyi describes religious ritual as "the highest degree of indwelling that is conceivable."[17] This is so because Polanyi compares the experience of worship with a mystic's surrender, noting that it is closer to sensual abandon than to exact observation. He describes ritual as a sequence of "things to be said and gestures to be made which involve the whole body and alert our whole existence" in such a way that the true participant is completely absorbed in them. The surrender within worship "corresponds to the degree to which the worshiper dwells within the fabric

[14] Michael Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books 1967) 24.

[15] Ibid., 19.

[16] Ibid., 18; *Knowing and Being,* 148.

[17] Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1958) 198. Polanyi contrasts this indwelling, however, with that of other kinds of knowledge in that it is never enjoyed, never consummated; we never achieve complete understanding. He notes that the ritual of worship is expressly designed to induce and sustain a state of "anguish, surrender, and hope." Christianity fosters mental dissatisfaction by offering us the comfort of a crucified God.

of the religious ritual."[18] The religious ritual, as a *Gestalt,* becomes a world within the interplay of symbols, a world in which the interplay of elements mutually inhere and cohere in such a way that each part derives its meaning from the whole at the same time that it contributes to the meaning of the whole.

With respect to the liturgy, we must ask what is the "face" known in the liturgy, what is the "whole." The answer is the paschal mystery of salvation in Christ Jesus. This is the "whole" which gives meaning to all of the liturgy. This paschal mystery of salvation is not only christological, it is trinitarian, for the Father sends the Son who lives, dies, rises and sends the Spirit that we, too, may ascend to the Father through Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. The "face" of the liturgy is about this trinitarian economy of everything being recapitulated in Christ in the return to the Father. This is the "whole" not only of eucharistic liturgy, but also the Liturgy of the Hours.[19] Because the "whole" of liturgy is this paschal mystery and economy of salvation in its entirety, to focus on any one part in exclusivity is to miss the whole. Thus, to reduce a theology of eucharist to the confection of the "real presence" misses placing that presence in the movement of return to the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit. To emphasize the role of the Liturgy of the Hours in the sanctification of the hours of our day in a narrow sense misses its eschatological meaning. These "parts" are necessary for the "whole," but the meaning of the whole is greater than any part.

IV. Biblical Texts Within a Liturgical Context

One of the most striking illustrations of this interplay of various liturgical elements—the proclamation of the scriptures, the presence of companion believers, the great prayer of thanksgiving including the Last Supper narrative —lies in the interpretation of biblical texts within a liturgical context. With Louis-Marie Chauvet we can assert that "in a completely literal sense the liturgical assembly (the ecclesia in its primary sense) is the place where the Bible becomes the Bible."[20] The text assumes its meaning within the *Gestalt*

[18] Ibid.

[19] Robert Taft (*The Liturgy of the Hours in East and West,* 334) shows that "the hours take their meaning not from the Eucharist, nor from Christian daily life as opposed to an other-worldly eschatological expectation, nor from the natural cycle of morning and evening, nor from personal devotion and edification as distinction from the work of the community" but from the paschal mystery.

[20] Louis-Marie Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press 1995) 212.

of its liturgical context. The interpretation which emerges from the liturgical juxtaposition of selections from the Old and New Testaments within a liturgy commemorating the paschal mystery functions according to typology rather than the historical-critical method. There is a reciprocal relationship between the text and the community. First, the texts belong to a canon accepted by the community thereby indicating an authority accorded the texts by the community. Second, the reading of this text gives the community reading it its identity since the texts proclaim a past experience of the people of God as the living word of God for today. The function of ordained ministry within the assembly is to guarantee both the apostolicity of what is read and to assure that these texts function as an exemplar of the community's identity.[21]

Chauvet points out that these four constitutive elements of the liturgy of the word—texts of past events accepted as authoritative, texts proclaimed as living today, their reception by a community recognizing its own identity in them, and ministry which guarantees their apostolicity and exemplarity—parallel the four constitutive elements of the biblical text as the word of God. First there are the instituted traditions of the community gathered in the oral and later written forms and finally into the biblical corpus as such. Then the hermeneutical process interprets this in relation to the present, thus rewriting the text in relation to the present. As an example of this, one can cite Israel's interpretation of the Exodus in the light of the Babylonian captivity. The community becomes the agent in this process as it writes itself into the book it is reading. Finally there is the canonical sanction of this reading by legitimate authority.[22]

In both instances we have event and interpretation. The Christian scriptures join both Testaments in the light of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The event which is interpreted is historical in two senses: first, it recounts a past event. Second, that event is transposed into the present life of the ecclesial community in its remembrance. It is precisely the proclamatory nature of the word within the liturgy affirmed in faith that moves the text from its identity as a literary narrative to an interpretation of a past event as now present in the life of the community. The historicity of the liturgical moment grounds the aesthetic interplay of symbols within a historical and sacramental realism whereby the narrative is no longer a literary story but the very life of the community. In short, the very word becomes sacramental,

[21] Ibid., 210.
[22] Ibid., 212.

making present under symbol the event it recounts. As a proclamatory speech-act, liturgical proclamation is performative; it accomplishes what it proclaims. This means that the salvation event proclaimed in the scriptures is accomplished in the present time in the life of the assembly. In its proclamation the church gives its interpretation in faith of its present experience in terms of the proclaimed event.

The question arises as to whether approaching the text in the context of liturgy dispenses with the historical-critical method, whether it represents a retreat from history to allegory. According to Jean Daniélou a typological reading of the biblical text notes the correspondences between different moments of sacred history. This occurs when we identify Adam as the "figure" of Christ (Rom. 5:14) or the Flood as a type of baptism (1 Peter 3:18).[23] Daniélou, citing Thomas Aquinas before him, emphasizes that a typological reading of scripture is not a sense of the scripture, that is, a sense of the text, but is a sense of the events themselves. Most specifically, it is an interpretation of the events from an eschatological perspective. Daniélou identifies the source of typology as the plan of salvation. In other words, the events in the history of Israel prefigure the events at the end of time which appear to us in Christ. A typological reading is thus necessarily eschatological.

Here the liturgical context of the scriptural interpretation is crucial. There is a profound congruence between (1) the eucharistic symbol of meal which commemorates a past meal and sacrifice which becomes present now and anticipates a future eschatological banquet, and (2) a liturgical reading of the scriptures which proclaim a past event which becomes the autobiography of the present community, and which yet also has an eschatological meaning of future completion. In liturgical time, the past, present, and future are present simultaneously as the community commemorates past saving events, celebrates them as present in the life of the community, and anticipates final fullness in the future.[24] This same compression of past, present, and

[23] Jean Daniélou, "Symbolisme et théologie" in *Interpretation der Welt: Festschrift für Romano Guardini zum Achzigsten Geburtstag* (Würzberg: Echter-Verlag 1965) 670.

[24] Thomas J. Talley explains the relationship between the past, present, and future thus: "By virtue of the resurrection, Christ is now transhistorical and is available to every moment. We may never speak of the Risen Christ in the historical past. The event of his passion is historical, but the Christ who is risen does not exist back there, but here, and as we live on this moving division line between memory and hope, between the memory of his passion and the hope of his coming again, we stand always in the presence of Christ, who is always present to everyone. This is where the really substance of our anamnesis lies" (cited by Robert Taft, "What Does

future exists in both the symbolism of meal and the symbolic interpretation of biblical text. The entire liturgical action represents a future eschatological fullness symbolically represented in the present time. The assembly, however, experiences the tension between the "already" and the "not yet" as it experiences itself as a pilgrim people and finds itself in a posture of waiting until all is gathered into one.

The text itself becomes a sacramental symbol. Just as the Christian assembly represents Christ and the sacramental species represent Christ, a liturgical reading of the text is primarily christological. This means that the texts are used liturgically to interpret the Christ-event by way of the historical events to which the texts bear witness. The events of the Testaments are interpreted through this lens. The historical event represented in Jesus is the eschatological completion of the events which prefigure him. Perhaps one of the mistakes we have made in the past is to attempt to read Christ into the Exodus or some of the messianic prophecies instead of reading the Exodus and the prophecies into Christ. The first would be a form of Christian eisegesis. The latter respects the historical-critical location of the text at the same time it treats the two Testaments as a unity and explicates the Christ event in continuity with the Jewish tradition. Arguably this is also how Paul read the scriptures in relationship to Christ, and the Jews in exile read the Exodus before him. The Old Testament becomes an interpretation of the New which in turn becomes paradigmatic of the community's life in Christ. Within this reading, the Exodus becomes a paradigm of Christ's passage from death to life and the Christian's passage from sin to grace. It is precisely the context of the liturgical action which changes the interpretation of the scriptural text.

V. Reception of the Word

Our interpretation of the scriptural text is not only shaped by the interplay of symbols within the liturgy, but within the liturgy we also hear the word of God differently than when we read it privately. George Worgul reminds us that ritual allows us to interpret our life experiences within the complexus of meaning which ritual celebrates and enables us to live that meaning more

Liturgy Do? Toward a Soteriology of Liturgical Celebration: Some Theses," *Worship* 66 [1992] 200). In other words, the past is present in the resurrected Christ who is transhistorical. See also Robert Taft, "Toward a Theology of the Christian Feast" in idem, *Beyond East and West: Problems in Liturgical Understanding* (Washington, DC: The Pastoral Press 1984) 1-13.

fully.[25] Within the eucharist the paschal mystery becomes the interpretative key for our life experiences. We interpret our lives in terms of our identity in Christ, our passage from death to life within the paradox of the Cross, our vocation to live a life poured out for others. Worgul comments that "ritual demands that role become autobiography."[26] This means that ritual is never playacting, but that we ourselves assume the identity which we enact. Within the eucharistic liturgy this means that we put on Christ, become the body of Christ, individually, yes, but especially corporately. As Paul says, "I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20). In knowing Christ, we put on Christ. In putting on Christ we know him almost kinesthetically, as it were, in our sinews and bones by acting like him, seeing the world through his eyes.

In liturgy the assembly conforms itself to the patterns of relationships expressed liturgically. We repeat in our own lives and become the mystery we celebrate. We become conformed to Christ in his self-offering and his passage from death to life and thus are remade into a new humanity. This is how ritual becomes autobiographical so that the texts proclaimed are not just about a past event in salvation history, but recount the transformation that is taking place in us now. The story of the paschal event in Christ becomes our story.

That in the liturgy we have a proclaimed word and not merely a collection of venerable and sacred texts is crucial. In the act of proclamation, of standing before the community and speaking the word aloud, we become the word we utter. At this moment the narrative is no longer a literary story, but the very life of the community. The past events of that story are transposed into the present life of the ecclesial community in the very process of repeating and remembering it. The liturgy constitutes a living transmission of the word, a word transmitted within the very life of the community. In short, the very word received in faith becomes sacramental, making present under symbol the event it recounts.

As proclamation is different from silent reading in our armchair at home, so preaching in a liturgical context is something quite different from an academic lecture. The purpose is not primarily to communicate information, but to elicit faith. This difference is between a knowledge about God, the kind of knowledge that theologians communicate, and knowledge of God, the knowledge acquired through participation in the liturgy. In effective preaching,

[25] George S. Worgul, "Ritual" in *The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship,* 1101.
[26] Ibid., 1104.

those who preach must first resonate with the word of God and let that word elicit faith within themselves. Then they speak the word, not as disembodied or separate from themselves, but as owned and appropriated by the self so that it resonates with the faith in the hearer. In effective preaching there is a resonance or a movement of recognition between the speaker and the hearer. A word in the heart of one person resonates with a similar word in the heart of another. Something familiar is recognized, but there is also something of a recognition experience, for the word also brings something new to awareness.

Liturgy becomes an interpretive key for our experiences whenever this encounter with the word in human proclamation occurs. We recognize our own experience and faith in the word we hear proclaimed. In this encounter our own experience is validated, but even more importantly, a community of faith is formed in the encounter out of the mutual recognition of shared faith and common experience. It is by dwelling within the Christian story that we are formed into a Christian community as we assume that story as our own.

As Richard Gula tells us, our conscience as a Christian people is concerned as much with "seeing" as with "choosing."[27] Christian beliefs have a great deal to do with shaping what we see. The real world of our moral choices includes imagination, vision, habits, affections, and other non-rational factors. To understand moral behavior, we need to pay attention first not to moral rules, but to the images shaping the imagination and the stories giving rise to these images. We live more by stories than we do by rules. We make our decisions more out of the beliefs we live by and the habits we have formed than out of the principles we have learned. The vision that forms all this is a community achievement, the result of internalizing beliefs and values. Moral conversion is a matter of repatterning the imagination so as to see dimensions of reality that were not available to us before. Gula tells us that vision informed by story gives rise to character, and our choices and action arise out of the character that has been formed. This is another way of saying that action follows being. As we are, so do we act. As God is, so God acts. What we are, our character, is shaped by how we pattern our world and imagine ourselves within it. The liturgy repatterns our imagination according to the values and relationships enacted within it.

[27] The material in this section is a summary of Richard Gula, *Reason Informed by Faith* (New York: Paulist Press 1989) 141-50. See also Iris Murdoch, "Vision and Choice in Morality" in Ian Ramsey, ed., *Christian Ethics and Contemporary Philosophy* (New York: Macmillan 1966) 195-218; Stanley Hauerwas, "The Significance of Vision: Toward an Aesthetic Ethic" in *Vision and Virtue* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press 1981) 30-47; and Craig Dykstra, *Vision and Character: A Christian Educator's Alternative to Kohlberg,* New York: Paulist Press, 1981.

Parables, for example, reshape our imagination as they invite us to see the world and relationships in a new light. They do not articulate rules and principles, but give us something to "see." They address our imagination at the same time they invert our usual way of seeing things. Take as an example the parable of the Good Samaritan. We are used to being told in homilies that we should be good Samaritans, meaning that we are supposed to help the poor traveler in the ditch. Bernard Brandon Scott suggests that this parable actually reverses this scenario. Rather than identifying with the hero, the Good Samaritan, in this parable the hearer is forced to identify with the half-dead and be saved by a mortal enemy. The only other alternative for an Israelite hearing the story is to dismiss the narrative as not like real life since there is no Israelite other than the man in the ditch with whom the hearer can identify. It is not an Israelite who helps his mortal enemy, a Samaritan, but the reverse: an Israelite who accepts help from a Samaritan. Thus the parable subverts the type of story where one is encouraged to come to the aid of those not normally deserving of aid. What happens is that the story subverts the effort to order reality into the known hierarchy of priest, Levite, and Israelite. Insiders and outsiders are no longer separated in terms of universal categories. In this parable, according to Scott, "the Samaritan is not the enemy but the savior, and the hearer does not play hero but victim."[28] That makes us not the do-good Samaritan, but the person in the ditch. In this scenario the transformation asked of us is not to help someone who differs from us racially or culturally, but to *accept* help where we don't look for it and would rather not find it. What happens if we are the person in the ditch? Are we willing to accept the help of a Samaritan, someone of a social class or ethnic group from whom we would rather not receive help? This parable not only dissolves the usual boundaries between insiders and outsiders, it reverses our expectations of who has to negotiate those boundaries. In this case, it not the person with resources, but the person in need. The parable enables us to "see" and imagine an aspect of the Christian story in a new way.

Gordon Lathrop suggests that parables are not just one example of this kind of reversal which invites a new vision, but that all liturgy is essentially parabolic.[29] This is certainly true of the paschal mystery which orders all

[28] Bernard Brandon Scott, *Hear Then the Parable: A Commentary on the Parables of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 1989) 189-202.

[29] Gordon Lathrop offered this suggestion during a discussion of an earlier version of this paper in the Liturgical Theology Seminar of the North American Academy of Liturgy, January 5, 1998.

liturgy and which proclaims that life proceeds through death. The boundaries between insiders and outsiders are overcome in Jesus' inclusive meal fellowship. Any social hierarchy is reversed in Jesus' instruction to wash one another's feet or in the image of a crucified Christ. When we dwell within the liturgy we dwell within this parabolic world with all its reversals.

VI. Liturgy As Interpretative Lens and Knowledge of God

To indwell the liturgy is to interiorize it. According to Polanyi, when we have tacit knowledge of such things as language, a probe, or a tool, we interiorize these things and make ourselves dwell in them. In his words, "Such extensions of ourselves develop new faculties in us; our whole education operates in this way; as each of us interiorizes our cultural heritage, he grows into a person seeing the world and experiencing life in terms of this outlook."[30] The liturgy becomes an interpretative lens which bestows meaning on the world. To be a Christian is not simply to assent to a series of propositional statements which articulate the faith. To be a Christian means to be in the world in a certain way and not in another way because one's relationships are constituted by the primary relationship of what it means to be united to the Father through Christ in the Spirit. To be a Christian is to be transformed according to the patterns of the liturgy. This is a dynamic rather than a static relationship which is described in the scriptures and enacted in the liturgy.

Just as the early monks memorized the scriptures in order to interiorize them so as to be able to pray unceasingly, the Christian repeatedly participates in the liturgy so as to imprint that economy in his or her very being. When we try to live the gospel and the relationships forged within the liturgy, we fall short. We need to return to the pattern again and again to "get it right," to be reminded (the anamnesis) of God's activity for us so we don't forget, to renew our strength, a strength to no small extent drawn from our common efforts and identity as a community. Examples of this new way of seeing in the liturgy include a table fellowship inclusive of sinners and tax collectors, the redefinition of power as service, of the quest for life as a passage through death, and a redefinition of social and religious boundaries.

Finally, we experience the knowledge of faith in our lives before we reflect upon it. Knowledge is an activity, a process,[31] and we literally act our way

[30] *Knowing and Being,* 148.
[31] Ibid., 132.

into knowing by entering into the relationships constituted by the liturgy. Liturgy becomes the ritual action by which we live and enact the faith. Faith here is understood in the most dynamic sense of the term which far exceeds intellectual assent. It is trust, commitment, and participation in God. The dynamism of the liturgy ritually expresses the dynamic relations of faith.

The consequences for theological study are found in the fact that worship provides the parameters for thinking about scripture and theology by keeping these reflections oriented toward their proper object, God, and within their proper context, the Christian community. It is in liturgy that we encounter the reality and mystery of God, the object of our study. This encounter grounds our knowledge of God in the primary narratives, symbols, and concepts of the faith we seek to understand. There is a connection, however, between the practice of the church and worship and the formulation of the church's belief in dogma. As David Power articulates it, "dogma expresses meaning, that is to say, the lived and at least incipiently theoretical approach to the truths of faith that guides a church in its quest for community with God in Jesus Christ."[32] The truths are lived and practiced in worship before they are expressed dogmatically. For example, the church baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit and prayed to the Father through Christ in the power of the Spirit before it developed a doctrine of the trinitarian relationships in the fourth-century Councils of Nicea (325) and Constantinople (381).[33]

The relationship between dogma and worship, however, is really reciprocal. In addition to worship giving rise to doctrine, doctrine on the other hand ensures right worship. The liturgy as experienced is itself already formed by a great deal of "secondary theology." This is evident not only in the texts, but in such gestures as genuflections and elevations at the narrative of institution. The worship extended to Christ and represented in the very performance of the eucharistic prayer would be idolatrous unless Christ is held to be divine.

At the risk of an oxymoron, participatory knowledge of God within the liturgy is a mediated immediate knowledge of God.[34] It is mediated because

[32] David M. Power, *The Sacrifice We Offer* (New York: Crossroad 1987) 139.

[33] Sarah Coakley argues for a rational defense of the doctrine of the Trinity from the practice of prayer in "Why Three? Some Further Reflections on the Origins of the Doctrine of the Trinity" in Sarah Coakley and David A. Pailin, eds, *The Making and Remaking of Christian Doctrine: Essays in Honour of Maurice Wiles* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1993) 29-56.

[34] As Avery Dulles notes, authors such as Rahner speak paradoxically of "mediated immediacy" in their theology of revelation. Dulles states: "The inner presence of God cannot be known and cannot achieve itself except insofar as it becomes mediated, or mediates itself, in

the complexus of liturgical elements mediate the meaning of the liturgy which is God, the object of our doxology. However, we attend from these elements toward their meaning. Although in a second more reflective moment, we may attend to a theology of each of the individual elements that comprise the liturgy, within well-executed liturgy the particular elements do not impinge on our consciousness in their particularity. Rather we are unaware of them as we are caught up into the primary symbols and larger movement of worship. Ideally many liturgical elements have a transparency. They do not call attention to themselves, but by means of them we are drawn into the worship and knowledge of God. This is similar to the experience described by Polanyi of when I point my finger at an object I mean that object and so this object is the meaning of my pointing finger.[35] I attend not to my finger, but at the object to which I am pointing. The object of our knowing, God, is mediated by the elements of worship, but there is a surplus of meaning which exceeds the sum of the parts much as a physiognomy exceeds each of the individual features.

This type of experience is a kind of contemplation. According to Polanyi, in contemplation "we cease to handle things and become immersed in them" and there is a "complete participation of the person in that which he contemplates."[36] However, the contemplation proper to the liturgy is not the detached contemplation of thought. All the senses are brought to bear in the liturgical act of indwelling. We are impressed with the objects, sights, smells, sounds. We indwell the liturgy not only by being present, but by being impressed with its various elements, as a coin is impressed by a stamp. We even physically ingest the object of our faith. The point of this impression is to be formed and shaped so as literally to assume the form of Christ. In this regard we have only to recall the words of St Augustine: "Become what you eat, the body of Christ." As in the gospels where physical healing is a sign of spiritual healing, the forgiveness of sin, so the physical indwelling which occurs at the liturgy is the material dimension of the contemplative indwelling and union which occurs there. Thus there is a mediated immediacy in our knowing. The result is a union at every level of our being. Knowing becomes a function of communion.

created symbols. The symbols, however, do arouse a genuine awareness of the divine itself—an awareness that always surpasses all that we can say about it" (*Models of Revelation* [Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books 1983, 1992] 148-9).

[35] *Knowing and Being,* 189.

[36] *Personal Knowledge,* 197.

To speak of indwelling and communion sounds like mysticism—and so it is. However, this is not a flight of the alone to the alone, but a communion with and knowledge of God through the materiality of bread and wine shared together. This is what Kenneth Leech calls a "flesh-based spirituality."[37] The materiality of sign and symbol inherent to the liturgy belongs to the incarnational order. Eucharistic liturgy points to the fulfillment of the incarnation in the redemption of the material world. Eucharistic bread is "the symbol of all bread shared." The common life centered on the breaking of bread has social consequences. The bread has often been seen as the symbol of human labor and human struggle, placed upon the altar so it can be sanctified. In the words of the prayer at the Preparation of the Gifts, it is bread "which earth has given and human hands have made." Similarly the wine has been seen as symbolizing human fellowship and mirth. Liturgy becomes the microcosm of the work that God is doing in the world, that is, transforming it into his body. This is theme of Romans 8, which speak of all creation being set free from its bondage to decay, obtaining the freedom of the glory of the children of God, groaning in labor pains as we wait for adoption and redemption, the reconciliation of all things in Christ. Thus worship, knowledge of God, and respect for the material order are inseparable. The condemnations of the Monophysites, Arians, and Iconoclasts illustrate how attempts to drive a wedge between the material order and the divine have been judged heretical.[38] Liturgical worship, because it belongs to the incarnational order, cannot be privatized or spiritualized, but has an ethical dimension which is social and historical. Knowledge of God leads us into *diakonia,* service, which is public and political as it seeks to translate Christian love into the social structure of our societal life.

The God we come to know in the liturgy is God-for-us. We know who Christ is in the eucharist within the context of the eucharistic action. In his critique of scholastic metaphysics, Louis-Marie Chauvet shows the inadequacy of conceiving the reality of eucharistic presence in terms of a metaphysical substance understood in itself.[39] Relying on the philosophy of

[37] Kenneth Leech, *True Prayer* (San Francisco: Harper & Row 1980) 75.

[38] The Monophysites taught that Christ had only one nature, a divine one, and that worship moved us away from the human to the divine. The Arians taught that Jesus was a creature subordinate to the Father since the divine essence of God could not be communicated. The Iconoclasts forbade religious images.

[39] This material summarizes Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament,* 389-98. He acknowledges that Thomas Aquinas strongly emphasizes the connection between the eucharist and the church, but notes that Thomas does not allude to this connection in his analysis of transubstantiation.

Heidegger and the idea that we do not know a thing in itself until we know what a thing is for, he maintains that one cannot conceive of the *esse,* that is, the ultimate reality of Christ in the eucharist without reference to Christ's *ad-esse,* the ultimate reality of being for the church. Furthermore, the *ad-esse* is constitutive of the sacramental *esse.*

This means that God's "being-for" is part of what it means for God to be God. To be God is to be in relationship, to be not in self-sufficient isolation, but ecstatically toward and for another.[40] Doctrines, particularly those of the Trinity, incarnation, and redemption *tell* us these truths about God in the code language peculiar to theology and church councils. However, in the anaphora, the eucharistic prayer, we *experience* again the economy of the Father sending the Son who gives his life for us and is present among us sacramentally by the power of the Spirit in order that we may become one body in Christ, a "living sacrifice of praise." The sending of the Son and the Spirit results in a communion the purpose of which is doxology, the return to the Father in praise and thanksgiving. Within the eucharistic liturgy we have the trinitarian relationships, a commemoration of Christ's becoming human and dying for us, and a sacramental representation of that final messianic banquet, image of eschatological redemption. Knowledge that is codified in doctrine is lived in the liturgy.

Chauvet illustrates this "being-for" of God within the liturgy with Heidegger's analysis of a pitcher. A pitcher cannot be adequately known by science, which can only pronounce on its materials, the shape, and its use. Its essence or "thingness" does not consist in the matter of which it is constructed, but "in the emptiness that holds," which in turn rests on an "out-pouring." The pitcher's essence is to be shaped for this possibility of pouring out. Heidegger plays on the double meaning of the verb *shenken* which means both "to pour" and "to offer" a drink at the same time and concludes that "the pouring pitcher unfolds its being as the pouring which offers."

Chauvet extends this analysis to the bread of the eucharist. Noting the social instituting of bread as a symbol for what one shares during a meal, Chauvet concludes that the essence of bread unfolds itself in the "symbolic act of religious oblation" where "bread" is never so much bread as in the gesture of thankful oblation where it gathers within itself heaven and earth,

[40] For a discussion of the ecstatic nature of God within a trinitarian and eucharistic framework see John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion,* Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press 1985.

believers who "hold fellowship" in sharing it, and the giver whom they acknowledge to be God. In this experience of bread a "new communion of life is established with God and between themselves."

The *ad-esse* of the eucharist is also the body of Christ given for us and broken for us. This is certainly the meaning of Luke's text: "Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and give it to them saying, 'This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me'" (Luke 22:19). *To know* adequately the real presence of Christ in the eucharist it is not enough to assert his real substance; we *know* this presence when we know what Jesus did with the body and for whom. This means that the real meaning and knowledge of the eucharistic presence is only acquired through the entire eucharistic action which represents sacramentally Christ's self-giving for us. Again, this is not a commemoration of a past event, but that past event brought into the present through sacramental symbol. The *ad-esse* of the eucharist is always new for us in this time.

One of the problems associated with religious knowledge is identifying the criteria for authenticity. When is it a true knowledge of God and not a deception or false knowledge? The dialectic between creedal professions of faith and the ritual enactment of faith offers constraints on both. For example, the God known and worshiped within the liturgy is trinitarian. The Trinity is professed in creed and the liturgical economy of worship offered to the Father in the Son by the power of the Holy Spirit is trinitarian. A unitarian profession of faith or a unitarian liturgical economy would be false. Thus one looks for a correspondence between what a community professes and how that community prays. If this correspondence is missing, either we have false worship or false belief.

A second criterion for true knowledge of God, however, is the ethical dimension of the liturgy. Our knowledge of God within the liturgy is true when it patterns our imagination and behavior according to the parabolic structure of the gospel. The test of true liturgy and true knowledge of God is how they form and transform us to live outside of the liturgy. Any number of individuals, for example, have claimed to have received messages from God asking them to perform atrocious acts against other human beings. The action belies the message. Similarly, the conduct of Christians verifies or falsifies what they claim to know of God.

VII. Conclusion

We must now ask whether the liturgy is a necessary avenue for knowing God within the Christian tradition. Polanyi notes that "a true understanding

of science and mathematics includes the capacity for a contemplative experience of them, and the teaching of these sciences must aim at imparting this capacity to the pupil."[41] If this is true of science and mathematics, how much more true this must be for a knowledge of God. If so, this means that "a true understanding of God includes the capacity for a contemplative experience of God, and a teaching about God, the study of theology, must aim at imparting this capacity to the pupil." The question is how we live in what we know so to acquire this capacity for contemplation. Contemplation requires that we submerge ourselves in that which we contemplate. Attachment rather than detachment is the condition of this type of knowledge. This requires first a faith commitment.

Beyond this, some Christians might respond that we can indwell the reality of God by internalizing the scriptures. However, one of the significant differences among the Christian churches is how those scriptures are interpreted. As Geoffrey Wainwright notes:

> The liturgy was, and *mutatis mutandis* remains for us, the locus in which the story of the constitutive events is retold in order to elicit an appropriate response in worship and ethics to the God who remains faithful to the purposes which his earlier acts declared. As the book in which the original stories have been deposited, developed, and classically defined, the scriptures subserve that continuing function of the liturgy.[42]

Here Wainwright seems to point to a reciprocal relationship between the biblical text and the liturgy. The liturgy is the interpretative lens for the Bible while the scriptures are necessary for the community's response to God in worship and ethics. Thus some liturgical context, interpreted as the presence of the paschal mystery, appears necessary for a Christian reading of the canon.

Third, we need a community which hands on from generation to generation what is tacitly known in its tradition.[43] Tradition shapes our power of perception so that we perceive in the Christian symbols what the church perceives. Avery Dulles, following Polanyi, tells us that tradition "is grasped

[41] *Personal Knowledge,* 195-96.

[42] Geoffrey Wainwright, *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine, and Life* (New York: Oxford University Press 1980) 153. See also Louis Bouyer, "Liturgie et exégèse spirituelle," *La Maison-Dieu* 7 (1946) 29-50; Jean Daniélou, *The Bible and the Liturgy,* Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press 1956.

[43] Avery Dulles, *The Reshaping of Catholicism* (San Francisco: Harper & Row 1988) 86.

not by objective knowledge—that is to say, by looking at it—but by participatory knowledge—that is, by dwelling in it."[44] He notes that tradition functions most effectively when we are not expressly conscious of it. What is finally achieved is a "tacit, lived awareness of the God to whom the Christian scriptures and symbols point." The Second Vatican Council in the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation states that this tradition is passed on in the church's doctrine, life, and worship.[45] Thus the liturgy embodies the community's identity at the same time that the community provides the norm for interpreting liturgical symbols.

Finally, conversion is both the product of indwelling and what is needed to participate more intensively in a symbol system. Ultimately, it is connaturality with the symbol that enables us to resonate with it. Lest this seem impossibly circular, we have only to recall that Aristotle and Plato, from the ancient tradition, and Thomas Aquinas, in the medieval, held that to discover concretely what is just or prudent or brave or chaste, it is useless to argue deductively. I can only arrive at this knowledge by asking a person who has the virtue, who then knows what this virtue is by consulting his or her own inclinations.[46] When we know something connaturally, we have the virtue in question embodied in ourselves and are thus co-natured with it.[47] When we are asked about a moral virtue, we give the right answer by looking at and consulting what we are and the inner bents or propensities of our own being or, in the words of Jacques Maritain, by listening to "the inner melody that the vibrating strings of abiding tendencies made present in the subject."[48]

Strictly speaking, virtue cannot be taught. Conversion is necessary in order to have an intuitive insight into the Good or God, for only then do we possess

[44] Ibid.

[45] *Dei Verbum* 8.

[46] For Thomas Aquinas on knowledge of chastity through connaturality see his discussion on wisdom in the *Summa Theologica,* II–II, 34, 2.

[47] Jacques Maritain is one of the few to attempt a quasi-definition of connatural knowledge: "A kind of knowledge which is produced in the intellect but not by virtue of conceptual connections and by way of demonstration. . . . We shall give the right answer, no longer through science, but through inclination, by looking at and consulting what we are and the inner bents or propensities of our being.

In this knowledge through union or inclination, connaturality or congeniality, the intellect is at play not alone, but together with affective inclinations and the dispositions of the will, and is guided and directed by them. It is not rational knowledge, knowledge through the conceptual, logical and discursive exercise of reason. But it is really and genuinely knowledge, though obscure and perhaps incapable of giving account of itself, or of being translated into words" ("On Knowledge Through Connaturality," *The Review of Metaphysics* 4 [1951] 473-74).

[48] Jacques Maritain, *Man and the State* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1951) 91-92.

the value, virtue, or divine life within us with which we can resonate. Conversion results in charity, which is to say love, which unites us to God.[49] Maritain notes that John of St Thomas' great achievement was to show that in mystical experience the love grows into an objective means of knowing which unites the intellect with the thing known.[50] This wisdom or knowledge of the divine occurs through taste and affective union rather than discursive reason. This requires contemplation not only of the scriptural text, but of the liturgical symbol within the lived worship of the church. It is not a direct and immediate contemplation of God in Godself, but contemplation by indwelling through the mediation of the complexus of symbols.

Polanyi does not speak of connaturality in connection with tacit knowledge through indwelling; nor does Maritain speak of tacit knowledge. However, since the meaning of symbols cannot be explained fully, but can only be experienced, because they cannot be invented at will but must be discovered, they only have the power to communicate with us through some sort of connaturality. Participation in a symbol can occur only because of some kind of affinity with it. Light and darkness, oil, bread and wine, water—these have their power because they resonate with something primordial within us. The connatural element within tacit knowledge explains why an outsider can wander into the liturgy or some other symbol system and be unaffected until they have been initiated into that community. Initiation into a specific symbolic community is a process of conversion through which an individual acquires the qualities with which to resonate with the symbol.

Inevitably the question arises whether, in such discussions of the liturgy as this one, we romanticize or idealize the liturgy or make claims about it and for it which cannot be substantiated. In this post-liturgical movement era we need to be critical, honest, hard-headed about the claims we make for the liturgy—especially in ecumenical conversations. Someone invariably asks: "What liturgy do you go to? What you describe is not my experience. Is this the experience of professionally religious people who live with this day in and day out through both office and daily eucharist, but not the ordinary Christian, the person in the pew, who only attends a Sunday service? Does such a view of liturgy reflect more the wish of the author than reality?" How can we reconcile such claims with what is often a rather mundane liturgical experience?

[49] Aquinas, *Summa,* I–II, 14, 1.

[50] Jacques Maritain, *Range of Reason* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons 1952) 24.

Liturgy is rightfully criticized if it becomes empty ritual or if becomes a manipulation of symbol in order to receive a desired response from the divine. The key to authentic liturgy is whether or not what is celebrated within the liturgy affects how we attempt to live outside of the liturgy. The liturgy represents symbolically the pattern of Christian relationships. The interplay between the attempt to live inclusive, self-giving relationships outside the liturgy and the pattern of inclusivity and self-offering represented within the liturgy gives life to our liturgical experience. The liturgy does not need to evoke intense emotional experiences or be celebrated with high drama in order to achieve its purpose, although esthetics do make a difference.

The primary liturgical symbols are simple: a gathered assembly, a proclaimed biblical text, bread and wine, oil, water. The symbols are ordinary. The participatory knowledge of God in the liturgy simply requires that we place ourselves in the formative environment or the liturgy so as to acquire the perspective expressed there, to experience ourselves as active members of a worshipping community, and through the liturgical rite to be caught up into the doxological return to the Father through Christ in the power of the Spirit. We are formed by the dailyness and commonality of liturgical prayer. Perhaps significantly Polanyi refers to this kind of knowledge here as *tacit*. As such it is silent, inferred, unexpressed. We are formed into a pattern, identified as Christian, and thus assume a way of being in the world. This is neither esoteric nor necessarily highly emotional.

Polanyi's epistemology challenges the stereotype of scientific and mathematical knowledge as being objective and capable of study by an impersonal, objective, detached observer. The academic study of theology in its effort to find acceptance by the Academy and to prove its objective, scientific character, often detaches itself from its grounding in a faith community.[51] If Polanyi's theory of tacit knowledge as applied to the knowledge of God within the liturgy is correct, this detachment is very misguided. The object of such study becomes the mediatory elements which are attended from in participatory knowledge. Although these are legitimate objects of inquiry, what happens is that such study becomes fragmented and cut off from the context which integrates and unites them. What is needed now is the integration of the various ways of knowing God. This involves, first of all, relocating them in their proper context: the public worship of the church.

[51] See David Kelsey, *To Understand God Truly: What's Theological About a Theological School* (Louisville, KY: Westminster 1992) chapter 3, "Excellence as *Wissenschaft* and Professionalism," 78-100.