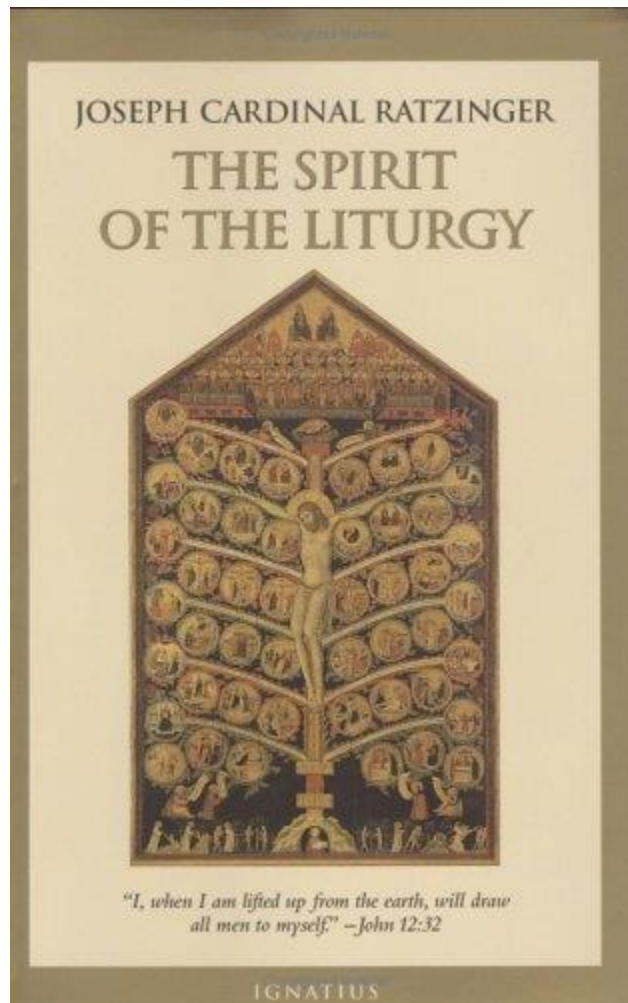


## **A Summary of The Spirit of the Liturgy by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI)**



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## About The Author

Cardinal Ratzinger is the former prefect for the Congregation of Worship, who succeeded St. Peter the Apostle as one of his successors. He was born April 16, 1927, Holy Saturday in Marktl am Inn, Germany. In 1939, he took his first step toward the priesthood with his entrance into the minor seminary in Transtein, which was interrupted by World War II. In 1945, he re-entered the seminary with his brother Georg. After this, in 1947, he entered the Herzogliches Georgianum and on June 29, 1951, he received the sacrament of Holy Orders; he was ordained as a priest.

Father Ratzinger continued his studies at the University of Munich where in July 1953 he received his doctorate in Theology after he wrote his dissertation entitled, "The People and House of God in Augustine's doctrine of the Church." In 1959, he began his professorship at the University of Bonn, and then from 1962-1965 he was present through all the sessions of the Second Vatican Council as the chief theological advisor to Cardinal Josef Frings of Cologne, Germany.

On March 24, 1977, Father Ratzinger was elected to the position of Archbishop of Munich and Freising by Pope Paul VI. Then on June 1977, he was elevated to the position of a Cardinal by the same pope. In 1980, by Pope John Paul II, he was named to a chair on the special synod of the laity. Cardinal Ratzinger was further honored by Pope John Paul II when on November 25, 1981, he became the Prefect for the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and the President *ex officio* of both the Pontifical Biblical Commission and the International Theological Commission. In 1998, he became Vice-Dean of the Sacred College of Cardinals and then in 2002 the Dean. On Tuesday April 19, 2005, the fourth ballot of the conclave elected Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger as Pope Benedict XVI.

## General Overview

This is a brief presentation of the historical and philosophical tradition of the Christian liturgy. Cardinal Ratzinger covers first the Essence of the Liturgy. Ratzinger, when younger, read the book *The Spirit of the Liturgy* by Father Romano Guardini and wished to contribute to the Church in the same manner as Father Romano Guardini. His book was dedicated on the feast day of St. Augustine, and Cardinal Ratzinger has weaved the thought of this Saint through his whole work. The essence of the liturgy involves the place of liturgy in the present reality of man as revealed through the cosmos in the unfolding of history. This unfolding of history is best illuminated by the New Testament of Sacred Scripture in the light of the Old Testament seated in its Jewish heritage.

Cardinal Ratzinger then proceeds to expound on the liturgy in the context of time and space. When he speaks of the liturgy in time and space, he is commenting on the particulars of the liturgy. Cardinal Ratzinger answers the predominating questions on the issues dealing with the particulars of the liturgy including the significance of the Church building, the Altar and the Direction of Liturgical Prayer, The Reservation of the Blessed Sacrament, and Sacred Time.

Ratzinger then moves to another topic which is key to the liturgy. He makes numerous distinctions in the relationship of art and the liturgy. He addresses the questions of images in their historical context in relationship to the Church. He then moves to another form of art and its participation in the liturgy, music, and the liturgy. Philosophically, he defeats the predominating errors regarding the proper forms of images and music which are to participate in the liturgy.

Cardinal Ratzinger then advances to address the various liturgical forms. This first occurs in the various rites which are present today in the Catholic Church and then in the various material objects and positions of the body which are involved in a proper implementation of the liturgy.

## Part One: The Essence of The Liturgy

Cardinal Ratzinger's first section on the essence of the liturgy is divided into three chapters: the first is Liturgy and Life: The Place of the Liturgy in Reality, the second is Liturgy – Cosmos – History, and the third is From Old Testament to New: the Fundamental Form of the Christian Liturgy – Its Determination by Biblical Faith.

A term that the Cardinal defines and builds upon in Liturgy in life is the term “play.” What does the term *play* signify in its relation to the liturgy? *Play* for Ratzinger is “a kind of other world, an oasis of freedom, where for a moment we can let life flow freely.” Children play in an anticipation of later life. The liturgy can be thought of as a type of play in anticipation of later life. It is in the liturgy that man “plays” in an anticipation of the life to come.

Another approach that the Cardinal uses to approach the topic of the liturgy in life is from Scripture, the Exodus of the Israelites. God repeatedly through the agency of Moses orders Pharaoh to release the Israelites. “Let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness” (Ex: 7:16). The issue at hand is the Israelite's freedom of worship. It was first thought that the Israelites would be able to worship God within Egypt, but it is on the insistence of Moses, in obedience to the commands of God, that the Israelites must leave Egypt. When the Israelites finally leave the land, they are able to worship God, something that they were not able to do in Egypt. Israel does not depart from Egypt in order to be a distinctive people like all others. They leave to worship God and it is from this reason that the distinction for them as a people is made. The land is given to the people solely as a place to worship God. At Sinai, when the Israelites receive the Ten Commandments from God, the Israelites learn how to worship God in the manner that God Himself desires. *Cult* (i.e. the proper form of liturgy) is part of the worship of God but so too is life according to the will of God. The Israelites are released from Egypt in order to have a proper cult of God.

Cardinal Ratzinger then expounds on the three important aspects of the nature of religion. Firstly, at Sinai the people receive not only instructions about worship, but a rule of both life and law. Secondly, in the ordering of the covenant on Sinai, the three aspects of worship, law, and ethics are inseparably interwoven. In the New Covenant, the three aspects of worship as revealed in the covenant on Sinai would be unraveled. Finally, Cardinal Ratzinger goes on to state that, “When human affairs are so ordered that there is no recognition of God, there is a belittling of man. . . God has a right to a response from man, to man himself, and where that right of God totally disappears, the order of law among men is dissolved, because there is no cornerstone to keep the whole structure together.” From this man can see that the proper type of worship is necessary for man to be fully man. Worship establishes the relationship between man to God and man to man. A life no longer receptive to the heavens is empty. You can see that every culture does not lack some type of cult. Even atheistic societies create their own empty materialistic forms of cult. However, man himself cannot establish his own worship. It is necessary that when God reveals Himself that He reveal the proper type of cult. It is the nature of worship to draw man to God and not God to man.

Liturgy, according to the second chapter, has its place in both history and the cosmos. The Sabbath is the pinnacle of God's creation and a sign of the covenant between man and God. The Sabbath is to bring about the freedom and equality of man because only when man is in a covenant with God does he truly become free. Before answering the question of what is the essence of true Christian worship, Ratzinger refers to the text that concludes the giving of the ceremonial law in the book of Exodus. The tabernacle is constructed in a manner very similar to the creation account. The tabernacle ends with a type of vision of the Sabbath. “So Moses finished the work. Then the cloud covered the seat of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle” (Ex 40:33f). The completion of the tent anticipates the completion of creation. God has made a dwelling place on this earth just as in creation heaven and earth is united. God, dwelling in creation, also dwells in the liturgy as a part of creation.

Cardinal Ratzinger then readdresses the question: What is worship? What happens when we worship? In all religions, sacrifice is at the heart of worship; however, man must first establish a fitting definition of sacrifice.

Sacrifice has nothing to do with destruction, which is a common misconception. It is a type of surrender to God. True surrender to God, true sacrifice, is losing oneself in order that one may find himself through a dedication to God. The goals of creation and goals of worship are identical: the divinization of the world in freedom and love, a sacrifice back to God. The historical and the cosmic are not to be distinct from one another. The historical appears in the setting of the cosmic. This is evident in the traditional concept of the *exitus* and the *reditus*. The *exitus* of God's free act of creation is in order to return man to God by his free will decision in the *reditus*. The *reditus* is possible for man because of the historical context in which the cosmos lies. Christ through the incarnation entered into history and provided the manner in which the cosmos could have a *reditus* to God. The liturgy as related to this will always be cosmic, but it does have its place in the historical context of time. Worship is presented as an *exitus* and *reditus* to God.

The third chapter that Cardinal Ratzinger embarks on is From Old Testament to New: The Fundamental Form of the Christian Liturgy – Its determination by Biblical Faith. The liturgy takes place in the context of both the struggles of man and society to find atonement, forgiveness, and reconciliation. This is made easier when man comes to find that the only real gift he should give to God is himself.

What was special about the liturgy of Israel? Primarily the one to whom it is directed. This is in accord with the first commandment: adoration is due to God alone. Leviticus prescribes the necessary laws for Old Testament worship given by God Himself. Exodus speaks of the prescribed rules for the Passover, the center of the liturgical year and of Israel's memorial of faith. The Old Testament worship, however, as evident in the Old Testament itself, is not solely external. Hosea chapter six verse six thus states, "For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God, rather than burnt offerings." The Old Testament Liturgy is just a foreshadowing of the New Testament. With the coming of the New Covenant is the end of the particular worship prescribed in the Old Testament – "At the moment of Jesus' death, the function of the old Temple comes to an end. It is dissolved. It is no longer the place of God's presence, His "footstool," into which He has caused His glory to descend." The Christian liturgy has an Old Testament foundation.

Ratzinger then continues to discuss the significance of the Greek term "logos." *Logos* is the word of prayer for man, the dialogue between God and man. In John's Gospel, Christ is also called the "logos" due to the incarnation; the Word became flesh. The Church Fathers played heavily on this relationship between the logos of Scripture and the logos as Christ. For the Church Fathers, the Eucharist is prayer, a sacrifice of the word. It goes beyond the Greek idea of sacrifice of the logos to the Old Testament idea that equivocates prayer to sacrifice. The Christian liturgy, including the concept of the term logos, is built upon its Jewish inheritance as Christ Himself was a Jew and a Jewish logos.

## Part Two: Time and Space in The Liturgy

The liturgy as present in man's life partakes of time and space. The foundation of the liturgy is in the historical event of Christ's death and resurrection on the Cross. God Himself intervened in time, first, through the Jews and, then, through the incarnation of Christ. The true interior act of the liturgy transcends time, but it is the particular external acts of the liturgy that find their place set in the compass of time. Christ's sacrifice on the Cross happened once, but it is the Mass where this sacrifice of Calvary is represented time and time again for the benefit of mankind. In the liturgy, man is not only receiving an inheritance from the past but he becomes contemporaries with the foundation of the liturgy. For according to Cardinal Ratzinger, "St. Bernard of Clairvaux has this in mind when he says that the true *semel* (once) bears within itself the *semper* (always)." Christ's sacrifice on Calvary contains the *semper* in its *semel*.

Ratzinger continues with the theme of the *semel* and the *semper*. The *semel*, for Ratzinger, seeks to obtain its *semper*. The sacrifice at Calvary is contained in the liturgy and is only complete when the world has become the place of love. The Christ has gone before man. He, in descending to hell, has done what we have to do, but what we could not first do. Christ opened for all of mankind a way to heaven. Man is part of time, and his

place in the scheme of salvation is also a part of time. The liturgy gives expression to the historical situation that it recreates. It is in the liturgy that there is also a historical *exitus* and *reditus* to God.

A part of the space in the liturgy is the space that the liturgy occupies, more precisely the building in which the sacred liturgy is to be held. It is the Church buildings that make it possible for people to gather for the liturgy. In the Old Testament the synagogue contained the “real presence” of God in the form of the Ark of the Covenant. The directions for the construction of this synagogue were heavily detailed and ornate. Today our Churches truly do contain the “Real Presence,” so how much more should they give glory to God? The traditional form of a Christian Church retains the general form of the Old Testament Synagogue in accordance with the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

There, however, have been modifications made in the traditional form of the Christian Church in relation to the synagogue. The Christian worshipper no longer looks toward Jerusalem but is to face east. The Christian is to face the rising sun, not in a worshipful manner, but he is facing the cosmos which bespeaks of Christ Himself. When one prays toward the east, he is attempting to enter the profession of history toward the future, to reach the New Heaven and the New Earth. The sanctuary, where the Word dwells, usually is a place set apart in the Church, just as it was a place set apart in the temple. The Torah is replaced with the Gospels and the Ark of the Covenant has been replaced by the flesh and blood of the Word of the New Covenant. However, a distinction from the Old Testament Law is that women may approach but not enter the sanctuary. With the New Covenant came new liturgical modifications.

The priest as we have already established, according to tradition, is to face east while celebrating the liturgy, and not the people. Because of the positioning of the body of St. Peter under St. Peter's Basilica in Rome the liturgy had to be celebrated facing the people, *versus populum*, while still facing east. It is this model that the modern “liturgical renewal” adapted. This was not a part of the documents of Vatican II. The celebration of mass *versus populum* does seem like a fruit of Vatican II bringing with it a new idea of the essence of liturgy – the liturgy as a communal meal. This aspect of the liturgy as a communal meal is not from the time of Christ. “Nowhere in Christian antiquity, could have arisen the idea of having to ‘face the people’ to preside at a meal. The communal character of a meal was emphasized just by the opposite disposition: the fact that all the participants were on the same side of the table.” As the priest turns toward the people he has enclosed the community within itself. When a priest faces the people he is no longer striving for the transcendent.

The liturgy is related to time. God, as discussed earlier, takes part in both the history and cosmos that compose man's present reality. Christ is the bridge between man and eternity. God's eternity is not timeless, but it is different than man knows time. God's power over time is present with time and in time. Each being has its own form of time including the liturgy. The liturgy contains its own particular relation to time. According to Cardinal Ratzinger, “It points to the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ, to His death and new rising. It points to the future of the world and the consummation of all history in the final coming of the Redeemer.”

The Sabbath brought a sign of the covenant between God and man into time; creation was tied to the covenant. The day of Resurrection is the new Sabbath and is the day on which the Lord ties the New Covenant with the Old Covenant. Sunday is the sign of the New Covenant and Sunday assumes the significance of the Jewish Sabbath. Sunday, however, looks at not only the past but also to the future, the final consummation of Christ in history. Sunday, the eighth day, just as baptism is a rebirth, is a rebirth into time through the resurrection of Christ. The Feast of the Epiphany, emerging in the East, and the Feast of Christmas, emerging in the West, provide different emphases according to the different religious and cultural contexts in which they arose, but yet they both celebrate the birth of Christ as the dawning of history. Both feasts contain the revelation of God to humanity, Christ in relation to time.

### Part Three: Art and Liturgy

Images play a part, or at least should, in the liturgical setting for Christians. In Judaic times, it is still present in some forms of Judaism; there was a prohibition against images. Christ, in becoming man and redeeming humanity, redeemed the image. Because He became flesh, He can now be depicted in the flesh. The early images of Christ portrayed Him in an allegorical manner. The image portrayed Christ allegorically in a pedagogical function. Whereas man portrayed Christ allegorically *acheiropoietos*, miraculous images not made by human hands, depict the true face of Christ. A major controversy that immersed in the Church was Iconoclasm. There was a danger in the adoration of the image. The images, to some, assumed the status of a sacrament and that there was a type of “real presence” conveyed in the image. This is understandable when dealing with the *acheiropoietos* images. The result in the total rejection of the image combined with the political factor of the Jews and Muslims, who already rejected images, was the Iconoclasm conflict. Iconoclasm rejected the use of the image.

According to the Eastern Church, the icon begins in prayer and leads man to prayer. The icon painter himself must first undertake a long path of prayerful asceticism in order to create an image that passes from art to sacred art. For according to Cardinal Ratzinger, “The icon is intended to draw us onto an inner path, the eastward path, toward the Christ who is to return.” The icon is more than a modern conception of beauty where, “the vision of a beauty that no longer points beyond itself but is content in the end with itself, the beauty of the appearing thing.” Today there is a crisis in art. Man is no longer elevated to the sublime resulting in a blindness of the spirit of man. Art is a gift. It is not something which is capable of being mass produced. There is a present need for art to lead man to prayer.

Another form of art employed in the liturgy is music. In Scripture the verb “to sing”, and its related nouns, is one of the most frequently employed words. It occurs 309 times in the Old Testament and 36 times in the New Testament. For Jews, the first mention of singing is after the crossing of the Red Sea. Singing, here, is praise for deliverance. For Christians, signing is done in remembrance of the Resurrection, man’s true deliverance. The model for liturgical prayer, for both the Old and New Testaments, has always been the Psalms. The Psalms have been traditionally ascribed to King David and they find their completion in the “New David,” a completion in Christ. In the Apocalypse the song of the conquerors is described as the song of God’s servant Moses and the Lamb. In the Old Testament, singing was due to two principle motivations: affliction and joy, distress and deliverance. It is a love of God that pervades all of this that is bespoken. St. Augustine, also in regard to singing in the New Covenant, states the following, “*Cantare amantis est* (singing is a lover’s thing).” The Holy Spirit is love and it is the Holy Spirit Who produces the singing. Singing is an art of the Holy Spirit.

A question for modernity is how far enculturation may approach Christianity when the Biblical faith first created its own form of culture. A negative example of enculturation of the liturgy is seen in liturgical music. In his first epistle to the Corinthians, St. Paul provides us with some information regarding the order of the service of the Christian liturgy, “When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification” (14:26). Cardinal Ratzinger continues to quotes Church sources, “The fifty-ninth canon of the Council of Laodicea forbids the use of private composed psalms and non-canonical writings in divine worship.” Today, “artistic freedom” has broken loose into sacred music as it no longer develops from prayer. Liturgical music has become acculturated.

The combatting of the integration of secular music into the liturgy is a battle which is not unknown to the Roman Catholic Church. The Council of Trent made a norm that liturgical music should be at the service of the Word, and St. Pius X also made a similar intervention when he declared Gregorian Chant and Palestrina to be the standard for liturgical music. Sacred music in the liturgy has a specific responsibility, which is today in danger. The relation of liturgical music to *logos* is in relation to words, the Holy Spirit, and the cosmic liturgy. The mathematical order of the universe – “cosmos” means “order” – was identical with the essence of beauty itself. Music is to follow this order. For according to Cardinal Ratzinger, “We sing with the angels. But this cosmic character is grounded ultimately in the ordering of all Christian worship to *logos*.”

## Part Four: Liturgical Form

The first chapter in liturgical form is dedicated to rite. Etymologically, rite comes from *ritus*, which is defined in the Latin as “mos comprobatus in administrant sacrificiis (an approved practice in the administration of sacrifice).” Man is always seeking the correct manner of honoring God and this also encompasses rite. Also, orthodoxy, derived from the Greek and in its Christian connotation means on the order of true splendor, the glory of God.

Amongst Christians major rites, particular ways of worship have formed. Rite in this sense continues on to mean, “the practical arrangements made by the community, in time and space, for the basic type of worship received from God in faith. There are three primatial sees: Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch. Byzantium later also immersed as a see to make four. The rites that compose these sees are numerous and include the Roman, Syro-Malankar, Maronite, Chaldean, Coptic, Ethiopian, Gaulish, and Mozarabic Rites. However, according to the Cardinal, “Rites are not, therefore, just the products of enculturation, however much they may have incorporated elements from different cultures. They are forms of the apostolic Tradition and of its unfolding in the great places of the Tradition.”

In this manner the great forms of rite are able to embrace many cultures. Just as the Pope’s authority is bound to tradition, so also is the liturgy.

Through his body, man is to participate in liturgical form. The *oratio*, originally not meaning prayer but public speech, is human action. The sacrifice of Christ is accepted already and forever, but in the liturgy man must make it his sacrifice in order to be transformed. But according to the Cardinal, “The uniqueness of the Eucharistic liturgy lies precisely in the fact that God Himself is acting and that we are drawn into that action of God.” To educate one in the liturgy, then, one must be led toward the essential action of the liturgy. Man’s action leads to God’s action.

Cardinal Ratzinger covers seven topics under the body and the liturgy: active participation, the sign of the cross, posture, gestures, the human voice, vestments, and matter. The most basic gesture of Christian prayer was, is, and forever will be the sign of the Cross. This confession of the Crucified Christ with one’s body finds Scriptural foundation in St. Paul, “We preach Christ Crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God” (I Cor 1:23). The sign of the cross is a confession in the faith established by the Crucified One and a hope for a future in Him.

The cross also shows man his way in life; to assume the cross is to act in imitation of Christ Himself. The cross, as shown, is a sign of the Passion of Christ, yet simultaneously it is a sign of the Resurrection. The Sign of the Cross, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, when holy water is used, is a remembrance of our Baptism. Baptism has a close connection to the Resurrection. The sign of the cross is simultaneously a remembrance of the death of Christ in union with man’s hope in a participation in His Resurrection.

The Sign of the Cross is not merely a construction stemming from the New Testament. Numerous Jewish graves discovered in the Holy Land were inscribed with the cross. This stems from a verse in Ezekiel, “Go through the city, through Jerusalem, and put a mark [Tav] upon the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations that are committed in it.” The Tav (a Hebrew character) is in the form of a cross and a seal of God’s ownership. For the Jews it was a confession of faith in the God of Israel and a sign of hope God’s protection. As far as we know, Christians did not assume this Jewish symbol, the Tav transformed into the salvation brought by the New Covenant.

Man’s posture during the liturgy is important. The most obvious form of this posture is kneeling. According to the Cardinal, “The kneeling of Christians is not a form of enculturation into existing customs. It is quite the opposite, an expression of Christian culture, which transforms the existing culture through a new and deeper knowledge and experience of God.” There are three closely related forms of posture, prostration, falling to one’s knees before another, and kneeling. All three have their place in the liturgy. Dancing is not a proper form

of expression for the Christian liturgy. Man's actions in the liturgy, ultimately are not about himself. Man is to show God the highest due honor. Cardinal Ratzinger summarizes this beautifully. "Liturgy can only attract people when it looks, not at itself, but at God, when it allows Him to enter and act."