

RETRIEVING THE SENSE
OF THE SACRED
A PARADIGM OF SILENCE IN THE LITURGY

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Retrieving the Sense of the Sacred: A Paradigm of Silence in the Liturgy

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PREFACE

Since its publication in 2017, *The Power of Silence: Against the Dictatorship of Noise* by Robert Cardinal Sarah has turned our attention to the role of silence in the liturgy. Cardinal Sarah is not the first prelate to invite us to appreciate the value of silence in Catholic liturgy.

In his landmark work, *The Spirit of Liturgy*, Cardinal Josef Ratzinger led his readers to discover silence as the entrance to the greater mystery surpassing words and actions. Ratzinger and Sarah both believe that the realization of silence as a part of the liturgy is one of the ways to deal with the liturgical and spiritual crises which the Church in the West has suffered since the 1970s.

The recovery of silence in Catholic liturgy should not be a concern unique to the Church in Europe and North America. My personal experience of the Catholic liturgy in mainland China today convinces me that we also need a systematic reflection on the liturgical practices introduced in the name of the Spirit of Vatican II. For most of the Chinese lay people whom I met over the past two decades, the active participation, an idea at the heart of the Liturgical Movement since its beginning at the end of the nineteenth century, is equivalent to the comprehension of what is heard and seen in the liturgy. Therefore, active participation seems to be perfectly realized in singing the hymns in Chinese, listening to the scriptural readings and many other acts alike.

Antonio Wong Lee Chun with his thesis, *Retrieving the Sense of the Sacred: A Paradigm of Silence in the Liturgy*, has made an important contribution to recover the value of silence in the context of the Church in Greater China. Drawn from his experience of serving the liturgy in Hong Kong and Macau, Mr. Wong's research not only examined the theological foundation of liturgical silence, but also engages in the discussion of how the sense of the sacred and mystery can be retrieved in modern Roman liturgy and chant. As indicated by his study, silence is a positive stillness that harbors potentials to restore Christian spirituality.

The thesis presented by an able student offers a rich reflection on silence in the liturgy. It invites us to contemplate Christ's self-giving on the cross as the great action of the liturgy through "a silence with content".

Thomas Y. Cai
17 October 2021

ABBREVIATIONS

GENERAL ABBREVIATIONS

BDB	<i>The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon</i>
CCC	<i>Catechism of the Catholic Church</i>
CCL	<i>Corpus Christianorum Series Latina. Turnholt: Brepols</i>
DV	<i>Dei Verbum</i>
GIRM	<i>General Instructions of the Roman Missal</i>
PL	<i>Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Latina</i>
RM	<i>Roman Missal</i>
SC	<i>Sacrosanctum Concilium</i>

BIBLE ABBREVIATIONS

RSV	Revised Standard Version
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
OT	Old Testament
NT	New Testament
Gen	Genesis
Exod	Exodus
1 Kgs	1 Kings
Ps	Psalms
Isa	Isaiah
Matt	Matthew
Lk	Luke
Eph	The Letter to Ephesians

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To all Professors and Academics in the Faculty of Religious Studies and Philosophy, I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation for all the efforts they have devoted to teaching and supporting the community, especially during this extraordinary period of the coronavirus pandemic.

In memory of my beloved father: Dad, may you rest peacefully in the holy arms of the resurrected Christ. In blissful silent communion, I believe you are still guiding me every day.

Finally, in a special manner, I would like to thank the Bishop of Macau, the *Most Reverend* Stephen Lee, who has supported my studies at the USJ and appointed me as the choirmaster at the Cathedral. This entire research would not have come into existence without these valuable pastoral experiences.

INTRODUCTION

I came from a small parish in Hong Kong.¹ This parish, which is not really a church, but what we called a ‘Mass Center’ in which Holy Mass has been celebrated in a Primary school hall,² is where I started to serve as an altar boy at the age of 12. Very often, I would stay at the school hall for a short prayer after the Mass has ended. I still remember the amazing sight when all the lights were gone except the tiny little lamp shimmering right above the tabernacle. There was nothing but silence. I would kneel and gaze at the only source of light over the tabernacle. It was there where I prayed in solitude and comfort. This weekly ‘secret’ encounter with Jesus in silence has remained a fundamental spiritual experience since my childhood.

Anyone who has had the experience of prayer would not deny the power of silence. The experience of silence has been an inevitable sign of our conversation with God. Silence is a non-vocal invitation to encountering the Sacred. The practice of chanting the Liturgy of the Hours as a seminarian³ has fostered my interest in studying liturgical silence. I have come to discover the power of silence. Such experience of silence can lead us not only to recollection and meditation of the Psalms, but can also transform us slowly into disciples of Christ. Liturgical silence connects us with the silent prayer of Jesus and with his passion on the cross. I have wondered how liturgical

¹ St. John the Baptist Parish (Mass Center) was established in 1962 and was collaborated with St. John the Baptist Catholic Primary School, located in the mid-area of Kwun Tong. A strong ecclesial community in the district and the spiritual house of thousands of faithful.

² The practice of celebrating Mass in School Halls goes back to 1950s. Due to a rapid increase of refugees from the Mainland China, the Hong Kong Catholic Diocese started to borrow school halls for conducting charity services and to celebrate the liturgy for the faithful. See: Pui Wah Yeung, “Church Architecture in Hong Kong,” Catholic Heritage – Exploration of historic buildings of the Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong, *Build*, last modified August 1991, accessed February 29, 2020, https://www.catholicheritage.org.hk/tc/introduction/building_introduction/index.html.

³ I am a former seminarian from the Holy Spirit Seminary (2008-2012).

silence shapes us as disciples, as member of the Church and as vibrant witnesses of the Gospel. For years, I have been longing to conduct academic research on the power of liturgical silence as a theological inquiry.

For methodology, I would like to employ the *Context-Theology-Paradigm* approach and therefore to structure this book into three parts. The first part is *contextual*: a critique of modern liturgical practice will be presented in order to set up a platform which opens to theological inquiry. The second part is *theological*: it aims at structuring a theological discourse on liturgical silence in an interdisciplinary and comprehensive way. The third part presents a *paradigm*: it attempts to discover theological implications in modern liturgical practice.

The advantage of using the proposed methodology as an approach of theological study is beneficial. Liturgical theology always aims at cultivating a true and proper liturgical spirit in worshiping and therefore, grounding a theological analysis in today's contexts, will lead us to understand more clearly the practical issues we are facing. As a matter of fact, without a certain understanding of our liturgical practices today and its rationale, the study of the liturgy remains a 'one-way ticket' which only takes us back to the past to indulge in liturgical nostalgia. What I suggest in this book is, however, a 'round-trip ticket' which we will allow us to embrace the spirit of authentic worship.

As an active liturgical minister and an aspiring scholar, it is clear that I have a vocation to contribute to theological scholarship as a witness to the work of the Holy Spirit who inspires us with the signs of the time.

A contextual theological reflection on liturgy is a key to unlocking the treasures of liturgical studies of our time.

The fundamental argument of this book is that liturgical silence, as prescribed in the Roman liturgy, is one of the remedies to retrieving the sense of the sacred in the modern world. Upon this initial argument, here is my own theological reflection: there is a loss of the sense of the sacred in today's Catholic liturgy. This loss of the sense of the sacred is caused by a failure to observe liturgical silence. In grounding this argument, I started with a report on my liturgical experience as an active liturgical minister, in other words, my own testimony. In the first chapter, some situations I have observed during my twenty-year ministry experience at several parishes in Hong Kong and Macau are presented. This is to provide to the reader a general picture of modern liturgical experience from which this entire theological discussion takes off. In the second chapter, I offer support to my arguments with the work of Cardinal Robert Sarah, who was the Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. He was one of the most prominent liturgists of our time, who had identified the loss of silence in the liturgy as one of the causes of today's liturgical crisis. In his book, *The Power of Silence*, he tackles the theological question on liturgical silence with insights which opens us to a clearer horizon about what happens in our common liturgical experience. These two chapters together formulate the first part of this book.

The second part of this book presents an investigation of a theology of liturgical silence. A few chapters are dedicated to this theological investigation. Chapter 3 opens the discussion on liturgical silence by looking

at the fundamental theological connection between silence and the Sacred. Chapter 4 deepens the discussion by looking into the Scriptural meaning of silence. Chapter 5 takes a Christological framework with a discussion on a theology of silence that reaches the person of Jesus Christ and the Christ Events, where the silence of Christ becomes the foundation of liturgical silence. Christ, the silent Word of God on the cross, is the turning point where the sacramentality of silence is found, and where the fundamental theological value of liturgical silence is manifested. Chapter 6 turns to apply the theological value of silence into the celebration of the Paschal Triduum, hence presenting a theology of liturgical silence in the context of the liturgy itself.

The third part is entitled “Retrieving the sense of the sacred.” It aims at discovering a true and living spirit of worship in the light of the theology of liturgical silence and hence, cultivating a vision on regaining the sense of the sacred in modern liturgical practice. It is comprised of two chapters. Chapter 7 looks into the modern Roman liturgy which we received from the Second Vatican Council and formulates our liturgical practice today. Together with the liturgical principles proposed by the Council Fathers, the liturgical function of silence and its compatibility with *active participation*⁴ and *ars Celebrandi* (‘the art of celebration’) are justified. To conclude the entire research, chapter 8 is dedicated specifically to sacred music. I intend to provide, in a more concrete way, the theological value of liturgical silence by analyzing the silence in liturgical chant. Given this, the study of liturgical silence will not remain as only a theological discourse, but rather a practical

⁴ Second Vatican Council, “Dogmatic Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 4 December, 1963,” in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1975), sec. 30 (hereafter cited as S.C.).

one. When we participate in liturgical chanting, a sense of silence leads us back to the sense of the sacred.

This book is based upon a liturgical context in which we see the need to rediscover a theology of silence. After all, we need to cultivate, interiorize, and devote into liturgical silence, in order for the liturgy we celebrate today to become truly the gate to the sacred—the mystery to celebrate.

PART I: THE LOSS OF THE SENSE OF THE SACRED

CHAPTER 1

A REVIEW ON MODERN LITURGICAL PRACTICE

Three years ago, I was appointed as choirmaster at the Macau Cathedral, the Cathedral of the Nativity of Our Lady. It was and is, however, a challenging commission for me. On the one hand, Macau is not my hometown, and I was new to the collective cultural history (especially the influence of the Portuguese lifestyle) of the city. On the other hand, I was also new to the liturgical behavior of the Catholics in Macau. Furthermore, the cathedral choir was also new to me. I have committed myself to a project of renewing Cantonese liturgical music to make my ministry more practical.

As a liturgical minister who wishes to contribute to a local church, I have been particularly attentive to the pastoral aspect of the liturgy. Having observed the liturgical practice of Cantonese-speaking Catholics over the past two decades, I would like to envisage my vision on the phenomenon of silence in modern liturgical practice in two dimensions.

First of all, it is necessary to clarify the basis on which I conduct the study on liturgical silence. These observations I made are based on the modern liturgical form of the Roman rite, in other words, the *Novus Ordo*, which is, the Ordinary Form of the celebration of the Eucharist since the liturgical reform of the Second Vatican Council. Though the *Usus Antiquior* has drawn some attention since Pope Benedict XVI issued the *motu proprio* in 2007, the practice of celebrating the liturgy with the 1962 Missal has

only been embraced by a minority of Catholics in Hong Kong and Macau. Therefore, my description of common liturgical experience in both places are based on the Ordinary Form of the liturgy.

1.1 THE TRADITION OF SILENCE IN ROMAN LITURGY

The purpose of this book is to explore the meaning of liturgical silence and therefore, it is of vital importance to look at the tradition of silence in the Roman liturgy. Apart from all kinds of liturgical actions and symbols, words, and gestures, silence remains a vital element in the Roman Liturgy.⁵ Downey holds the idea that liturgical silence is an activity of the assembly and its function is to express both the assembly's attentiveness and receptivity to the Holy Spirit who is present in the celebration of Christ's mystery.⁶ *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal* clearly states that sacred silence, as part of the celebration, is to be observed at designated times.⁷

There are periods of silence that are intrinsic to the liturgy itself. In some of the historic liturgies, certain parts of the Eucharistic Prayer were recited in silence. According to Downey's explanation, this is linked to the notion that the priest alone entered and celebrated the mystery of sacrifice.⁸ In the western tradition, the practice of the silent Canon, which the priest

⁵ Michael Downey, "Silence, Liturgical Role Of," *The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship* ed. Peter E. Fink, SJ (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1990).

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Catholic Church, *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal: Including Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America and Universal Norms on the Liturgical Year and the General Roman Calendar* (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011), no. 45; Second Vatican Council, "Dogmatic Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium, 4 December, 1963" in *Vatican Council II: Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations; the Basic Sixteen Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery (Northport, NY: Costello Publ. [u.a.], 1996), sec. 30 (*hereafter cited as GIRM*).

⁸ Downey, "Silence, Liturgical Role Of."

recites the greater part of the anaphora in a ‘low voice’ (*submissa voce*), dates back to the eighth century.⁹

During the Middle Ages, the development of the priest’s role in the liturgy resulted in a number of private prayers which were said in a barely audible voice by the priest alone. In the 1969 missal, the principal of inaudible prayer by the celebrant is still maintained in the Offertory.¹⁰ These private prayers, however, as Downey suggests, remain few in today’s liturgy.¹¹

Making a note on the silent Canon, Olver observes an obvious change in the Pauline Missal and its General instructions. He sees the Eucharistic prayer from the Pauline Missal as not directed to be said *submissa voce*.¹² Nowadays, the practice of silent Canon is still under debate among theologians. Ratzinger, in his work *The Spirit of Liturgy*, argues that the tradition of praying the Canon in ‘low voice’ should remain as a general norm of liturgical actions.¹³

However, the role of silence still has an intrinsic connection to modern Catholic liturgy—the Novus ordo. The revised *Roman Missal*¹⁴ explains some occasions where silent prayer, which carries the function to

⁹ Louis Bouyer, *Eucharist, Theology and Spirituality of the Eucharistic Prayer*, trans. Charles Underhill Quinn (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), 367. The issue of praying the Canon in a ‘low voice’ remains a subject of research among scholars. A number of historical anaphora shows that there was a reciprocal development on the practice of silent Canon. However, in modern liturgical practice, reciting the Canon in a ‘low voice’ was almost disappeared since the liturgical reform that followed by the Second Vatican Council.

¹⁰ Joseph Shaw, ed., *The Case for Liturgical Restoration: Una Voce Studies on the Traditional Latin Mass*, (Brooklyn, NY: Angelico Press, 2019), 32.

¹¹ Downey, “Silence, Liturgical Role Of.”

¹² Matthew Olver, “A Note on the Silent Canon in the Missal of Paul VI and Cardinal Ratzinger,” *Antiphon: A Journal for Liturgical Renewal* 20 (January 1, 2016): 43–45.

¹³ Joseph Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), 215.

¹⁴ Some prescribed silence suggested by the revised *Roman Missal* are, just to name a few, before the penitential rite during the introductory rites; after the invitation to pray (*oremus*); after the readings and the homily; after the communion. See Downey, “Silence, Liturgical Role Of.”

foster active participation, should be observed during the liturgy. Therefore, along the tradition of the Roman rite, liturgical silence is understood as part of experiencing continuity with the living tradition of Western Catholic worship.¹⁵

1.2 SILENCE AS A MODERN LITURGICAL ISSUE

I observe the liturgy from a practical point of view. There are moments in which great liturgical silence could possibly be achieved. These are good examples indeed to describe the common experience of liturgical silence in today's liturgy. For instance, it is very common that when the organ music fades out completely, there is a profound moment of silence among everyone in the whole assembly. It is also obvious that during the consecration in the Eucharistic Prayer when the Eucharistic host is being elevated by the priest, the whole assembly again dwells in silent adoration. Nevertheless, when the celebrant receives Holy Communion, the whole assembly again remain in absolute silence. These are, I would say, some common experiences of liturgical silence today.

This liturgical experience is at the same time the experience of the sacred, in other words, of the Divine presence. If we look deeply into the actual and sacramental time-and-space in the liturgy, we recognize that empirical reality is linked, in a sacramental way, to the supernatural reality through what we understand as signs and symbols, or liturgical actions.¹⁶

¹⁵ Peter J. Elliott, *Ceremonies of the Modern Roman Rite: The Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours: A Manual for Clergy and All Involved in Liturgical Ministries*, Rev. ed. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 8, no. 22.

¹⁶ Cf. *GIRM*, no. 288. *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal* clearly states the Eucharistic celebration is a celebration of a *great mystery*. Sacred actions carry out by signs and symbol ensure the active participation of the people of God in the celebration.

Among the plentitude of liturgical actions, silence remains as an irreplaceable element. It is not easy to categorize silence as an action of a certain response because outer silence can also convey the impression of arbitrarily doing nothing during the liturgy. However, silence in the liturgy refers to the inner spirit which opens itself to encountering the sacred mystery. In such a way, when inner silence is perceived as an outer spatial experience, it constitutes a meaningful response to a sacred encounter in every liturgical celebration. For instance, in the Eucharistic prayer when the host is elevated for the veneration of the assembly, the moment of silence after the sound of the bell signifies an inner motif of adoration in response to the presence of Christ in the elevated host. This experience of silence is both external and internal. So, phenomenologically speaking, liturgical silence constitutes our sense of the sacred.

When the cultivation of liturgical silence remains one of the biggest challenges in the Catholic world today, the question of our liturgical experience also becomes the question of our experience of silence in the liturgy. When I consider liturgical silence as a theological issue, I do not only see it as purely a liturgical concept. In fact, it refers to a possible condition through which a sense of the sacred is revealed in us. Therefore, in this book, the spectrum of silence and the sacred which unfolds our liturgical experience today, is addressed.

1.3 THE DISTURBANCE CAUSED BY MODERN TECHNOLOGY

The excessive use of modern technology today leads to a disturbance of silence in liturgical reality. It is common nowadays that everything is instantly at hand and digitally mediated, and the beauty of silence which signifies the human capacity of communication and intimacy, is often replaced by a habitual reception of flooding information to occupy the liturgical realm. The forgetfulness of silence in the liturgy, which is also the forgetfulness of the highest means of communication, has harmfully distorted our liturgical experience.

There are two specific modern technological issues that I consider responsible for the loss of silence in modern liturgy. They are, firstly, the installation of enormous visual projections as a replacement of printed liturgical books and hymnals; secondly, the virtual reality created by digital mediation which dissociates worshipers from the actual liturgical reality.

One can never underestimate the defects it brings when we decide to apply modern technology in enhancing our liturgical experience today. In Hong Kong, since the last decade, many parishes have started to abandon printed copies of the Sunday Missal. Screens have been set up around the Church to display the readings and to provide ‘subtitles’ during liturgical celebrations (e.g. the Eucharistic prayer). This is indeed problematic. Setting up screens in the church creates the impression of letting the assembly follow the liturgy more easily as they no longer need to spend time navigating the Missal and the hymnal for the right page. However, such liturgical arrangement risks destroying the sense of the sacred by dismantling the harmony which lies behind the architecture of the liturgical space. Nowadays

it is not unusual to enter into a Church of 500 seats to discover pairs of LED screens hanging over the two sides, sometimes even a pair of giant projection screens over the altar. Liturgical space is disturbed when it can no longer direct the orientation of the assembly to where it ought to be—the altar. Nevertheless, the screen that displays running words destroys noble simplicity of the liturgical space by not only directing the eyesight of the people but also drawing their inner attention by fancy designed pictures. Projection screens become a temptation to distract general liturgical focus. This unnecessary attention is creating a sort of ‘eye pollution’ which directs the assembly into a false liturgical orientation. However, liturgical space aims at creating a spatial harmony so that the sense of the sacred is aroused in the spirit. In this case, under projection screens, inner silence is confused as the assembly turns their mind to following screen projections rather than meditating upon sacred objects. Without meditation in the spirit, silence becomes merely the absence of action and meaningless. Furthermore, projection screens also reduce the capacity of listening, which is an essential element of cultivating silence. Nowadays this false orientation which confuses liturgical silence is obvious during the Collect and the Eucharistic Prayer. These prayers are ought to be joined together by the assembly by listening in great silence. Projection screens, on the contrary, detach the internal participation of the assembly by occupying their external senses. When the assembly is busy following the words on the screen during the Eucharistic Prayer, the experience of a genuine form of liturgical silence, is lost.

The second theological problem I encountered is the new challenge led by digital mediated liturgical experience through cyber web. In the past few years, theological reflections on digital mediated liturgy have become a

‘hot topic’ among theologians. Given the fact that we are living in a reality in which liturgical celebrations are not only being recorded but very often being put into live streaming. Nowadays everyone can ‘watch’ a liturgy through live streaming from the internet. Live streaming of Eucharistic adorations, Masses, and Vespers (perhaps in a monastery) around the world are all available to ‘watch’. Take the example of the pandemic of the coronavirus. most dioceses in the world stopped all public liturgy in order to avoid social contact. Sunday masses are being streamed online for the faithful to ‘watch’. Some communities, for example, the Holy Spirit Seminary in Hong Kong, has been offering live streaming of daily Vespers to invite the faithful to ‘watch’ since the pandemic.

Theologically speaking, what do liturgical practices on the internet mean to us? The digital reality has created a new form of worship which Berger identifies as ‘@worship’.¹⁷ Berger raises theological questions which resemble the thoughts in our minds: how does a prayerful encounter with God take place when it is digitally mediated?¹⁸ What are the markers of active participation in digital sacred space?¹⁹ Can sacramental grace possibly be mediated through digital participation? In what way does @worship enhance our inner silence when we participate virtually in a liturgy from a remote place? What are the limitations of engaging in @worship? What

¹⁷ Teresa Berger, *@ Worship: Liturgical Practices in Digital Worlds*, Liturgy, worship and society series (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2018). In the preface of the book, Berger uses @worship to convey liturgical practices that are digitally mediated. I would like to use this terminology to specify the platform on which we adopted the entirely new experience of liturgical practice. The notion of @worship covers general liturgical experience and our spiritual life with the internet. The common usage of applications on smart phones for the readings of the mass, Liturgy of the Hours and other liturgical texts are all included when I employ @worship to signify our newliturgical experience.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 5. Berger suggests a series of theological questions regarding the new challenges from our common experience of @worship. There are few more questions which were mentioned by Berger but they are not directly connected with the topic of this book. I am implying the need of doing theological reflection specifically in liturgical theology at the practice of @worship today.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

are the possible causes which negatively affect our experience of liturgical silence and the sense of the sacred?

Liturgical silence presupposes the harmonization between the inner spirit and the outer reality. Therefore, I suggest that the @worship provides us a limited liturgical experience because it fails to enhance our perception by sensual environment in which the liturgy actually takes place. Digital transmission of images and sounds are limited in such a way that they can never be transmitted simply because they are sensual elements, such as the acoustic, air pressure and room temperature, etc. These are essential elements through which outer silence is constituted and perceived. A typical example is the Opera performance in the Arena di Verona, an ancient Roman Amphitheatre which creates one of the most extraordinary classical music experiences in the modern world. The acoustic of the sound created by the amphitheater enables the audience to dwell into the performance. The architecture of the Arena aims at creating a distinctive experience for music lovers to perceive the authenticity of the arts. The architecture of the Roman liturgy has a similar setting. Specific designs of Cathedrals and Basilicas aim at creating a liturgical space to unfold the mystery that is celebrated through liturgical actions. The sense of the sacred, so to speak, is the purpose of liturgical architecture. Since in the @worship experience, outer liturgical space is not perceived as it is, the harmonious connection which constitutes our experience of liturgical silence is being cut off from one side. The sense of the sacred aroused by authentic liturgical silence, in this case, is limited.

Modern technology has no doubt created an entirely different way of life. It surpasses all our living space. To borrow a wordplay from Berger,

“we now live, move and have our being in the digital age.”²⁰ However, in the liturgical realm, there are elements which can never be replaced or digitally transmitted. Liturgical silence is a fruitful expression of participation in the liturgy. It has to be archived by perceiving the actual liturgical space where the enhancing spirit of the liturgy, the sacramentality of every liturgical action, is performed. Therefore, the sense of liturgical silence is lost when the sense of the sacred loses its very form of manifestation. How do we profess the mystery we celebrate in the liturgy by failing to achieve liturgical silence which opens to encountering the sacred?

²⁰ Ibid., 2. An interesting wordplay by Berger using the words of St. Paul in his Areopagus sermon (Acts 17:28) which Paul himself may have quoted from Epimenides of Crete. This phrase is also used in the liturgy. See Preface VI, Sundays in Ordinary time.

1.4 THE DECLINE OF TRADITIONAL SACRED MUSIC IN THE MODERN LITURGY

One cannot speak of liturgy without also talking about the music of worship.²¹ To take a deeper look at the sense of the sacred which is aroused by liturgical silence, the discussion now turns to our experience of liturgical music today.

Liturgical music plays an essential part in our liturgical experience. Traditional sacred music,²² in line with liturgical architecture, shares the same purpose to create liturgical silence in order to arouse the sense of the sacred.

Sacred music in the vernacular has become a fundamental experience of worship since the Second Vatican Council. The diocese of Hong Kong published the first hymnal in the vernacular in March 1969,²³ which was, only six years after the promulgation of the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* in 1963. Two more hymnals were also published in 1976 and 1982.²⁴ Liturgical music in the vernacular therefore constitutes the general liturgical experience of sacred music among the local faithful. However, the use of the

²¹ Pope Benedict XVI, *A New Song for the Lord: Faith in Christ and Liturgy Today* (New York: Crossroad Pub, 1996), 174.

²² By traditional sacred music, I am referring to specifically the Gregorian chant and plainchant. Both are prescribed in SC 116 as native to Roman liturgy.

²³ 蔡詩亞, and 蘇明村. “天主教香港教區的聖樂發展.” 台灣: 輔仁大學, 2011. Translated title: *The Development of Sacred Music in the Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong*, co-authored by Rev. S.A. Peter Choi, the director of Sacred Music Commission of the Hong Kong Diocese; and Dr Allison So, the vice chairman of the Commission. According to this article, the Catholic Hymnal (聖歌選集) was the first Cantonese hymnal produced for the Diocese in Hong Kong.

²⁴ There are two hymnals which published later on, the 〈頌恩〉 and 〈心頌〉, first published in 1976 and 1982 respectively. They were renewed and combined into one volume in 2017 under the supervision of the Sacred Music Commission of the Diocese of Hong Kong. Up till the present, the usage of both 〈頌恩〉 and 〈心頌〉 cover almost all Cantonese speaking Catholic community all over the world.

vernacular should not lead to a rejection of traditional sacred music.²⁵ Nowadays, due to the agenda of some progressive pastoral approaches, traditional sacred music has become alien to local parishes.

Apart from using vernacular to the extent that traditional sacred music is being left out from our common liturgical experience, the intrinsic connection between liturgical music and the liturgy itself has undergone a decline by the wild spread usage of the ‘four-hymn Sandwich’,²⁶ which has become the common music arrangement since the existence of the *Novus Ordo*. Nevertheless, the ‘four-hymn Sandwich’ has opened to us a new liturgical experience by adopting borrowed musical materials from a non-liturgical context such as Praise and Worship (PW), Protestant hymnody and even popular music. These types of music indeed do not have a direct theological connection with the Roman Rite. The over-exaggeration to promote sacred music in the vernacular in the past two decades resulted in a liturgical crisis: breaking down the intimacy of the relationship between sacred music and the Roman liturgy.

²⁵ Since the publication of the Chinese hymnal, the usage of traditional Gregorian Chant and plainsong were both excluded due to the inaccessibility of the Latin language. However, there were strong emotions to reject Latin chants due to the agenda of imposing liturgical music in the vernacular in order to attract young people to participate congregational singing. As an active choir member, I personally experienced this tension in choosing the repertoire for the mass. Parish priests often concern themselves with the ability of the congregation to sing together over the liturgical value of a choir which presents liturgical music *for* the people. Ratzinger addresses this question with the notion of representation as a function of liturgical choir. It fosters active participation by what he interprets as liturgical togetherness. The liturgical value of traditional sacred music is being ignored due to a fanaticism about vernacular after the Council. See Pope Benedict XVI, *A New Song for the Lord*, 177–79.

²⁶ The “Four-hymn Sandwich” is a technical term proposed by modern sacred music experts to signify the sequence of four hymns typically sung at the Entrance, the Preparation of the Gifts (Offertory), the Communion, and during the Recessional procession at the end of the Mass. Cf. Roseanne T. Sullivan, “Propers of the Mass vs. the Four Hymn Sandwich: Two Catholic Scholars Look at ‘The Great Catholic Music Debate,’” *Homiletic & Pastoral Review*, January 15, 2016, accessed March 9, 2020, <https://www.hprweb.com/2016/01/propers-of-the-mass-versus-the-four-hymn-sandwich/>.

What then is the relationship between silence and traditional sacred music? Let us take a look into the Plainchant. First of all, the theory of Plainchant consists of a distinctive rhythmic form which has a theological connection to the human nature. The human body walks in the rhythm of two, and the human heart beats in a ternary order. The rhythm of Plainchant is constructed in the units of two and three. It is in such a way that Plainchant, which by imitating the natural rhythmic form of life of the human body, expresses the act of praise and worship by way of chanting. Notably, the ternary rhythmic unit always contains a beat of silence followed by a light beat. It creates, therefore, an internal structural form: the *neums*.²⁷ Furthermore, we should also acknowledge that *pause* and *repose* are two inseparable elements of rhythm in the art of music. In the art of Plainchant, *pause* and *repose* are called the ‘hidden beat’ (*Tempus latens*).²⁸ The *repose* is often marked by a pause on the final note of a verse. It creates a moment of silence between verses. This specific style of singing to ‘amplify’ silence within music is traditionally called *the suspension of voice (Mora vocis)*.²⁹ Silence in Plainchant contains valuable theological implication in which the singer takes time to grasp meaning of the text which is clothed with melodies.³⁰ The purpose of this specific rhythmic style is for the penetration of the text and therefore perfectly natural to discourse. The power of silence which lies behind traditional sacred music is distinctive in such a way that it conveys a pure liturgical function: meditation of the liturgical texts. As a matter of fact, both Plainchant and Gregorian chant are made up of similar rhythmic

²⁷ Marie Pierik, *The Spirit of Gregorian Chant* (Richmond, VA: The Church Music Association of America, 2007), 95.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., 96.

³⁰ Note that the Latin language is intrinsically connected with the rhythmic construction of both the Plainchant and Gregorian Chant. Under normal circumstances, Latin text may be heard clearly in chanting. Therefore, together they form a unique style of musical art.

structures, with the sacred intention to express liturgical texts, is in itself native to the Roman liturgy.³¹

What is happening in the Hong Kong Diocese is that traditional sacred music was not properly promoted both in the seminary and in parishes. The formation curriculum in the seminary excludes necessary training in traditional sacred music. During my formation as a seminarian, traditional sacred music was not encouraged in the seminary. This indicates the fact that the idea of applying vernacular and borrowed religious hymns in the Roman liturgy leads not only to the decline of an authentic development of Roman liturgical music but also to the loss of the sense of sacred which lies behind the internal structure of traditional sacred music. Since traditional sacred music has in itself a natural connection to the sacred liturgy, the common experience of authentic liturgical silence, in this case, is lost.

The general liturgical experience of sacred music today, as a result of over-promoting liturgical music in the vernacular, has a limitation to create the authentic sense of silence produced by traditional sacred music. It follows that an authentic structural silence in Roman liturgy and the sense of the sacred which belongs exclusively to it is at stake in our time.

³¹ *SC*, sec. 116.

SUMMARY

We have seen that silence has a long tradition in the Roman liturgy. The modern liturgy, on the one hand, has been challenged by the development of advancing technology to create a liturgical space which allows us to experience the power of liturgical silence; on the other hand, it has also been deeply manipulated by pastoral concerns to the extent that it has abandoned the treasure of traditional sacred music and the sense of silence it contains. Liturgical silence, however, is a form of encountering the sacred and it has to be cultivated in a proper liturgical spirit.

Being an active liturgical minister, I maintain the vision that there must be a more effective cooperation between the clerics and lay ministers to enforce liturgical formation among the faithful so that the tradition of the Roman liturgy might develop in a legitimate and organic progress.

CHAPTER 2

CARDINAL SARAH ON SILENCE

*It is time to recover silence.*³²

This chapter presents the theology of Cardinal Sarah. In his book *The Power of Silence*,³³ he addresses the topic of silence which serves as a valuable insight to the study of the paper. Being one of the most prominent liturgists of our time, the African Cardinal presents his theological review of sacred silence through many aspects. The book is written in conversational form, in which Cardinal Sarah discussed the theological value of silence with Nicolas Diat, who is a French journalist.

Recalling my initial argument that the failure to appreciate liturgical silence does cause a loss of the sense of sacred, I found Cardinal Sarah's comments surprisingly valuable. Cardinal Sarah opened the first conversation with a question which I consider straightforward. The first line of the Cardinal goes as follow:

There is one great question: how can man really be the image of God? He must enter into silence.³⁴

Truly the question of silence concerns the very nature of human beings which is created in the image and likeness of God. What Sarah implies here is the value of experiencing silence which cannot be understood without looking at the origin of our own being. Silence reveals the fundamental

³² Robert Sarah, Nicolas Diat, and Michael J. Miller, *The Power of Silence: Against the Dictatorship of Noise* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2017), 126, no. 241.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 21, no. 1.

relationship between God and human beings. The Cardinal explains by saying that it is the moment of silence which connects us with the divine presence: “God carries us... nothing will make us discover God better than his silence inscribed in the centre of our being.”³⁵ Therefore, the question of experiencing silence, which is the concern of this book, is fundamentally the question of experiencing the sacred.

To present the Cardinal’s critique on liturgical silence, we must, first of all, acknowledge that liturgical worship itself does not stand alone in our Christian life. That is to say, our experience of silence in the liturgy does not merely imply liturgical actions alone. Rather, what is expressed in the liturgy is the reflection of the way we live outside the liturgy. This is the reason why when expressing his reflection on sacred silence, the Cardinal does not stay in the liturgical realm. For him, the silence of the world is intrinsically connected with the silence in the liturgy. Silence has a role which is connected with faith in God.³⁶ The more the world ascends toward God, the more silent they become.³⁷ The discussion which the Cardinal gives in the book is presented in different aspects. Among these aspects, I would like to discuss three of them in order to demonstrate the necessity of rethinking a theology of silence in our time. The first discussion here presents how Cardinal Sarah sees the relationship between silence and noise. The second discussion proceeds to his comments on silence in the liturgy. Finally, the last discussion centers on the mystery of silence in relation to the mystery of evil and God’s love. The chapter will conclude with an illustration of the linkage between the sacredness of silence and the necessity to rethink a theology of silence.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 22, no. 3.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 40, no. 34.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 55, no. 71.

2.1 SILENCE VERSUS NOISE

What does Cardinal Sarah understand by the word silence? A glance may appear when we again look at his very first description that the human person can really be the image of God when he enters into silence.³⁸ For Sarah, the experience of silence is the way to encounter God. It is absolutely clear that, as we also see in the Scriptures, there is not a prophet who encounters God without coming to his solitude and silence.³⁹ Here the Cardinal reminds us of three figures: Moses, who only heard the voice of the Lord after he was trapped in the wilderness in Horeb where he saw the burning bush which burnt silently;⁴⁰ Elijah, who encountered the Lord at Horeb only after a sound of sheer silence;⁴¹ and John the Baptist, who lived and preached in the wilderness.⁴² All these biblical figures represent a way of silence to enter into the presence of God. The Cardinal continues to say that God is already in man and silence is just the way through which we find him.⁴³ The *already* here is crucial for us to enter into the Cardinal's reflection. As the Cardinal himself suggests: "if a person isolates himself... the goal of his search for God is within him. God's silent presence already dwells in his heart."⁴⁴ Therefore, silence does not mean an absence. The Cardinal concludes: *it is the manifestation of a presence.*⁴⁵ The silent presence of God is found only in the image of God in man, the Cardinal therefore asserts that man is not only capable of being silent, in fact, he is the man of silence.

³⁸ Ibid., 21, no. 1.

³⁹ Ibid., 23, no. 5.

⁴⁰ Exod 3:1-4.

⁴¹ 1 Kgs 19:11-13.

⁴² Matt 3:1-4; Isa 40:3.

⁴³ Sarah, Diat, and Miller, *The Power of Silence*, 23, no. 5.

⁴⁴ Ibid., no. 6.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 27, no. 12.

When we say silence is the inner reality of man's own nature, contemplative silence becomes the living force of the power of silence. For God's presence is found in man's silence, those who love God should attempt to preserve or create an atmosphere in which He [God] can be found.⁴⁶ Contemplative silence does not exclusively mean that it can only be found in the monastery. Since silence is part of man's essence, therefore contemplative silence points to his interiority. It penetrates into the deepest part of a soul, where the absolute other rests. As the Cardinal says: *without silence, there is no interior life.*⁴⁷ In this sense, silence is not only a way to meet God, but it is also, according to the Cardinal, a condition for otherness and a necessity if one is to understand himself.⁴⁸

In fact, in describing the relationship between silence and noise, the Cardinal's comments are quite strong. For him, silence is at stake in the midst of our life today. Silence becomes like an unreachable oasis since it is assaulted by the spreading of noise in cities.⁴⁹ The noise which he understands is not merely the sound which we hear around, but that which disturbs the human nature, which disables the human capacity to reach the other, God and oneself. The noise which the Cardinal is addressing is seen through the essence of silence in such perspective.

He also regards postmodern society as a dictatorship of speech and noise.⁵⁰ To elaborate on this idea of noise, he points out that the noise of the world is trying to prevent God himself from speaking.⁵¹ He even employs

⁴⁶ Ibid., 32, no. 18. Cardinal Sarah quoting words from Thomas Merton in *The Sign of Jonas*.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 33, no. 20.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid., no. 21.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 56, no. 74.

⁵¹ Ibid.

the description *hell of noise* to distinguish the broken relationship between the world and silence. This means that under the disturbance of noise, humans can no longer listen to the voice of silence. Silence is the voice which allows us to enter into the realm of the sacred, where prayer grows, where grace is received and where the silent love of God is revealed. In such a way silence reveals the mystery of human being in his original purity,⁵² the true image of God.

By suggesting the theological implications between silence and noise, Cardinal Sarah claims that it is essentially important for us to strive for silence and solitude in today's culture which is governed by noise. The Cardinal does not, however, bear hostility toward worldly living experience. What he means is that the voice of God, which is marked by his silence, would not be found in our world if we are not able to recover silence as presented to us through the Word of God echoing in our inmost soul. In such a way, the modern world, which is constantly filled with noise also discloses to us the correct place and means to encounter the sacred. Again, as the Cardinal says, *it is time to recover silence*.⁵³

2.2 SILENCE IN THE LITURGY

The true value of liturgical silence, according to Cardinal Sarah, does not merely rest on the prescription we find in the Roman liturgy. In the celebration of the Eucharist, silence before each prayer, the *Confiteor*, after the reading of the Word of God, and after the communion are, as according to Cardinal Sarah, times to allow the soul to *breathe*.⁵⁴ Cardinal Sarah

⁵² Ibid., 34, no. 23.

⁵³ Ibid., 126, no. 241.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 129, no. 248.

understands silence in such a way that it goes beyond the fundamental descriptions we found in the liturgy. Sacred silence, as we encounter in the liturgy, is to be understood in a deeper way.

*Sacred silence is a cardinal law of all liturgical celebrations.*⁵⁵ Cardinal Sarah sees sacred silence in such a way because it is the only truly human and Christian reaction to God when he breaks into our lives.⁵⁶ Liturgical silence is sacred simply because it signifies the loss of words before the divine majesty.⁵⁷ What he means is not merely the absence of words, but the incapability of speaking before the presence of the Almighty. Looking back to the Scripture, Cardinal Sarah reminds us of the vision of Isaiah,⁵⁸ where he rephrases the reactions of the prophet before the theophany as “*I am reduced to silence!*”⁵⁹ In the context of a theophany, which is what the liturgy naturally is, the loss of words becomes the only expression of which human beings are capable to react. Therefore, sacred silence is a cardinal law of the liturgy because it generates in us the sense of adoration and awe. In silence, God himself communicates with us.

The Divine liturgy, Cardinal Sarah goes on claiming, is essentially something of *a plunge onto the mystery*.⁶⁰ And this is to be realized by dwelling into sacred silence. One of the problems which we are facing today is the tendency to attempt to make the liturgy to be *immediately intelligible*. As a result, as Cardinal Sarah comments:

⁵⁵ Ibid., 112, no. 233.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 121, no. 231.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 120, no. 227.

⁵⁸ Isa 6.

⁵⁹ Sarah, Diat, and Miller, *The Power of Silence*, 120, no. 227.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 136, no. 259.

...some priests employ liturgical pedagogy which contains endless flat, horizontal commentaries and such shows that these pastors are afraid of that silence in the presence of the Most High might disconcert the faithful.⁶¹

I recall the experience of attending a Sunday Eucharistic celebration in a certain parish in Hong Kong. During the two-hour liturgical celebration, the priest interrupted the Eucharistic prayer with his own commentary. What the priest was trying is to *explain* the liturgy so that the assembly would be able to *understand* it in order to achieve active and conscious participation. In fact, the more the priest was trying to speak on his own, the less the liturgy would convey the sense of the sacred. The liturgy becomes loads of words, in such a way that it not only destroys noble simplicity but also takes over the place of sacred silence, which *plunges us onto the mystery*. Without sacred silence, our liturgy becomes noisy and distorted. Therefore, Cardinal Sarah again says, *it is time to recover silence*.⁶²

Cardinal Sarah also provides us with the meaning of sacred silence under the mandate of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. Implementing participation, as he states, does not exclude the means of sacred silence. In fact, he argues: “that the quality of our silence is the measure of the quality of our active participation.”⁶³ Silence in the liturgy implies an orientation toward the holiness of God. The outward silence turns us interiorly, thus placing ourselves before God who actually acts in the liturgy. For the liturgy is not something we make, it is a divine *actio Christi*. Putting ourselves in silent awe is to place ourselves before the silent Christ on the cross and to enter into his

⁶¹ Ibid., 123, no. 235.

⁶² Ibid., 126, no. 241.

⁶³ Ibid., 131, no. 251.

suffering and death. It is in such a way that we offer our adoration and reverence to Him. This is the reason why Cardinal Sarah goes on maintaining that liturgical silence is a *radical and essential disposition*.⁶⁴ Furthermore, as he continues to explain: *what is beyond our silent participation is the heart of conversion*.⁶⁵ Our passion towards the gift of salvation, which purifies and unites us as a people of God through the passion of Christ, is shown by our silence in the liturgy. This is, as Cardinal Sarah claims, the true and real silence.⁶⁶ If such is the quality of our silence in the liturgy, how precious, real, active, and conscious is our participation in it?

2.3 SILENCE, EVIL AND LOVE

The last discussion I draw from the Cardinal's reflection centers on how silence relates to Christian life as a whole, in other words, our friendship with God. Sacred silence is never to be understood as merely liturgical practices. Moments of silence in the liturgy are the fruitful accomplishment of our spiritual life. Sacred silence is a proof that we are not only in communion with God but also in good friendship with him. In other words, as the Cardinal Sarah puts it, sacred silence is the path of the love of God but not the path of love of self.⁶⁷ When talking about silence in the modern world, he illuminates us with the following words:

A man without silence is a stranger to God, exiled in a distant land that remains at the surface of the mystery of

⁶⁴ Ibid., no. 253.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 132, no. 253.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 181, no. 345.

man and the world; but God is at the deepest part of man, in the silent region of his being.⁶⁸

Silence signifies communion with God, a relationship in which God is adored, befriended, and glorified. A person in silent adoration does not remain in the mystery of oneself, but rather enters into the mystery of God, where he detaches himself from the noise of the world. “If we manage to be with God in silence, we possess what is essential.”⁶⁹ It is in such a way that Cardinal Sarah brilliantly points out that our experience of silence before the sacred is determined by our decision of choosing between love or evil. Cardinal Sarah reminds us that evil exists because the love of God is rejected.⁷⁰ A person becomes a noisy being when he chooses to reject the love of God. He fills himself with conventional empty talks and acts of injustice that lead to the destruction of his own life. As Cardinal Sarah describes: “it demeans and destroys man. It tarnishes the image of God engraved on man.”⁷¹

Understanding the question of silence under the scope of Christian spirituality, Cardinal Sarah rings out a prophetic voice to defend sacred silence in the face of the evil and injustice which dominate our society. However, according to Cardinal Sarah, the remedy comes with the power of silence.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 173, no. 337.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 171, no. 329.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 147, no. 276.

⁷¹ Ibid., 148, no. 279.

Human intellect, Cardinal Sarah says, will never go so far to fathom and understand the mystery of evil.⁷² In a world where scientific knowledge and technology seem to have explained everything in life, at the same time humans seem to know the world well enough. Yet the mystery of suffering and death remains untouchable. This is the wisdom which belongs to God alone. In fact, as the Cardinal suggests, “Christ alone can give man the strength to confront evil and come to terms with it.”⁷³ By entering into the deepest tragedy of suffering, Christ has shown the world the power of the Cross. The Cross which once disposed God in silence becomes the most beautiful expression of God’s love for humankind. Silence possesses the immense power of God’s infinite love, which is capable of destroying the force of evil. Therefore, a person, as suggested by Cardinal Sarah, should enter into interior silence so as to find the only certainty in this world,⁷⁴ in other words, to turn to the power of the Cross, where both God and the human person remain silent. One side of silence is to save the world, the other to contemplate the immensity of love poured out to reach his inmost being. Thus, Cardinal Sarah concludes, “silence in God restores our courage.”⁷⁵ This is the power of silence, which turns over the destructive power of evil. In such a way the Mystery of evil becomes a purifying force for the human person.

Silence and prayer are the strongest weapons against evil. In *silent prayer, man is fully human*.⁷⁶ The nature of a human being as the image of God cannot be more clearly grasped than when a person is in silent contemplation before God’s presence. Silent prayer brings us into God’s time,

⁷² Ibid., 146, no. 273.

⁷³ Ibid., 149.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 146, no. 283.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 158, no. 312.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 150, no. 187.

Cardinal Sarah describes: “into the great silence that is a silence of love.”⁷⁷ It opens us to see the world in the eyes of God, at the same time it springs out very powerful responses which are capable of overcoming the power of evil: sweetness, love, joy, hope, smile and patient, just to name a few. Contemplative silence then transforms into deeds of love and care. It is an imitation of the contemplative self-communication of love within the Triune God. In other words, the love of God pours out in silence. Every Christian virtue grows in silence. Therefore, the way of silence should enlighten us to understand the mystery of suffering and pain in a more noble way.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 152, no. 291.

SUMMARY

Cardinal Sarah's reflection on silence is a powerful voice leading us to see that sacred silence does not merely contain moments of silence in the liturgy. In a critical way, his comments describe a world which is marked by noise that demeans and destroys authentic liturgical life. We are living in a world which tries to pull us out from the true power of silence. In fact, the capacity of presenting oneself in contemplative silence reflects the spiritual status of the person. The Sacred Mystery which the liturgy celebrates consists of a contemplative dimension, which can possibly be entered into through silence.

Applying my own observation which I have proposed in the first chapter, digital technology has created, in the modern world, a confusion within our experience of silence. It keeps us busy, occupying our attention and consciousness by offering us a 'throwaway' culture. It gives us an illusion that everything is at hand all the time. But sacred silence is something the digital world cannot directly offer to us. It consists of a spiritual engagement in which we need to search for a real time and a real presence: a presentation of the self before the divine. Therefore, the spectrum of liturgical silence expands itself out from liturgical actions.

Our liturgical experience today, as I observed, has the tendency to rely more on human works than the liturgy itself. It wants to create a celebration of its own. It also has the tendency to manipulate the Mystery. Modern liturgy tends to be as easily intelligible as it can be, at the same time it has forgotten the power of silence. The liturgy which relies only on magnificent speakers and screens would slowly drive us away from what is effective. It

turns out that what is seen, heard, and touched in the liturgy remains the work of human hands rather than of the contemplative spirit of the divine Mystery. Modern liturgy which employs music from different genre would mislead people's musical preference from authentic liturgical music and the theological meaning behind it. In fact, the failure to appreciate traditional sacred music, which is native to the Roman liturgy, is also the failure of appreciating the sense of silence which is native to the Roman liturgy. What is lost is not only the beauty which intrinsically inherited between liturgy and music but also the sense of the sacred which allows us to enter into the spirit of the liturgy. To conclude, modern liturgy has failed to let the liturgy itself speak.

Silence has lost its place. In this sense I share the same vision with Cardinal Sarah. If we fail to see the nature of silence and in what way it manifests our relationship with God, we will then become a stranger to God. The sense of the sacred in the liturgy will also be lost. Therefore, the real theological issue in our liturgical experience today, as the Cardinal points out in a prophetic voice, is summed up in this statement: *it is time to recover silence*.⁷⁸

The study of liturgical silence has to be conducted in a more comprehensive way. In what way does silence reveal to us the sacred? What is the theological connection between silence and the sacred? What do Scriptures say about silence? In what way does the Christological value of liturgical silence lead us to active participation? These are the topics which need further exploration.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 126, no. 241.

PART II: A THEOLOGY OF LITURGICAL SCIENCE

CHAPTER 3 SILENCE AND THE SACRED

*Before the divine majesty,
we are at a loss of words.*⁷⁹

This chapter discusses the positive experience of silence as the connexion between human beings and God, to whom everything is rendered as sacred. It will be presented from three perspectives: First, to set the study in position, I need to demonstrate a positive sense of silence out of its ambiguous nature. After that I will explore the meaning of sacred mainly through the light of Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*⁸⁰ and Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*.⁸¹ Lastly, as a conclusion to this chapter, I will focus on the movement of silence towards the mystery.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 120, no. 227.

⁸⁰ Otto Rudolf, *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and Its Relation to the Rational*, trans. Harvey John W., 7th Pr. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965). Otto's masterpiece is considered the classic of Western religious studies. As a German Lutheran scholar in the early 20th century, his ideas convey a hermeneutic of Holy which shaped many of the philosophers and theologians today especially in the West. Therefore, since the aim of this paper is to study silence and sacred in a specific religious experience in the West, the Roman Liturgy, Otto's contribution to the idea of Holy will be employed in this paper as a main reference.

⁸¹ Mircea Eliade and Willard R. Trask, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion; the Groundbreaking Work by One of the Greatest Authorities on Myth, Symbol, and Ritual*, A Harvest Book (San Diego: Harcourt, 1987). Apart from a phenomenological approach which we find in Otto, Eliade's work is worthy serve as a reference to the discussion of the sense of sacred in this paper. His theory of myth and symbols in ritual ceremonies which made explicit in the contrasting position of Sacred and the Profane leads us to a boarder horizon of the sense of sacred.

3.1 OVERCOMING THE AMBIGUOUS NATURE OF SILENCE

We have already seen, in the previous chapters, that liturgical silence is a theological issue of our time. After presenting my own pastoral reviews, together with the insightful and prophetic reflections delivered by Cardinal Sarah, the path to an investigation of a theology of liturgical silence seems clear and necessary. Therefore, I commence the theological study of silence with a clarification on the ambiguous nature of silence so that the discussion which follows would not fall into a theological void.

Silence is a liturgical reality. In a general sense, it signifies a means of liturgical participation which initiates an encounter with the sacred. However, silence can have negative effects. The overuse of silence, from a practical point of view, points to a liturgical embarrassment and results in an inattentiveness, a certain idle-ness which represents disconnection and uncertainties.⁸² Therefore, silence is potential to both positive and negative effects. Kieran Flanagan refers to it as the ambiguity of silence.⁸³ That is to say, silence in the liturgy can lead us either to the mystery or to a discretion of ignorance.⁸⁴ The phenomenon of silence in worship, as Flanagan suggests, relates to a metaphysical dilemma which points either to an aesthetic nihilism or to belief in God.⁸⁵ The value of the study of Flanagan therefore gives light to the study of liturgical silence in this book. It is true that silence, in itself a liturgical phenomenon which involves both personal and collective worship, can be interpreted in a polemic direction depending on one's own

⁸² Kieran Flanagan, "Liturgy, Ambiguity and Silence: The Ritual Management of Real Absence," *The British Journal of Sociology* 36, no. 2 (1985): 193–222. Flanagan conducted a study of liturgical silence within the area of sociology of religion. By describing the metaphysical involvement in silence in the liturgy, the author points out that the ambiguity is one distinctive nature of silence.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 213. "Silence is a distinctive ambiguous phenomenon in the management of liturgy. It is a resource laden with risk."

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 214.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 213.

intellectual and spiritual maturity. In other words, silence can signify both active and inactive participation in the liturgy. And it is where a liturgical risk appears. Flanagan says:

Inactivity can be filled with a sense of silence or can be emptied in a way that ritual cannot directly control. That is the essence of the liturgical risk.⁸⁶

Therefore, it is of vital importance that a certain meaning of sacred silence is conveyed in the experience of liturgical silence so that one could enter into the realm of worship with a proper liturgical spirit. Furthermore, an underlying prescription of studying the theological value of liturgical silence also contains an apologetic function to fight against today's culture of noise and the ambition to manipulate liturgical reality. In other words, we need to justify liturgical silence as a necessary means to foster active participation.

3.2 SILENCE AND THE SACRED

To recover silence in the liturgy, we must look at its dynamics with the mystery which we celebrate in every kind of liturgical rite. Therefore, a sense of what is 'holiness' and 'holy' should be the first concern of our discussion here.

In the realm of the liturgy, we often hear the word 'holy' (*heilig* in German) and 'sacred' (*sacer* in Latin) in reference to a variety of liturgical

⁸⁶ Ibid., 215.

actions and objects. Sometimes they are by themselves of independent liturgical value, for example, the *Sanctus* in the Roman rite⁸⁷ constitutes a moment of ‘holiness’ which orients to the Consecration. In the Eucharistic liturgy, ‘sacred’ is also used to imply the divine presence of Christ through *transubstantiation* in consecrated species.⁸⁸

It is necessary to study the real meaning of the word ‘sacred’ or ‘holy’ in every specific liturgical moment or liturgical object. So, to properly perceive the meaning of these adjectives, we should investigate the meaning they are trying to convey. According to Otto, these common expressions are used in a derivative sense which consists of an absolute moral attitude.⁸⁹ In other words, the ‘supreme good’. But this ‘complete goodness’, or better say ‘goodness itself’, is simply not enough to say about the ‘mystery’ which we refer to. In fact, the reality, to which both ‘holy’ and ‘sacred’ are pointing, are analogically directed to the attributes of God. Words, somehow, are simply not enough to say anything about God himself. In biblical languages, Otto points out, the Hebrew *qādōsh* and the Greek *ἅγιος* would be more suitable words as they both contain a living force in Semitic religions.⁹⁰ But still, we are too far to describe the ultimate and absolute reality to which God really is, and hence to the experience of the Holy.

⁸⁷ Josef A. Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origins and Development: (Missarum Sollemnia)*, Rev. and abridged ed., vol. 2 (Notre Dame, IN: Christian Classics, 2012), 128. As the continuation of the preface, Jungmann points out the theological significance of the *Sanctus* contains not only its Biblical origin from the vision of Isaiah (Isa. 6), but also symbolizes a union through which the earthly church singing the hymns of the seraphim from Heaven.

⁸⁸ See *GIRM*, no. 11, 79d.

⁸⁹ Rudolf, *The Idea of the Holy*, 4.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

Otto saw this problem and therefore developed his idea of ‘numinous’ as a concept to render exclusively the experience of God’s ‘holiness’.⁹¹

The ‘numinous’, as a concept invented by Otto, is marked by a *creature-feeling* as a deeply felt religious experience in the consciousness.⁹² It describes a state of mind with a sense of being a creature. With this peculiar sense of creature-ness, the mind eventually sees its own nothingness in contrast to that which is supreme above all,⁹³ meaning to say, the presence of the wholly otherness, its own creator. However, to sketch a brief meaning of Otto’s idea of ‘numinous’, Uwe Michael Lang’s note assists us with a sharp vision:

Otto develops a phenomenology of religion centered on the experience of ‘the Holy’ as something ‘wholly-other’. The awareness of the holy as the ‘numinous’ ... is explained as non-rational, non-sensory and transcending the subject. It inspires holy fear and awe (*mysterium tremendum*).⁹⁴

The stress on individual experience of the Holy One, framed in Otto’s notion as ‘the numinous’, by the expression *mysterium tremendum*, leads us to a

⁹¹ Ibid., 6–7. After considering vocabularies from different languages and their specific denotations, Otto saw a need of inventing a word in order to free itself from the rationalisation and moralisation of terms; hence to free from linguistic obligations to specific religions (The Hebrew *qādōsh* and the Greek *ἅγιος* as Biblical terms which only apply to ‘holiness’ within the context of the Judeo-Christian God). In developing the notion of ‘numinous’, Otto stressed on the unique state of mind which pre-forced oneself into consciousness. It then becomes a universal mental state of mind being evoked and awakened. To use the expression of Otto, the ‘numinous’ is perfectly *sui generis* and irreducible to any other. Therefore, we may conclude, that the ‘numinous’ describes a primitive state of mind to which a sense of ‘holiness’ is aroused in one’s own consciousness.

⁹² Ibid., 8.

⁹³ Ibid., 10.

⁹⁴ Uwe Michael Lang, *Signs of the Holy One: Liturgy, Ritual, and Expression of the Sacred* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2015), 20.

deeper insight of the distinctly personal experience of the Holy in solemnities of rites and liturgies.⁹⁵

Silence, according to Otto, is considered one of the means of expression of *the numinous*.⁹⁶ He regards silence as a spontaneous reaction to the feeling of the actual *numen praesens*.⁹⁷ In fact, Otto explains that silence belongs to a sort of emotional “shudder” or the “crazy and bewildering note.”⁹⁸ In a certain sense, silence is considered within the category of language, specifically in musical sound. However, in general ritual experiences, what is clear to us is the sense of ‘keeping silence’ (*εὐφραμειν*), the state of speechlessness necessarily employed as a human reaction before an awakening *numen praesens*.

In *The Sacred and the Profane*, Eliade portrays the sense of sacred in contrast to the experience of the profane. He points out that the first possible definition of sacred is that it is *the opposite of the profane*.⁹⁹ Like Otto, Eliade also sees the wholly *otherness* of the sacred. While Otto takes the start from the emotional side of the subject, Eliade sees it from objective reality, saying that the sense of the sacred fundamentally comes from the manifestation of the Sacred itself: the ‘*hierophany*’¹⁰⁰—the manifestation of a reality which does not belong to our world.¹⁰¹ The value of Eliade’s conception on the sacred also serves as a reference in this book. It creates a profound religious sense by revealing the ontological distinction between the sacred

⁹⁵ Rudolf, *The Idea of the Holy*, 12.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 68–69.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 69. The “*numen praesens*,” refers to the sense of self-present indicated by the ‘creature-feeling’ that arise in the mind. It is, according to Otto, a fundamental experience of the ‘Holy’.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁹⁹ Eliade and Trask, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 10.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 11. “Man becomes aware of the sacred because it manifests itself, as something wholly different from the profane.”

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

and human beings. The '*hierophany*' remains a sign which opens to a possible communication with the sacred and the reality of transcendence before the self-revealing power of the sacred.¹⁰² To put it in another way, Eliade claims that the sacred discloses itself to the person through '*hierophany*' which distinguishes itself from the worldly order, eventually creates a *sense* of sacred. The *sense* which the sacred not only is somehow perceived, but also becomes something to achieve. It therefore creates *room* for human expression.

The study of the idea of the *Holy* and the *Sacred* from both Otto and Eliade discloses the fact that the reality of the 'holy' demands religious expressions as a conscious response. Both the 'numinous' and the 'sacred mode of being' are reflected in human consciousness and therefore constitutes the sense of sacred. Silence, as we have also seen, is another necessary reaction to the experience of the 'holy'. It signifies the state of a speechless awe as a spontaneous response to the self-manifestation of the sacred. Being an expression of the 'numinous', silence reveals the ontological distinctiveness between the sacred and human beings. Silence, in other words, reveals the 'creature-ness' of humans before the sacred. In this way a connexion between silence and the sacred is clearly seen. Therefore, we may conclude that liturgical silence, is fundamentally a reaction of the self-revealing power of the 'holy'.

¹⁰² Ibid., 26. "But the irruption of the sacred does not only project a fixed point into the formless fluidity of profane space, a centre into chaos; it also effects a break in the plane, that is, it opens communication between the cosmic space (between earth and heaven) and makes possible ontological passage from one mode of being to another."

3.3 THE MOVEMENT OF SILENCE TOWARDS THE MYSTERY

I have already illustrated the fundamental meaning of the sense of sacred and its character as a response to the sacred. The following discussion explores the movement of silence towards mystery.

When we say silence is a necessary response to the self-revelation of the sacred, it is also to say that silence has a capacity of crossing the boundaries towards the mystery which is the foundation of all liturgies.

Torevell stresses that silence has the power to cross the boundaries from the visible to the invisible, from the audible to the inaudible. Ritual and cultic silence, he describes, is a force of disclosure to engaging the mystery.¹⁰³ Supporting himself with O. Davies, Torevell also points out the fact that Christian rite has already developed a tradition of cultic silence which initiates an understanding of the hidden depth of revelation.¹⁰⁴

In the tradition of Christian monasticism, silence plays a constitutional role to signify a specific movement of the soul moving away from passion and returning to the incomprehensible mystery of transcendental love.¹⁰⁵ In the study of the use of words by the desert fathers, Burton maintains the idea that silence is connected to absolute verbal purity and integrity. The absence of words, he says, has the capacity to open a soul into fruitful interpretation of the divine Word.¹⁰⁶ The power of silence, he explains, is the mysterious ground out of which the words of the Scriptures

¹⁰³ David Torevell, *Liturgy and the Beauty of the Unknown: Another Place* (Aldershot, Hants, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 135.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 136.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 135.

¹⁰⁶ Douglas Burton-Christie, *The Word in the Desert: Scripture and the Quest of Holiness in Early Christian Monasticism* (New York; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 136.

and the words of the holy ones emerged in their full revelatory power.¹⁰⁷ Therefore, carrying the sensibility to listening to the words from Scriptures, silence possesses the transforming power which directs a soul towards mystery. The mystery manifesting itself in silence remains not only the essence of monastic life, but also, as Burton describes, is an expression of love and tenderness, humility of life before the ‘silent one’.¹⁰⁸

Therefore, it is suitable to say that ritual silence, as a means to participation in the liturgy, creates an internal movement of the soul which turns towards the mystery by its revealing power through itself as a ritual act. As Torevell says, silence assists and deepens the meaning of words and signs in the liturgy.¹⁰⁹ This is clearly in line with the thought of Ratzinger. In *the Feast of Faith*, he regards silence as a greatly important element of a real *paricipatio actuosa*:

In Silence, together, we journey inward, becoming aware of word and sign... In silence man ‘bides’ and ‘abides’, he becomes aware of ‘abiding’ reality... it creates a space in which we can encounter what is truly great and inexhaustible, something that does not need ‘variety’ because it suffices.¹¹⁰

What lies behind the experience of liturgical silence is a movement towards the mystery. Ratzinger affirms that the true value of liturgical silence is actually over the significance of other liturgical gestures such as standing and

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 146.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 149.

¹⁰⁹ Torevell, *Liturgy and the Beauty of the Unknown*, 135.

¹¹⁰ Joseph Ratzinger, *The Feast of Faith: Approaches to a Theology of the Liturgy* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 72.

kneeling.¹¹¹ Because silence alone provides the *intrinsic tension of the reality itself*.¹¹² To conclude with the words of Cardinal Sarah: *Silence is more important than any other human work. Because it expresses God.*¹¹³

¹¹¹ Ibid., 73. In a discussion on liturgical expressions, Pope Benedict XVI talks on liturgical signs and images. Where he chooses to elaborate silence prior to other liturgical gestures. It shows that the theological value of silence, both personal and communal, ties up the spirit of the liturgy in a more profound aspect.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Sarah, Diat, and Miller, *The Power of Silence*, 54.

SUMMARY

In this chapter, we have seen that silence has an ambiguous nature. This ambiguous nature of silence is, however, another way to express what we called ‘apophatic theology’ in traditional Christian theology.¹¹⁴ My approach is to focus on the sense of sacred as a *feeling* which results in a loss of verbal description to the self-revelation of the sacred, at the same time to describe the experience of silence in a positive sense so that a theology of the liturgical silence may proceed. I also employed concepts from two gigantic figures in Christian religious studies (Otto and Eliade) to consolidate the concept of the sacred. I illustrated the fundamental relationship between silence and the sacred and its ontological significance, hence, to point out silence as a necessary reaction in response to the self-revelation of the sacred. I then explored the meaning of silence by proposing its inner movement to transcendence. The monastic tradition was taken as an example to illustrate the mystical power of silence as a constant engagement with the sacred. Finally, the discussion went back to silence in the liturgy introducing the liturgical character of silence as a means of participation, so that a fuller picture of the theological foundation of liturgical silence is well established.

¹¹⁴ The ambiguous nature of silence discloses the possibility of a negative approach to the knowledge of God as a human experience in the sense that silence represents a non-audible mediation to the self-manifestation of the divine presence. To connect my study of sacred silence with ‘apophatic theology’ at this point is to introduce to the reader that the nature of silence, while being fundamental to the experience of the Sacred, is a hidden mystery that lies beyond a concrete audible experience. Therefore, it means that God is not what we heard but rather that which lies hidden therein.

CHAPTER 4

SILENCE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Since Sacred Scripture is the soul of theology,¹¹⁵ it implies that a comprehensive theological treatment on sacred silence cannot be justified without finding its roots in Sacred Scriptures. In order to present a theology of liturgical silence, this chapter discusses the Biblical sense of silence in the Old Testament (OT). The next chapter will cover materials from the New Testament (NT) in a Christological framework.

When Ratzinger holds the view that liturgy implies a real relationship with *Another* who reveals himself to us,¹¹⁶ the Emeritus Pope is pointing to a *theophany*. That is to say, the act of worship implies an institutional form of divine revelation. This chapter, then, tries to link the phenomenon of silence with the divine presence of God we find in the OT, justifying silence as a non-verbal communicative means of divine revelation.

This leads to a brief study of the concept and usage of the Hebrew word דַּמָּמָה (*demamah*) in the Hebrew Scriptures. By looking specifically on the experience of Elijah (1 Kgs. 19:12), I suggest that the experience of silence belongs to a sequence of theophany. The second part of this chapter presents the experience of the Psalmist in Psalm 19, where silence is rendered as a non-verbal means of communication which transmits the glory of God. Finally, after seeing the biblical value of silence as in theophany and

¹¹⁵ Second Vatican Council, "Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, December 18, 1965," in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1975), sec. 24 (hereafter cited as DV).

¹¹⁶ Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 22.

non-verbal communication, I conclude this chapter by elaborating on the concept of silent adoration in light of the theology of the Sabbath.

The Hebrew word for ‘silence’ is דַּמָּמָה (*demamah*) which has the root d-m-m.¹¹⁷ According to *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (BDB), the word דַּמָּמָה denotes ‘whisper’ and occurs in two verses (I Kgs. 19:12; Job 4:16).¹¹⁸ Baumann refers to its etymology and usage in the Ancient Near East, of which he concludes the meaning “to be silent.”¹¹⁹ Waldman considers the root has a mystical implication as “murmur,” some sort of sound which are not words in a syntactic relationship.¹²⁰ Reymond suggests that the same root possibly conveys “stillness, silence and cessation.”¹²¹ In the experience of Elijah at Horeb (1 Kgs. 19:1–18), however, a contextual and lexical meaning of the texts is presented to sum up an idea that silence belongs to a sequence of theophany, which signifies a process in which God reveals and open himself to conversation with human beings. Silence, we should say, is an integral part of a divine encounter.

¹¹⁷ E. D. Reymond, “The Hebrew Word דַּמָּמָה and the Root D-m-m I (‘To Be Silent’),” *Biblica* 90, no. 3 (2009): 374–75. A presentation of a historical survey on the root d-m-m by Reymond. After drawing evidences from the usage of semantic Hebrew and Aramaic words in rabbinic and Christian texts, in addition to a consideration to its usage in the Dead Sea Scrolls, he suggests that the root basically generates ‘silence’, ‘to be silent’. Biblical scholars discovered two possibilities of words derived from the same root (d-m-m) and therefore distinguish root d-m-m I which could be translated by ‘to be or grow dumb, silent, still’; and d-m-m II which signifies mourning and moaning. The study of this paper will take the root d-m-m I as it denotes a sense of ‘stillness, silence’.

¹¹⁸ Francis Brown et al., *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon: With an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic; Coded with the Numbering System from Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, [Nachdr.], Reprinted from the 1906 ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2010), 199.

¹¹⁹ See A. Baumann, “dāmāh,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 260

¹²⁰ Nahum M. Waldman, “Sound and Silence,” *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 22, no. 4 (1994): 230.

¹²¹ Reymond, “The Hebrew Word דַּמָּמָה and the Root D-m-m I (‘To Be Silent’),” 376.

4.1 SILENCE AS THEOPHANY: ELIJAH AT HOREB (1 KGS 19:1–18)

הַקֹּדֶם הַמְּמַד לְדָק שִׁמְעָה רַחֲמָו הַיְהוָה שְׁאֵב אֶל שִׁא שְׁעָרָה רַחֲמָו
(1 Kgs. 19:12, *Westminster Leningrad Codex*)

“and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire;
and after the fire *a sound of sheer silence*.” (1 Kgs. 19:12, *NRSV*)

Elijah’s experience of silence at Horeb is the main concern the passage from 1 Kgs. 19:1–18. Mordechai, agreeing with the majority of biblical scholars, regards the context of this passage as a Theophany at Mount Horeb.¹²² Since 19:1–18 is structurally positioned at the last part of a tale cycle concerning Elijah’s mission, the ‘Theophany at Horeb’ is to be seen as a climax of the whole narrative.¹²³ However, when we look into the ‘Theophany at Horeb’, the phrase הַקֹּדֶם הַמְּמַד לְדָק (*qôl demāmâ dāqâ*, “a sound of sheer silence,” *NRSV*) in 19:12 should not be read without its theophanic context.

Lust suggests a *New Sinai-Theophany* when he compares the experience of Elijah with traditional descriptions concerning the divine revelation to Moses.¹²⁴ The revelation of the Lord to Moses is marked by unusual cosmic phenomena. In Exodus 3 there was the burning bush, later in Exodus 19 we see thunder, lightning, and thick cloud (v.16), the Lord descends in a fire with the whole mountain shaking (v.18). These are forms of non-human phenomenon so terribly distinguishable than usual experience.

¹²² Mordechai Kogan, *1 Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Nachdr., The Anchor Yale Bible 10 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 456.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ J. Lust, “A Gentle Breeze or a Roaring Thunderous Sound? Elijah at Horeb: 1 Kings XIX 12,” *Vetus Testamentum* 25, no. 1 (1975): 113.

Now when the theophany appears to Elijah in 1 Kgs. 19:12 as *qôl demāmâ dāqâ*, the Scriptures opens to a new sequence of cosmic event on theophany different than that of Moses.¹²⁵ It is important to note that, it is until Elijah heard the *qôl demāmâ* then he began to wrap his face in his mantle and went out of the cave. Such is the expression of encountering the presence of the Lord as we see in the case of Moses.¹²⁶ In addition, v.11 eventually echoes the anticipation of the glory of the Lord to pass by as we see in Exodus 33:22. That is to say, the theophanic framework of this passage where Elijah was going to encounter the presence of the Lord is clearly seen. Lust argues that the threefold repetition of the particle ‘not’ in vv.11–12 also conveys the meaning ‘not yet’.¹²⁷ Thus, the structure of a new narrative sequence is strengthened when the *qôl* is introduced in v.12. As Lust concludes, the *qôl* stands for the voice of the Lord.¹²⁸

The new sequence of theophany, however, does not only surprises us with a new form but also a new paradox. A paradox which explains the experience of meeting the mystery of God in silence. While Waldman explores the mystical implication of *qôl demāmâ dāqâ* by indicating the contrasting status of both ‘silence’ (*demāmâ*) and ‘sound’ (*qôl*), he considers the case to be an oxymoron:¹²⁹

¹²⁵ Ibid., 114.

¹²⁶ Exod 33:22.

¹²⁷ J. Lust, “A Gentle Breeze or a Roaring Thunderous Sound?,” 114.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 115.

¹²⁹ Waldman, “Sound and Silence,” 232.

Behind the contradiction of the oxymoron, however, there is a meaning, namely, that this silence is not an absence or a void but a concrete fullness, an experience, conveying that there is a presence.¹³⁰

Now we may say that *qôl demāmâ dāqâ* does refer to some type of sound. It is a sound, which Waldman also indicates, that confronts us with a mystery.¹³¹ Hens-Piazza favours the translation of NRSV which renders ‘a sound of sheer silence’ by acknowledging the ironical and ambiguous quietude between two contradictive words, *sound* and *silence*, which directs us to the manifestation of the imperceptible and undetectable.¹³²

Silence has a quality of otherness. In the experience of Elijah, it is in silence that God manifests his very presence and hence, a divine conversation began. The significance of the contradiction between *qôl* and *demāmâ* lies in the reality of encountering the mystery, of which one enters into the presence of the absence—to perceive the sound which is not heard, and to approach what is unapproachable.

4.2 THE SILENT REVELATION OF GOD’S GLORY IN PSALM 19

This section focuses on Psalm 19 as an example to justify silence as a non-verbal transmission of God’s glory. This is to be done in two steps. Firstly, a stand of exegesis will be presented in order to posit an interpretation

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid., 231.

¹³² Gina Hens-Piazza, “Dreams Can Delude, Visions Can Deceive: Elijah’s Sojourn in the Wilderness of Horeb (1 Kings 19:1–21),” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 48, no. 1 (February 1, 2018): 15.

of the Psalm. Then, an interpretation of the Psalm is presented to justify silence as a means of non-verbal transmission of the glory of God. And conclude by suggesting the theological connection between the Psalmist's silent contemplation and liturgical silence.

To structure the dynamic which lies in the revelation of God's glory through silent contemplation, the exposition of Psalm 19 here favours the exegetical standpoint of Wagner, who proposes that the Psalm is a unit which consists of three progressive sections.¹³³ While many other scholars argue that the Psalm contains only two separated units (hence the division of 19A and 19B),¹³⁴ Wagner's viewpoint provides us with a balanced weight of understanding on the experience of the Psalmist. According to Wagner, the whole Psalm was composed with a "progressive narrowing of focus from the heavens' praise of El as creator to the petition of the human heart addressed to YHWH as rock and redeemer."¹³⁵ Such a viewpoint, in which we identify silence's theological character of transmitting the glory of God, lies the foundation to my later discussion exploring the deeper meaning of liturgical silence.

Wagner argues that the fundamental context of Psalm 19 is a prayer which consists of a progressive narrowing focus with three distinctive themes.¹³⁶

¹³³ J. Ross Wagner, "From the Heavens to the Heart: The Dynamics of Psalm 19 as Prayer," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 61, no. 2 (1999): 246.

¹³⁴ Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60–150: A Commentary*, 1st Fortress Press ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 269; Mitchell J. Dahood, *Psalms I: 1–50*, trade paperback ed. 2006, [Nachdr.], *The Anchor Bible* 16 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 121.

¹³⁵ Wagner, "From the Heavens to the Heart," 246.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 249.

- vv. 2–7: The heavens' praise of El
 vv. 8–11: Worshiping the Torah of YHWH
 vv. 12–15: Petition addressed to YHWH¹³⁷

The cosmic praise of El (vv. 2–7) opens the whole Psalm with the Psalmist's contemplation to a personified universe.¹³⁸ The contemplation, strictly speaking, as implied in v.4, is a silent contemplation of the glory of God (v.1). It is the silence which reveals the glory of God, the true wordless message contained in the natural movement of the universe. It is logical to suggest that the content of vv.2–7 is constructed over a borrowed theme from an ancient Canaanite hymn of the sun in its usage of the name of God as 'El'. Such an opinion is also held by both Kraus and Dahood.¹³⁹ However, Wagner, in a deeper sense, notices the significance in the change from 'El' to the six-fold repetition of 'YHWH' found in vv. 8–11. From the glory of creator El to the meditation of the Torah of YHWH, Wagner proposes a quality of intimacy between the Psalmist and YHWH.¹⁴⁰ The silent transmission of God's glory leads to the joyful observance of the Torah in the heart (v.9). The dynamic imposed here progressively proceed from a silent contemplation of the cosmic law narrowing down to the eternal Law of YHWH, the God of Israel. The non-verbal transmission words of the nature sum up at the Words of YHWH as written in the Torah. Verse 11 uses two specific items which people cherish greatly (gold and honey) to imply the fruitful observance of the Torah as the highest good for human life,¹⁴¹ that is to say, the glory of YHWH. The final section (vv.12–15) marks the ultimate desire

¹³⁷ Verse numbers in RSV.

¹³⁸ Wagner, "From the Heavens to the Heart," 249.

¹³⁹ Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 270; Dahood, *Psalms I*, 121.

¹⁴⁰ Wagner, "From the Heavens to the Heart," 225.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 256.

of the Psalmist for an unbroken fellowship with YHWH¹⁴² and therefore concludes the whole progressive unit by addressing YHWH in the first person for the first time throughout the whole Psalm (v.15).¹⁴³

Theologically speaking, the theme of silence breaks through the whole composition of the Psalm. The silent contemplation of the glory of God results in a personal contact with God in intimate private prayer. From a god of a remote cosmic reality to *my* God, the experience of the Psalmist becomes an experience of conversion evoked by silent contemplation and completed only by it. The Psalmist approaches God in silence. From the amazement of gazing the universe to the spirit of the observing the Torah, and to his own realization of sin, both conscious and unconscious,¹⁴⁴ he pledges his God for an eternal silent union where he shall be blameless (v.14).¹⁴⁵

Now since the liturgy is “the work of human redemption and perfect glorification of God.”¹⁴⁶ The mystery we celebrate remains in us as an awful silence, in which there is no word sufficient to render. In discussing sacramental languages, power maintains the ideas that silence is an inner speech, which brings human into communion with that which is sought.¹⁴⁷ Putting it with the experience of the Psalmist, it is the glory of God which the Psalmist would finally come to adoration and the redemptive power he wishes to

¹⁴² Ibid., 259.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 260.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 258. Wagner notices the two different expression of ‘errors’ תּוֹצֵאֹת and ‘hidden faults’ תּוֹרֵקֹת in v. 13 therefore suggests the distinction of both intentional and unintentional sins. See also Jacob Milgrom, “The Cultic הַגָּג and Its Influence in Psalms and Job,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 58 (1967): 120.

¹⁴⁵ Wagner, “From the Heavens to the Heart,” 259. According to the study of Wagner, the verb used for ‘blameless’ is קָטָא which evokes the description of Torah as ‘perfect’ הַמְּיֻקָּת in v.8a. This implies the ‘great reward’ promised to those who observe the Torah.

¹⁴⁶ *SC*, sec. 5.

¹⁴⁷ David Noel Power, *Sacrament: The Language of God’s Giving* (New York: Crossroad Pub, 1999), 73–74.

obtain through the final petition. The Psalm ends with a proclamation of God as his rock and redeemer (v.15), which adheres to the very nature of the liturgy: the glorification of God and the sanctification of men.¹⁴⁸

4.3 ADORATION IN SILENCE: THE THEOLOGY OF THE SABBATH

The discussion will conclude by an exposition of the theme silent adoration in light of the theology of the Sabbath. This aims at rediscovering the theological value of silence at worship. By pointing out the meaning of silence within the fundamental religious meaning of the Sabbath, the whole discussion of the theological value of liturgical silence shall lead us to a deeper understanding of the silence in the Roman liturgy.

The shadow of silence in the theology of the Sabbath is subtle. In order to make a clear illustration, the following argument will base upon the fundamentals of the Sabbath proposed by Ratzinger in *A New Song for the Lord*.¹⁴⁹

The theme *silent adoration* in the Sabbath can be found in the context of creation. Ratzinger holds the idea that “the Sabbath calls first of all for deep respect and gratitude toward the creator and his creation.”¹⁵⁰ However, the notion of the Seventh Day, the Day of YHWH encompasses a long history of development in Jewish religious heritage. According to the study

¹⁴⁸ SC, sec. 7.

¹⁴⁹ Pope Benedict XVI, *A New Song for the Lord*. The Emeritus Pope dedicates a section on the theology of the Sabbath in the context of the theology of the Lord’s Day. According to his teaching, the theology of the Sabbath is essential in understanding the Christian meaning of Sunday worship. For he indicates that “the passage from the Sabbath to Sunday reflects precisely the continuity and innovation of what is Christian” (p. 82). This paper takes up his fundamental understanding in his approach in order to justify the organic development of silence in Christian liturgy.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 84.

of Kimball, the ritualization of the Seventh Day tradition as a holy feast celebrated at the temple dates back to the eighth and seventh centuries BC and was associated with the Creation narrative (Genesis 1) during the time of the exile in the sixth century BC.¹⁵¹ While in exile, the people of Israel were without the holy temple and therefore the holy *time* became a marker of their own religious piety among the pagan religions.¹⁵² The idea of *holy time* which refers to the Creation narrative conveys the meaning of a complete rest,¹⁵³ a day which is consecrated by YHWH since the time of creation.¹⁵⁴ It is here where the sense of silent adoration lies. The *holy time* directs to a complete detachment from daily work and from the society (human time) to a solemn rest, the rest of YHWH. Worldly activities are reduced to silence in order to devote itself into God's time. In other words, the Sabbath signifies a *holy time* when the person unites with the whole creation in silence to pay reverence to God who has the ultimate right of ownership to all.¹⁵⁵ In this sense, the Sabbath carries an ontological meaning. Again, as Ratzinger points out, the world was given to us "from the measure of the true ruler and owner for dominion of service."¹⁵⁶ So the Sabbath, as the time consecrated by YHWH for his own glory, requires the whole creation to pay honour to their only God and creator in silent and wordless adoration.

¹⁵¹ Bruce A. Kimball, "The Origin of the Sabbath and Its Legacy to the Modern Sabbatical," *The Journal of Higher Education* 49 (1978): 309.

¹⁵² Kraus Hans-Joachim, *Worship In Israel, A Cultic History of Old Testament*, trans. Buswell Geoffrey (Oxford: Basil Blackwell & Mott. Ltd., 1965), 87. "With the loss of the holy place the 'holy time' became more important." See also Theophile James Meek, "The Sabbath in the Old Testament: (Its Origin and Development)," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 33, no. 3 (1914): 209. "Its [the Sabbath] observance became the distinctive mark of a loyal member of the race and was one of the few things that remained to differentiate them [the Israelites] from their heathen neighbours."

¹⁵³ Paul A. Barker, "Sabbath, Sabbatical Year, Jubilee," ed. T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker, *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 695.

¹⁵⁴ Meek, "The Sabbath in the Old Testament," 211.

¹⁵⁵ Pope Benedict XVI, *A New Song for the Lord*, 85.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

The eschatological dimension of the Sabbath also highlights the sense of silence therein. Ratzinger notes that the Sabbath “is the anticipation of the messianic hour, not only in thoughts and desires but in concrete action.”¹⁵⁷ Barker also suggests a similar description that the Sabbath is an “endless day anticipating the ideal for God’s creation.”¹⁵⁸ Putting together the notion of the *endless* day and the *messianic hour*, we shall see that the eschatological character of the Sabbath essentially implies the longing for eternal liberation. The sense of silence comes into the scene as a concrete action aims at anticipating the absolute freedom of God. In this sense, human actions themselves are reduced to silent adoration. A closer study of the *Sabbath Song* in Qumran texts conducted by Allison clearly testifies to the biblical tradition of silence as a vehicle of praise.¹⁵⁹ In this sense silent adoration truly is the anticipation of the timeless glory of God in concrete action.

The theology of the Sabbath, as we have seen, contains a remarkable implication on the theological value of silence. The holiness of the Sabbath is deeply connected with the sense of silence. The Sabbath requires a person to reduce oneself into silence adoration, a form of praise only suitable to praising the glory of God. Silence in the Roman liturgy, on the other hand, carries the exact theological reality: silence in the liturgy has only one orientation which is the glory of God revealed in the Paschal mystery of Christ and our sanctification in Him.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 86.

¹⁵⁸ Barker, “Sabbath, Sabbatical Year, Jubilee,” 697. The argument presented by Barker lies in his interpretation that the seventh day of creation in Genesis does not have the ‘evening and morning’ formula. Therefore, he concludes the initiation of Israel into participation to the very good creation in a weekly sabbath model.

¹⁵⁹ Dale C. Allison, “The Silence of Angels: Reflections on the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice,” *Revue de Qumrân* 13, no. 1/4 (49/52) (1988): 194. “If, as the Sabbath Shirot discloses, silence itself can be a vehicle of praise, and if, because of the limitations of human language, especially as regards religious matters, there is no adequate hymn (cf. *4Q400*, frag. 2, 7), then it is most fitting to worship God in quietness, without voice (cf. *Acts of Pater* 39(10)).”

¹⁶⁰ SC, sec.10.

SUMMARY

The study of sacred silence in the Scriptures enhances within us the capacity to see the theological value of liturgical silence in its authentic sense. The Scriptures record not only the lived experience of the people of God but also the power of eternal love and redemption offered to us in human history. Nevertheless, exploring the theme of silence in the OT enables us to grasp more deeply the liturgical value of silence in the Roman liturgy. In this chapter, three major liturgical themes are connected with the sense of silence. *Theophany*, which the liturgy fundamentally means, is perceived with the sense of silence. *God's glory*, to which the liturgical celebration primarily points to, is also transmitted in wordless silence. Lastly, *adoration*, which encompasses the totality of worship, expresses itself in silence as sacred time.

In our experience of encountering God in silence there lies the foundation of an authentic liturgical experience, where God reveals himself (theophany), where we contemplate the immense glory of God, and where we offer our praise and worship through active engagement and participation. Silence constitutes a fundamental structure of them all.

CHAPTER 5

JESUS CHRIST THE SILENT WORD OF GOD

5.1 THE PURPOSE TO PROPOSE A CHRISTOLOGICAL TREATMENT ON LITURGICAL SILENCE

The study now moves on to explore the theological value of silence within a Christological framework. This chapter aims at justifying the silence of Christ as a theological disposition of the mystery of God which gives the fundamental meaning to liturgical silence, an integral element in the Roman liturgy. Jesus Christ, as the sacrament of the encounter with God is himself the “divine act in human form.”¹⁶¹ Since the research of the paper has a liturgical context, the study of Christ’s silence in this chapter implies “an interpretation and transposition of a divine activity into human activity.”¹⁶² What I propose is to interpret the theme of silence in the mystery of Christ, precisely in the Paschal mystery. The power to transmit and accomplish the divine work of redemption reveals itself in the form of silence. In such a way we shall establish a theological disposition on liturgical silence. Moreover, the liturgy is seen as an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ.¹⁶³ The silence of Christ, which signifies the Divine revelation in a definite mode, shall provide the foundation of liturgical silence.

Silence, as I found, is one of the themes which underlies the whole mystery of Christ. As Cardinal Sarah says, silence is a “form of mystagogy.”¹⁶⁴ Therefore, I shall first of all, propose silence as a Christological theme

¹⁶¹ Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ, the Sacrament of the Encounter of God*, ed. Ted Mark Schoof and Carl Sterkens, New ed., The collected works of Edward Schillebeeckx [ser. eds.: Ted Mark Schoof ...], vol. 1 (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 10.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ SC, sec. 7.

¹⁶⁴ Sarah, Diat, and Miller, *The Power of Silence*, 127, no. 243.

in the light of a selected reading by Ignatius of Antioch. This is followed with a sketch of a theology of silence by looking at the Christ events based on the Christology of Von Balthasar. And to conclude by pointing out the sacramentality of silence in the mystery of worship based on the insights of Schillebeeckx. Hence, with these steps I hope to fulfil the task of exploring the theological value of liturgical silence in a Christological framework.

5.2 SILENCE AS A CHRISTOLOGICAL THEME: IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH ON THE WORD AND SILENCE

...there is one God
who revealed himself through Jesus Christ his Son,
who is his Word which proceeded from silence,
who in every way pleased him who sent him.

(Ignatius of Antioch, *Magn.* 8.2)¹⁶⁵

As early as in the apostolic period, the theme of silence has already been employed by Ignatius of Antioch in Christological disposition. To defend, however, the authenticity of Christian theological framework against the gnostic sense which could possibly be derived from his writings, the discussion here is in total agreement with Vall, who maintains that “Ignatius’ deepest theological affinities by far are to New Testament Christianity”¹⁶⁶ as his texts indicate eternal silence as an incorporated notion into an authentic biblical theology of revelation.¹⁶⁷ In fact, Ignatius’ theology was tightly

¹⁶⁵ The English text of this section is taken from Schoedel’s critical edition. See William R. Schoedel, Ignatius, and Helmut Koester, *Ignatius of Antioch: A Commentary on the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch*, Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 118.

¹⁶⁶ Gregory Vall, *Learning Christ: Ignatius of Antioch and the Mystery of Redemption* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2013), 260. Vall argues the terminology employed by Ignatius stands in stark contrast to Gnosticism’s fragmentation of God and Christ. See pp. 260–62.

¹⁶⁷ Vall, *Learning Christ*, 262.

connected with the Johannine tradition (as well as with St. Paul) as seen in his exposition on the relation between the Father and Jesus Christ.¹⁶⁸

The theme of silence was primarily taken up by Ignatius in the context of defending the silence of the Ephesian Bishop.¹⁶⁹ However, Ignatius turned silence into a Christological theme.¹⁷⁰ In *Magn.* 8.2, Christ the Word (Logos) is said to proceed from *silence*. What does it mean? According to Schoedel's commentary Ignatius' use of the word 'silence' does not carry a sense of identification with God (the Father).¹⁷¹ If that is the case, then what Von Balthasar proposed might enlighten us:

The word of Jesus sounds from a place of silence for it to be a word at all. That place is, firstly, the silence of the Father... But for this very reason it is also Christ's own silence, which can be perceived by the man who has received his word... he acts by speaking but is known in his silence, in the greater sphere of mystery... ultimately his silent suffering.¹⁷²

Silence is the language of the hidden mystery. A language "already in existence to express in his own way what is beyond speech."¹⁷³ According to Von Balthasar, "Ignatius saw silence as superior to the word."¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁸ Thomas G. Weinandy, *Jesus: Essays in Christology*, Faith and Reason: Studies in Catholic Theology and Philosophy (Ave Maria, FL: Sapientia Press of Ave Maria University, 2014), 64.

¹⁶⁹ Schoedel, Ignatius, and Koester, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 121.

¹⁷⁰ Weinandy, *Jesus*, 65. "Ignatius' understanding of the relationship between the Father and Jesus Christ, his Son and Word, possesses the authentic ring of the apostolic tradition as found within New Testament Christianity. Even where he is articulating something that is particularly his own, he has not moved significantly from New Testament motifs, but rather his creativity arises specifically from within these various traditions."

¹⁷¹ Schoedel, Ignatius, and Koester, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 120.

¹⁷² Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Explorations in Theology* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 131.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 130.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

Therefore, the mystery of silence is connected with the mystery of the Incarnation where the eternal silence of the Father is revealed in the Word incarnate. Vall adds that “it is silence because it is hidden until the Son reveals it and remains mysterious even after he reveals it.”¹⁷⁵ Silence signifies a form of revelation of the Father by way of Christ’s own action. Certainly, Von Balthasar is pointing at the whole mystery of Christ (the greater sphere of mystery): his being conceived and born of a virgin, his death on the cross were “all accomplished in the silence of God.”¹⁷⁶ In this sense, I propose, that silence is a Christological theme—a theme which enables us to study the mystery of Christ through the eternal glory of the Father and the redemptive work of salvation is revealed.¹⁷⁷

5.3 THE THEOLOGY OF SILENCE IN THE CHRIST EVENTS

The investigation of the theme of silence in the Christ Events bares two theological implications. On the one hand, it leads us to see how the movement of silence reveals Christ’s Paschal mystery. On the other hand, it helps us to grasp the sacramental meaning of liturgical silence through the movement of silence in the Paschal mystery. The following discussion is focused on some significant moments in the Christ Events.

¹⁷⁵ Vall, *Learning Christ*, 266.

¹⁷⁶ Balthasar, *Explorations in Theology*, 131. Schoedel’s commentary of *Magn* 8.2 limits itself to the point of Incarnation. The comments made by Von Balthasar is preferred here since he draws the theme of silence into a wilder dimension of the mystery of Christ. Which at the same time opens the space for further discussion on the subject. For Schoedel’s argument see Schoedel, Ignatius, and Koester, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 121. “The general respect for silence shared by Ignatius thus easily leads over to a theological application of the theme. Yet in Ignatius God’s silence has value only in light of the revelation of the Word, and what he apparently had in mind (as in *Eph.* 19.1) was the fact that God did not comment openly on that he was about in the events of the incarnation.”

¹⁷⁷ Ignatius’ intimate connection to the Johannine tradition enables us to see the orientation of worldly deeds of Christ towards the glory of the Father. In such a way he always pleases the Father by accomplishing the mission he is sent for.

Let us first take a look at the silence in the event of the agony. Von Balthasar observes a sequence of isolation in Jesus' experience at the agony.¹⁷⁸ The agony is one of the last stages in Jesus' journey towards the cross. After the supper, Jesus took his disciples to the Mount of Olives, where he started to realize himself as being isolated. The silence in the Mount of Olives grows gradually when we look into the theological dialectic of distance which is suggested by Von Balthasar.¹⁷⁹ It starts with Jesus commanding his disciples to sit *here* while he was *there* to pray (Matt 26:36), the distance is underlined by Jesus' going and coming three times, hence the silence which Jesus experienced. The isolation was intensified by the disciples' incapacity to accompany Jesus in his "solitary struggle in prayer."¹⁸⁰ Jesus was, little by little, left alone to the point that even when he prays, the Father keeps silent before him. "There was no communication with the Father,"¹⁸¹ as Von Balthasar notes. The gradual silence grows in the dialectic of distance. Silence is leading Jesus to his suffering, his cross, and his death.

Silence continues to drown the atmosphere from the Mount of Olive to the trial of Jesus. Jesus's silence before Pilate not only echoes the prophecy of the suffering servant of the Lord from Isaiah 53:¹⁸² *He was silent (did not open his mouth) as a lamb that is led to the slaughter* (Isa 53:7); but also, depicts his self-surrender in his trial. Von Balthasar observes a "theology of

¹⁷⁸ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), 100.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 100–101. Von Balthasar's theological dialectic points to an isolation of Jesus from the disciples. However, it is the gradual silence which Jesus experienced is being stressed here. For the ultimate orientation of the agony is the divine judgement of the sin of the world on the cross, the dialectic which observed by Von Balthasar here consists of an inner motif which prepares Jesus to enter to the 'hour' which is coming for him. It lies in the silence in isolation which Jesus gradually experienced all the way in his passion until his death on the cross.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 101.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 100.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 118.

the delivering up” which he employs from Wiard Popkes.¹⁸³ Jesus’ silence displayed the fact that his way of suffering and the cross as a whole is a ‘hand-over’ of himself, done out of his total obedience to the Father. For Popkes, this hand-over has its proper meaning only in light of the salvation history;¹⁸⁴ and for Von Balthasar, the whole Christological study shall be seen through the obedient faith of Christ.¹⁸⁵ Thus, the theological significance of the silence of Jesus, as seen in the light of both Von Balthasar and Popkes, discloses the Christological feature in the hymn of Philippians 2:8, *he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross*. The silence of Jesus in the trial culminates in the proclamation of *Ecce homo*.¹⁸⁶ This silent man, before his own people, “is known in his silence.”¹⁸⁷

Silence enters more explicitly into the scene of the crucifixion. In the crucifixion narrative, there are eschatological signs which disclose the silence of the cosmos. Von Balthasar points out that the cosmic darkening reported by the Synoptics expresses an “inner hour of darkness.”¹⁸⁸ It is not only the darkness described in the prophecies of both Amos (8:9–10) and Zechariah (12:10), but also a silent reaction from the universe in front of the great tragedy of Jesus. Von Balthasar clearly states that the cosmos is “in

¹⁸³ Ibid., 111–12.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 111. Von Balthasar quoting from Popkes, “We must understand the expression to ‘hand over’ in its proper meaning, without diluting it to a mere ‘mission’ or ‘gift’. Here was done what Abraham was spared from doing in Isaac. The Christ was deliberately given by the Father to a deadly destiny. God rejected him and delivered him to the death-dealing powers... the Christ is the accursed of God... Here the *theologia crucis* comes to expression in a way than which none more radical can be conceived.”

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 4. Introduction of the book delivered by Aiden Nicholas OP. The related original section as follow: “Balthasar insisted, however, that the manner in which theology is to be written is Christological from the start to finish. He defined theology as a mediation between faith and revelation in which the infinite, when fully expressed in the finite, i.e. made accessible as man, can only be apprehended by a convergent movement from the side of the finite, i.e. adoring, obedient faith in the God-man.”

¹⁸⁶ John 19:5.

¹⁸⁷ Balthasar, *Explorations in Theology*, 131.

¹⁸⁸ Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale*, 127.

no way active, but rather is passively shaken to its foundations by the final event.”¹⁸⁹ The cosmos remains silent, the whole creation trembles as Jesus is being hung on the cross, the cosmos freezes at one point because God is acting through this silence. This is the death of Christ: humbly, silently, heading to the Father’s eternal glory. Christ’s death is the Day of YHWH accomplished in silence, the utmost word of Christ to speak of himself. The *silent* death of Christ is his final revelation.¹⁹⁰ The *Ecce homo* now as *Ecce Deus*.

Thus Christ’s death on the cross uttered a great cry in silence. For three days the world was covered with thick silence.¹⁹¹ When the power of death seems to have the last word, the power of silence waits for its last act. Von Balthasar provides us with a fascinating description about the silence brought by the death of Christ:

The more eloquently the Gospels describe the passion of the living Jesus, his death and burial, the more striking is their entirely understandable silence when it comes the time in between his placing in the grave and the event of the Resurrection.¹⁹²

The silence in between the burial of Jesus and his Resurrection highlights the climax of the presentation of silence as a Christological theme. Concerning this interval, the Gospel reports nearly nothing, hence an absolute silence. This is the silence which belongs to God alone, the silence which

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 79.

¹⁹¹ Sarah, Diat, and Miller, *The Power of Silence*, 104, no. 202.

¹⁹² Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale*, 148.

gives rise to life. To borrow an expression from Cardinal Sarah, this is “the great silence of the Transfiguration.”¹⁹³ A transformation of life from death is done silently through the death of Christ. The living and the dead altogether join silently into communion through the death of Christ. Hence, we shall say, it is the absolute silence that reveals the solidarity of Christ, both to the living and the dead:

In that same way that, upon earth, he was in solidarity with the living, so in the tomb, he is in solidarity with the dead.¹⁹⁴

Unsurprisingly, the theology of Holy Saturday has its very foundation on this absolute silence. If the internal logic of the Incarnation leads to the death of Christ on the cross, the death of Christ must also signify his triumph over the deathly powers.¹⁹⁵ Silence, therefore, opens up the soteriological explorations which concern the theology of *descendit ad inferna*, hence the milieu of theological discussions along with the Christian tradition.¹⁹⁶ We must not exclude the silence in the empty tomb, which signifies the absence of the earthly Jesus. The mystery of Christ as the redeemer of humankind would not be completed until the Resurrection takes place. The Resurrection of Christ, however, takes place in a most mysterious way as that of the Incarnation. In silence He descended, and in silence He was raised. The Paschal joy is fundamentally silent. Resurrection of Christ, however, takes place in a most mysterious way as that of the Incarnation. In silence He descended, and in silence He was raised. The Paschal joy is fundamentally silent.

¹⁹³ Sarah, Diat, and Miller, *The Power of Silence*, 105, no. 204.

¹⁹⁴ Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale*, 149.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 154.

¹⁹⁶ Since my intention is to point out the fundamental character of silence as a Christological theme in the Christ events. Further exploration in regard to soteriology and the ecclesiological foundation derive from the theology of Holy Saturday in the field of Christology are left out of this research.

Then Christ must be silent, as he is to the silent and unfathomable Word of God, which marks the distance between God and his creatures.¹⁹⁷ Von Balthasar refers to this as he states: “the infinite spaces of silence that inhabit the incarnating Word of God cannot be rationalized out of this transposition without the destruction of its integrity.”¹⁹⁸ In other words, only silent deeds would give rise to communication between God and his creatures. In this sense, Christ is truly the Word made flesh, and dwell *silently* among us. The whole mystery of Christ is fully revealed until his paschal mission was accomplished in silence. Again, though he speaks, he is only known by silence.¹⁹⁹

5.4 THE SACRAMENTALITY OF SILENCE IN THE MYSTERY OF WORSHIP

At the beginning of this chapter, I quoted from Schillebeeckx on a fundamental Christological claim that Christ is the “divine act in human form.”²⁰⁰ After an exposition of the theology of silence, I would like to further elaborate the theological value of silence in the context of Christ as “the human embodiment of the redeeming love of God,”²⁰¹ that is, the sacramentality of silence in the mystery of worship. It is not only to conclude this chapter but also to turn the whole discussion to the meaning of silence in the liturgy, which I will proceed in the next chapter.

The saving activity of Jesus is *sacramental*, Schillebeeckx explains, for a sacrament is “a divine bestowal of salvation in an outwardly

¹⁹⁷ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic: Theological Logical Theory* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), 277.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 279.

¹⁹⁹ Balthasar, *Explorations in Theology*, 131.

²⁰⁰ Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 10.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

perceptible form which makes the bestowal manifest.”²⁰² We have already seen that, in the Paschal mystery, the divine grace of salvation is bestowed through the movement of *silence* in the Christ Events. This silence which signifies Christ’s self-emptiness and total obedience to the Father, while at the same time carrying in itself a sacramental character, manifests the bestowed grace of salvation in perceptible silence. Silence, theologically speaking, is not only a sign that reveals the saving power of God in human perceptible means but also reveals an outwardly perceptible manner of worship. For Christ is not only “the revelation of the redeeming God; he is also the supreme worshipper of the Father.”²⁰³ Since Christ came into *our place* by assuming human form of in mysterious silence, as a mystery he also carries the totality of redemption in perceptible silence. Hence, the *upward* movement of praise and the *downward* movement of salvation²⁰⁴ are both manifest in silence. If the silent Servant of God is the supreme model of all worshippers of the Father, then what it also discloses to us is the sacramentality of silence, a perceptible sign of the incomprehensible silent mystery of God, who bestows to us in Christ every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places (Eph 1:3). In light of the sacramental character of silence, we shall also see what Schillebeeckx describes as the great *liturgical mystery of worship*.²⁰⁵ Through the silent sacrifice on the cross, which is represented by Christ as the head of all believers, silence becomes a *prototype* of worship. Silence as an ‘act of community’²⁰⁶ is primarily offered by the silence of Christ in his paschal mystery, representing the whole humankind, “pleads with the Father for the grace of redemption for every man.”²⁰⁷ Hence, the

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid., 12.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 13.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 22.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 21. As derived from *leiton ergon*: an act of the people.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 22.

cycle of mutual love between the Father and the Son, as the “origin of the Holy Spirit”²⁰⁸ is now translated into the *silent* Christ who prays to the Father for an Advocate as the Spirit of truth to testify for him (cf. John 15:26). The silence which reveals the obedience of the Son in his sacrifice, together with the acceptance by the Father out of his eternal love of redemption completes its sacramental character, truly revealing the mystery of worship.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 24.

SUMMARY

“Encounter demands the asceticism of truth, the humility of hearing and seeing which leads to the authentic grasping of the truth.”²⁰⁹ Silence leads us to the truth. Liturgical silence, which signifies a spiritual encounter with Christ through its space and time in liturgical celebration, remains the fundamental meaning of the mystery of Christ, which is, the mystery celebrated in the liturgy. Therefore, liturgical silence is Christocentric.

Only the silence of Christ would lead us to an authentic meaning of liturgical silence. Christ is the head; he is the model, a *prototype* of worshipping the Father. In light of the theology of silence, Cardinal Sarah’s word echoes: “The rejection of silence is the rejection of the love and life that come to us from Jesus.”²¹⁰ Silence is Christ’s victory over the noise of the world. The noisy world loves only the self, but Christ’s silence manifests the saving love of the Father through humility, self-emptiness, and even death. Then, we shall now proceed to explore the true meaning of silence in the liturgy, to ‘hear’ and ‘see’ the silence at worship is to taste the grace of salvation which comes down to us as we offer our praise in silence.

²⁰⁹ Pope Benedict XVI, *A New Song for the Lord*, 11.

²¹⁰ Sarah, Diat, and Miller, *The Power of Silence*, 107, no. 206.

CHAPTER 6

THE MOVEMENT OF SILENCE IN THE PASCHAL TRIDUUM CELEBRATION

The study of liturgical silence has now come to its final stage.²¹¹ Having seen the theology of silence from various aspects with a considerable length, we have come to the understanding of the sacramentality of silence as seen in the Paschal mystery of Christ. The sacramental sense of silence opens us to the mystery of worship. “Real liturgy implies that God responds and reveals *how* we can worship him.”²¹² It is in silence that God responds and reveals himself in the mystery of Christ, the mystery which, theologically speaking, *creates* Christian worship in a general sense. In order to point out the liturgical value of silence in a concrete and practical aspect, this chapter presents the movement of silence in the Paschal Triduum celebration. Firstly, it begins with a discussion on the liturgical year as a celebration entering into God’s time, highlighting the sense of silence therein as presented. Then, the discussion will turn to describing silence as an inner liturgical orientation of celebration by presenting the movement of silence at the high point of the liturgical time: the Paschal Triduum. The chapter will conclude the investigation of a theology of liturgical silence, while at the same time turning the research of this book to its final part.

²¹¹ For the first thing, as I mentioned earlier, my research of liturgical silence focuses on the *Novus Ordo*, which is the common liturgical experience of most Catholics nowadays. The following liturgical study will be conducted according to the liturgy received after the Second Vatican Council; for the second, an illustration of the movement of silence in the Paschal Triduum creates a theological linkage from the previous chapter. I will further elaborate the value of silence in the Eucharist when I discuss *active participation* and *ars celebrandi* in the next chapter.

²¹² Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 22.

6.1 ENTERING INTO GOD'S TIME: THE LITURGICAL YEAR

When the eternal Word assumed human existence at his Incarnation, He also assumed temporality. He drew time into the sphere of eternity.

(Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 92)

All time is God's time.²¹³ When we participate in the liturgy, we enter into God's time. Liturgical celebration is the encounter with the mystery of Christ in eternity beyond human time. Ratzinger describes liturgical encounter as encountering the *Christ of today, yesterday and the future*.²¹⁴ The Liturgical Year, so to speak, is the celebration of the whole mystery of Christ over the course of the year; that is to say, it celebrates the historical Jesus and the Christian hope for the future in the present. God entered into our time, in such a way that he brought eternity and connected it into time.²¹⁵ In the realm of the liturgy, however, *time* is simply God's glory. The glory revealed in and through the Paschal Mystery of Christ, and in its effective salvation of humankind, out of the infinite love of the Triune God.

This happens because there is a point of encounter between the God's time and human experience in temporality—the eternal and the body. Since the Incarnation of the Word remains human forever, it follows that the presence of eternity will forever become bodily and concrete.²¹⁶ Hence, the flesh becomes the instrument of salvation.²¹⁷ The Paschal mystery of Christ, however, also gives meaning to the future dimension of time. The Christian

²¹³ Ibid., 92.

²¹⁴ Pope Benedict XVI, *A New Song for the Lord*, 11–16.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 12.

²¹⁶ Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 92.

²¹⁷ Tertullian, *De Resurrection Mortuorum* 8.3 (CCL 2:931): *Cara salutis est cardo.*

notion of time always carries an eschatological meaning, in which the consummation of all history will be accomplished in the final coming of the redeemer. In such a way, as Ratzinger notes, “eternity is imparted to time and time becomes eternity.”²¹⁸ Therefore, the mystery of Christ, in the accomplishment of his Paschal mission, constitutes a reality of *present-past-future* in liturgical time.

Thus, *the Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy* from the Second Vatican Council implies a theology of liturgical-time which explains the Paschal mystery. The Church celebrates the Paschal Mystery in an annual cycle base on the weekly celebration of the Lord’s day, which is the original feast day.²¹⁹ Within the cycle, the whole mystery of Christ is celebrated from the mystery of the Incarnation, through the Passion of the Lord to the Ascension, followed by the Pentecost which expresses the fundamental Christian expectation of the blessed hope of the coming of the Lord.²²⁰ Within the same annual cycle, in which the Paschal mystery is constantly celebrated throughout the year, the liturgy *recalls* the history of redemption and *unfolds* the historical event *hic et nunc* (‘here and now’) to nourish the faithful by celebrating a Christian time.²²¹ The Liturgical Year, so to speak, is a celebration of the *present-past-future* in the Paschal Mystery.

From another perspective, the annual celebration in time also celebrates the ‘hour’ of Christ. The ‘hour’ which the Lord presides over and celebrates his mysteries with the Church for the glory of the Father.²²² Then

²¹⁸ Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 94.

²¹⁹ Cf. SC, sec. 106.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, sec. 102.

²²¹ Peter J. Elliott, *Ceremonies of the Liturgical Year: According to the Modern Roman Rite; A Manual for Clergy and All Involved in Liturgical Ministries* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2002), 11, no. 27.

²²² Sarah, Diat, and Miller, *The Power of Silence*, 136. No. 259.

we shall say, The Liturgical Year is a celebration of God's *silent deeds of redemption*. It invites us to enter into the mystery which is accomplished in silence. A sacred time which bears a strong presentiment of eternity.²²³ Only by an adequate understanding of the sacramentality of silence, which I concluded in the last chapter, would a proper sense of the inner rhythm in the Liturgical Year be grasped. At the outset, the Liturgical Year constitutes a continual celebration from the Incarnation (the Advent and Christmas Season) to the Paschal mystery of Christ (which covers from the Lantern Seasons to the end of the Eastertide). While these liturgical seasons are expressed with specific liturgical signs and actions, the inner rhythm which reveals the whole Mystery of Christ proceeds *in silence* as the burning bush that is never consumed. Given this internal rhythm of silence in the whole Liturgical Year, every liturgy would be a true "plunge into the mystery."²²⁴

6.2 THE GREAT SILENCE: THE MOVEMENT OF SILENCE IN THE PASCHAL TRIDUUM²²⁵

Since the celebration of the Paschal Mystery is of supreme importance to Christian worship,²²⁶ it follows that the Paschal Triduum is the high point of the liturgical year. If we maintain the sacramentality of silence which directs us to the mystery of worship as a principle of liturgical theology, then, the celebration of the Paschal Triduum, the climax of all

²²³ This paper directly points to the liturgy of 'Paschal Triduum' as received in 1969 in the renewed norms for the liturgical year. Cf. Pope Paul VI, "Approval of the Universal Norms on the Liturgical Year and the New General Roman Calendar," *Motu Proprio*, February 14, 1969.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ This paper directly points to the liturgy of 'Paschal Triduum' as received in 1969 in the renewed norms for the liturgical year. Cf. Pope Paul VI, "Approval of the Universal Norms on the Liturgical Year and the New General Roman Calendar," *Motu Proprio*, February 14, 1969.

²²⁶ Ibid.

celebrations throughout the liturgical year, should have in itself an inner movement of silence.

The term ‘sacred triduum’ (*triduum sacrum*) appeared early at the end of the fourth century where Ambrose spoke of “Christ’s suffered, rested and rose.”²²⁷ Augustine referred it to “the most holy triduum of the crucified, buried, and risen Lord.”²²⁸ In the Jerusalem Church, the travels of Egeria testifies to a more dynamic report on early liturgical celebration of Easter Triduum in Jerusalem at around 381–384.²²⁹ Additionally, in Tertullian’s time, as Nocent notices, the Paschal fast began on Good Friday until the morning of Easter Sunday. The above ancient materials convinced Nocent to see in the early centuries that the Paschal Triduum is comprised of Good Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday.²³⁰ The specific structure of unity in celebration during the Easter Triduum, as shown in the early Church, shows the “real unity of Christ’s death and resurrection,”²³¹ which means, the whole Paschal Mystery. In the modern Roman calendar, as received in the post-conciliar liturgy, the Paschal Triduum refers to the celebration from Holy Thursday Evening Mass until the end of the Second Vespers on Easter Sunday.²³²

²²⁷ Irénée Henri Dalmais, Pierre Jounel, and Aimé Georges Martimort, *The Liturgy and Time*, New ed., The Church at prayer, vol. 4 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1986), 47. See also St. Ambrose, *Ep.* 23, 13 (PL 16:1030).

²²⁸ Ibid. See also St. Augustine, *Ep.* 54, 14 (PL 33:125).

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Adrien Nocent, *The Liturgical Year: Lent, the Sacred Paschal Triduum, Easter Time*, vol. 2 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2013), 255.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Peter Coughlan and Peter Purdue, trans., *The Liturgy of the Hours: The General Instruction on the Liturgy of the Hours with a Commentary by A.-M. Roguet, O.P.* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Abbey Press, 1971), 58.

Within the structural unity of the Paschal Triduum celebration lies an internal movement of silence. As a matter of fact, all liturgical celebrations, starting from the Holy Thursday Evening Eucharistic Celebration, initiates the whole Church into a *great silence* that carries a twofold liturgical realities in which it commemorates the Passion of the Lord on Good Friday and, at the same time, prolongs itself into the Easter Vigil where the Paschal message is proclaimed. Marked by the movement of silence, the liturgy of the Paschal Triduum is celebrated in such a way. Theologically speaking, the very movement of silence in the liturgy of the Paschal Triduum is an actualization of the silence we have seen in the Christ Events from the Agony to the empty tomb, as explained in the previous chapter. Hence, this is the silent movement from death to life as expressed in the liturgy of the Paschal Triduum in an explicit and aesthetical way.

6.2.1 NOCTURNAL SILENCE: HOLY THURSDAY

The Eucharistic celebration of the Lord's Supper initiates the Church into silence by specific liturgical features. Among these are the empty tabernacle, the reduction of the use of music and bells after the *Gloria* until the Easter Vigil, as well as the *Gloria* itself, the transfer of the Holy Eucharist to the 'altar of repose', the stripping of the main altar, and the removal of holy waters from the stoups.²³³ These are all external signs and gestures which express the inner motif of the liturgy: entering into a great silence. Uniting herself with Christ, the Church is ready for the 'hour' to come. In fact, as Nocent sees, what the Church celebrates at the Lord's Supper is an "actualization of the historical event"²³⁴ which she will commemorate

²³³ Elliott, *Ceremonies of the Liturgical Year*, 184–217. Sec. 184–217.

²³⁴ Nocent, *The Liturgical Year*, 2:231.

throughout the next day. It is Christ's Paschal Mystery that once led Christ into silence, and it is the same Mystery that takes Christ's Church into the great silence. Attention should be given to the tradition of the Easter Fast,²³⁵ which requires the body to restrain itself from the need of the flesh in order to draw the spirit into silence. Christ displays his solidarity by letting himself be in the tomb, silent for three days; the Church, in turn, offers herself in silent prayers and fasting during the three-day celebration of the Paschal Triduum. Therefore, after the celebration of the Lord's Supper, there comes the "nocturnal silence" as described by Cardinal Sarah.²³⁶ The Church now in silence becomes Christ's very companion.

6.2.2 SILENT ADORATION: GOOD FRIDAY

On Good Friday comes the silent 'hour'. The liturgy on Good Friday is marked by a notable restraint.²³⁷ Precisely speaking, it is a liturgy that is both inwardly and outwardly marked with silence. In the celebration of the Lord's Passion, singing is reduced and the organ remains silent. The whole liturgy is filled with notable moments of silence: during the general intercessions, the reception of the Holy Communion, and the dismissal in silence.²³⁸ However, the movement of silence is not only found in the outer signs and gestures. The inner rhythm of silence is itself contained in *time* as the whole Church commemorates on that very day the suffering 'hour' of Christ. Good Friday is in itself a day of silence. This silence does not only recall the historic 'hour' of Christ but also makes present his glorious Passion at the moment when the church publicly venerates the death of Christ on the cross.

²³⁵ Elliott, *Ceremonies of the Liturgical Year*, 94, sec. 181.

²³⁶ Sarah, Diat, and Miller, *The Power of Silence*, 104, no. 200.

²³⁷ Nocent, *The Liturgical Year*, 2:271.

²³⁸ Elliott, *Ceremonies of the Liturgical Year*, 220–49, no. 220–49.

As Richter observes, “the cross ritual offers an optical and meditative, even hymnic unfolding of what was being heard in the liturgy of the Word.”²³⁹ What lies behind this liturgical dynamic is the power of silence.

The silence on Good Friday is so great because it is also a liturgical *décor* which directs to Christ’s glorious triumph, the mystery of the victorious Passover.²⁴⁰ The elevation of the cross is indeed the high point throughout the liturgy of Good Friday. Nocent emphasizes that it is the most important act in the history of salvation:

The elevation, and the adoration that follows, are also an assertion of the decisive victory Christ has won over the powers of evil that are active in the world. He is ‘lifted up’, and the lifting up means that the human race that had been dispersed has been gathered into unity once again.²⁴¹

The glorious victory of the cross which is lifted up draws all people to Christ himself (cf. John 12:32) thus demanding a response of silent adoration.²⁴² This is a moment of silence not only to pay reverence to the glorious triumphant cross, but also to signify the faithful’s interior spiritual surrender to God in total obedience they learnt from Christ. Therefore, the movement of silence behind the adoration of the cross reveals a Christian spiritual offering in silence which is authentically liturgical.

²³⁹ Klemens Richter, *The Meaning of the Sacramental Symbols: Answers to Today’s Questions* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1990), 124.

²⁴⁰ Nocent, *The Liturgical Year*, 2:271.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 2:278.

²⁴² Cf. *The Roman Missal*, The Passion of the Lord, no. 16.

6.2.3 TOWARDS THE EASTER JOY: THE EASTER VIGIL

So far, we have seen how the inner movement of silence on Good Friday relates to the theology of the cross. On the Easter Vigil, it is the theology of expectation which underlines the movement of silence. In the midst of a profound silence, the liturgy gradually turns into splendours of Easter joy to commence the Easter Season.

In the liturgy of the Easter Vigil,²⁴³ the mood of the Easter fast receives a festive character. As Nocent describes, it is “a fast marked by expectation of the Lord’s return.”²⁴⁴ Thus the centrality of the Easter Vigil rests upon the silent awaiting of a twofold expectation: the Easter proclamation and the eschatological second coming of Christ. So, as the movement of silence moves gradually from the silence of the tomb where Christ’s body rested, to the encounter of the empty tomb in the Easter Vigil, the gradual fading out of silence is to be replaced by the splendours of Easter joy which expresses itself in extraordinary liturgical signs.

The liturgical setting of the Easter Vigil expresses a sense of silence which slowly receives a festive mood from that of Good Friday. In the modern Roman rite, it is strictly observed that the Easter Vigil is celebrated in between the nightfall and the daybreak of Sunday morning.²⁴⁵ All lights of the church are extinguished.²⁴⁶ In such a way, it frames the liturgy in complete darkness and a profound sense of silence. The silent adoration which derives from the cross slowly moves to silence which expresses

²⁴³ Since this paper contains an agenda to discuss general liturgical experience of modern Catholics. I will omit the study of the Monastic origin of Holy Saturday. The elaboration of the movement of silence will focus on the Easter Vigil as received after the post-conciliar reform.

²⁴⁴ Nocent, *The Liturgical Year*, 2:281.

²⁴⁵ Elliott, *Ceremonies of the Liturgical Year*, 129, sec. 256.

²⁴⁶ Cf. *The Roman Missal*, The Easter Vigil, no. 7.

the waiting for the Lord. Given the fact that the Vigil is the transition between the mystery of death and the mystery of the resurrection,²⁴⁷ it is upon the movement of silence that this transition is fully expressed.

The blessing of the New Fire in complete darkness²⁴⁸ opens the celebration of the Vigil in complete silence. In the prayer of *Lucernarium*, we pray that the Paschal celebration would inflame us with heavenly desires and to attain festivities of unending splendour.²⁴⁹ It is in such silence that the liturgy aims to express a liturgical meaning in which the new fire kindling in darkness symbolizes the act of creation.²⁵⁰ Therefore, the blessing of the New Fire not only expresses a longing for God in silence but also, as Cardinal Sarah sees, a profound silence of Easter grace.²⁵¹ Upon this silence comes the Paschal candle which symbolizes the glory of the resurrected Christ.²⁵² When the Paschal candle is lighted, the movement of silence in the solemn procession dramatically contrasts with the solemn threefold proclamation of the *Lumen Christi*. Slowly advancing to the altar, the silent procession of the Paschal candle expresses a transition from the darkness of the world to God's light. There was an ancient tradition in Rome where the celebration of the Easter Vigil was to be flooded with light.²⁵³ It is not difficult to see how the early Church assimilated the symbolic idea of Christ the light into the liturgical celebration. Modern Roman liturgy, however, continues with the tradition handed down, when the Paschal candle arrives at the ambo, the whole church is covered by candle lights in silent stillness.²⁵⁴

²⁴⁷ Dalmais, Jounel, and Martimort, *The Liturgy and Time*, 38.

²⁴⁸ Elliott, *Ceremonies of the Liturgical Year*, 131, no. 260.

²⁴⁹ Cf. *The Roman Missal*, The Blessing of the Fire, The Easter Vigil, no. 10.

²⁵⁰ Nocent, *The Liturgical Year: Lent, the Sacred Paschal Triduum, Easter Time*, 2:293.

²⁵¹ Sarah, Diat, and Miller, *The Power of Silence*, 106, no. 205.

²⁵² Nocent, *The Liturgical Year: Lent, the Sacred Paschal Triduum, Easter Time*, 2:294.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 2:288.

²⁵⁴ Elliott, *Ceremonies of the Liturgical Year*, 138, no. 278–79.

Silence also has a place in the solemn proclamation of the *Exsultet*. While it is proclaimed, the whole Church silently listens to the fundamental Easter message: the redemption through the Paschal Mystery.²⁵⁵ The function of silence, which is at the beginning of the Easter Vigil, gradually introduces the joy of Easter into the celebration. With the return of the *Gloria*, the magnificent organ, the ringing of bells and the solemn *Alleluia*, silence completes the beginning of the Vigil liturgy by leading the Church into the splendid joy of Eastertide.

The movement of silence within the Paschal Triduum signifies a transition from darkness to joy, from death to life. Cardinal Sarah regards the silence on Holy Saturday as the “most luminous sign of never-ending hope.”²⁵⁶ The silence which completes the liturgy eventually transforms into an ultimate hope for the eternal-time to come, at the same time it reveals a *liturgical-time-reality*, that is to say, the glorious ‘hour’ of God as revealed in the Paschal Mystery. Silence, in such a way as we have seen in its movement throughout the Paschal Triduum, is a real “plunge to the mystery.”²⁵⁷

²⁵⁵ Richter, *The Meaning of the Sacramental Symbols*, 116.

²⁵⁶ Sarah, Diat, and Miller, *The Power of Silence*, 108, no. 207.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 136, no. 259.

SUMMARY

The presentation of the theology of silence concludes with a disposition on the theological value of silence in the Paschal Triduum. Silence is indeed an internal movement in the Roman liturgy. Its theological value encompasses more than mere religious sentiment. Silence has a profound theological foundation which lies in Holy Scriptures. It is the highest means of communication with the divine. It signifies a heart-to-heart encounter with God.²⁵⁸ Silence surpasses the history of salvation and receives a sacramental character in the Mystery of Christ. It connects the horizons of human heart and language in need of a continuing quest for mystery.²⁵⁹ Silence is also a sacramental language, which opens us to entering into God's time, his glory.

The Paschal Mystery, which constitutes the fundamental meaning of Christian worship, contains an inner movement of silence. Silence is, theologically speaking, a sacramental sign. Seeing silence in such a way enables us to cultivate a proper spirit of worship which is authentically Christian. Silence is thus intimately integrated into the liturgy. As Cardinal Sarah acknowledges, "the quality of our silence is the measure of the quality of our active participation."²⁶⁰

In light of the theology of silence, the research of this paper will proceed to a practical area. The last section of this paper explores the relationship between silence and the liturgical principle of *active participation*. In order to offer a paradigm in retrieving the sense of the sacred through the

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 95, no. 177.

²⁵⁹ Power, *Sacrament*, 74.

²⁶⁰ Sarah, Diat, and Miller, *The Power of Silence*, 131, no. 251.

cultivation of the sense of silence in our liturgical experience, the last two chapters explore the theological value of silence as a pastoral concern.

PART III: RETRIEVING THE SENSE OF THE SACRED

CHAPTER 7 LITURGICAL SILENCE IN MODERN ROMAN LITURGY

Having seen a critique on modern liturgical practice (Part I) and a systematic disposition on the theology of liturgical silence (Part II), I will be presenting in the final part of this book, a theological paradigm of silence. That is to say, a practical treatment is proposed based upon a well-examined liturgical context and an investigation on a theology of liturgical silence.

This chapter justifies that liturgical silence is a marker of the two liturgical principles received from the Second Vatican Council: *active participation* and *ars Celebrandi*. Both are liturgical principles that shaped the modern Roman liturgy. The reason for doing this is to justify the liturgical value of Sacred silence in the light of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. Pointing to the fact that liturgical silence is by no means to be excluded in modern Roman liturgy, the following discussion aims at presenting sacred silence as the very positive means towards a fruitful celebration. The discussion first argues that silence is a marker of *active participation*, then to further examine *how* liturgical silence fosters active participation by looking at its theological implication which lies behind our common liturgical experience: the Eucharistic celebration. Finally, a conclusion is presented with a discussion on liturgical silence and *ars celebrandi*.

7.1 SILENCE AS A MARKER OF ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

It is very much the wish of the Church that all the faithful should be led to take full, conscious, and active part in liturgical celebration which is demanded by the nature of the liturgy.

(*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 14)

Being a leitmotif throughout the whole document, the interpretation of *active participation* has been widely discussed since the promulgation of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*.²⁶¹ Such notion, however, did not appear to the Council Fathers from nothing. Back to the time of Pope Pius X, the very expression has been introduced to describe a true Christian spirit in worship.²⁶² Later in *Divini Cultus*, Pope Pius XI employed the same expression with a hope to foster congregational singing in the liturgy.²⁶³ This very idea of active participation was then taken up by the Fathers in the Second Vatican Council with the hope to formulate an ideal manner of celebrating the liturgy as a real communal celebration.²⁶⁴

It is clear that the subject directed to active participation, as according to the Constitution, is the entire body of the faithful, who by reason of their baptism, summons to participate in the liturgy as the priestly people of God.²⁶⁵ Thus, it is clear at the first place that the expression is used in the

²⁶¹ Jeremy Driscoll, OSB, "Sacrosanctum Concilium," in *The Reception of Vatican II*, ed. Matthew L. Lamb and Matthew Levering (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 31.

²⁶² Pope Pius X, *Tra Le Sollecitudini*, Motu Proprio, November 22, 1903.

²⁶³ Pope Pius XI, *Divini Cultus*, Apostolic Constitution, December 20, 1928, Sec. 9.

²⁶⁴ Reiner Kaczynski, "Toward the Reform of the Liturgy," *History of Vatican II*, ed. Giuseppe Alberigo and Joseph A. Komonchak, vol. 3 (Maryknoll, NY: Leuven: Orbis; Peeters, 1995), 232.

²⁶⁵ Josef A. Jungmann, "General Principles for the Restoration and Promotion of the Sacred Liturgy," *Commentary On The Documents Of Vatican II*, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler, trans. Lalit Adolphus, Kevin Smyth, and Richard Strachan, vol. 1 (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1989), 17.

Constitution to suggest *full, conscious and active* participation.²⁶⁶ Actually, active participation has an intrinsic connection to Christian identity in relation to baptism.²⁶⁷ The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains the word “liturgy” as the People of God participating in “the work of God.”²⁶⁸ However, speaking on the meaning of active participation, Ratzinger sharply points out a common error in understanding participation as something external, merely a visible, engaged action.²⁶⁹ Aidan Nichols, O.P. formulates a critique on practical liturgy by discussing the outcome of over-maximizing active participation by overlooking the first and foremost work of transcendental grace in the liturgy.²⁷⁰ In fact, the Constitution reminds us that participation in the liturgy should be both internal and external.²⁷¹ Like many of the scholars, Mattheeuws observes the inwardness in participation as a principal element.²⁷² Thus, the following discussion will try to situate silence as a form of both inward and outward liturgical action which marks a *full, conscious and active participation*.

Since active participation is at the very heart of the Constitution, it is crucial here to situate a definition for this leitmotif prior to the discussion which follows. In this case, I would like to employ the definition suggested by Bernard Capelle, a Belgian Benedictine and one of the pioneers of the

²⁶⁶ SC, sec. 13.

²⁶⁷ Jeremy Driscoll, OSB, “Sacrosanctum Concilium,” 32. It is the nature of the liturgy itself which demands active participation of the faithful by reason of their baptism. I will come back to this point when I discuss participation through silence in Eucharistic celebration.

²⁶⁸ Catholic Church, *Catechism of the Catholic Church: With Modifications from the Editio Typica* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), no. 1069.

²⁶⁹ Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 171.

²⁷⁰ Aidan Nichols, *Looking at the Liturgy: A Critical View of Its Contemporary Form* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996), 54–56. Here Nichols is concerning both the liturgy and sociology. By situating practical liturgy as a form of rite which favours the outward dynamics of actions and its immediate intelligibility, Nichols regards this kind of ‘liberal’ liturgy has dismantled the entire sacred superstructure of rites.

²⁷¹ SC, sec. 19.

²⁷² Gino Mattheeuws, “The ‘ars Celebrandi’ of the Liturgical Congregation: Some Forgotten Dimensions,” *Questions liturgiques* (1971) 83, no. 2–3 (January 1, 2002): 69.

liturgical movements, from whom Driscoll's discussion draws upon. According to Capelle, active participation is "a presence sustained by an intention."²⁷³ The interpretation of this definition suggested by Driscoll is totally in line with the subject of this paper. According to him, the word 'presence' points to "personal engagement."²⁷⁴ And the word 'intention' carries both exterior and interior dimensions.²⁷⁵ Both of the two aspects are perfectly in line with the liturgical character of silence, hence, they require deeper exploration.

Speaking of engagement, it is important to remember that liturgical silence is in itself contemplative. It is a silence of adoration by a person who "stands in the presence of God."²⁷⁶ It also signifies the participant who actively and willingly present oneself through silence in the liturgy, where God's Words are proclaimed, and his grace bestowed through sacramental signs. Liturgical silence, so to speak, is a means through which "the faithful come to it [the liturgy] with *proper dispositions*, that their minds should be attuned to their voices."²⁷⁷ Participation in silence, in this sense, means to present oneself with one's *whole being* in an active availability that opens the self to be engaged with the Mystery. In such a way, silence in the liturgy sustains a kind of presence upon which sacramental encounter occurs. Then we shall say, active silence points to active engagement, consciously presenting oneself as an active participant in every liturgical celebration.

Liturgical silence also refers to a reciprocal dynamism which consists of both the outer atmosphere (silence perceived) and the inner spirit.

²⁷³ Jeremy Driscoll, OSB, "Sacrosanctum Concilium," 31.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Sarah, Diat, and Miller, *The Power of Silence*, 69, no. 116.

²⁷⁷ SC., sec. 11.

As a matter of fact, they foster each other. Quoting from Flanagan, Nichols agrees that “active, outward participation is to be evaluated according to the degree to which it generates inner appropriation, interior assent.”²⁷⁸ This is how silence works in the liturgy. An outward, sensible silence cannot exist without an interior assent to the mystery. Certainly, outward silence does not merely manifest an inner spirit of worship but also indicates an active and full *conscious intention*, which sustains the inner spirit by being a marker of active participation.

Silence has something to do with interiority. It requires, nevertheless, a certain knowledge of what the liturgy is about, its very nature. In this case, Ratzinger maintains the notion that liturgical silence is “a silence with content.”²⁷⁹ The Emeritus Pope points to a *silence* which is not ‘made’, but a positive stillness which is a response to the mystery.²⁸⁰ The word ‘mystery’ here well explains both ‘positive stillness’ and the reciprocal dynamism of silence I am referring to. If we take ‘stillness’ as the effect of the revealing power of the sacred, when it becomes ‘positive’, silence also becomes an *intention*. As a form of a response, silence sustains the inner self in the face of the mystery by holding back words and actions. Again, as Cardinal Sarah describes, “before the divine mystery, we are at a loss of words.”²⁸¹ In such a way, silence becomes a non-verbal means of participation, an integrated structure of both internal and external worship, which is, by all means, active and fully conscious.

²⁷⁸ Nichols, *Looking at the Liturgy*, 65.

²⁷⁹ Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 209.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁸¹ Sarah, Diat, and Miller, *The Power of Silence*, 120, no. 277.

7.2 PARTICIPATION MARKED BY SILENCE IN THE EUCHARIST

To develop active participation, the people should be encouraged to take part by means of acclamation, responses, psalms, antiphons, hymns, as well as by actions, gestures and body attitudes. And at a proper time a *reverent silence* should be observed.

(*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 30)

Given the fact that liturgical silence, by all means, fosters *active participation*, then it is by no means to be excluded in the celebration of the Eucharist. The prescription of silence in the 1969 Missal directs to certain moments in which a *reverent silence* should be observed.²⁸² I would like to look into a few of those prescribed moments of silence to illustrate its theological value and to see how silence works to foster active participation.

In modern liturgical practice, silence is always forgotten in the liturgy of the Word. The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* reminds us that the function of silence during the liturgy of the Word is to favour meditation.²⁸³ Along with the theological investigation of liturgical silence I conducted earlier, it is all the way clear that liturgical silence is contemplative. It serves as an active response to the divine presence. Therefore, it is in the Readings and especially in the homily that God speaks to his people.²⁸⁴ Nevertheless, a short period of silence between the Readings and

²⁸² *GIRM*, 45. Sacred silence also, as part of the celebration, is to be observed at the designated times. Its nature, however, depends on the moment when it occurs in the different parts of the celebration. For in the Penitential Act and again after the invitation to pray, individuals recollect themselves; whereas after a reading or after the Homily, all meditate briefly on what they have heard; then after Communion, they praise God in their hearts and pray to him.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 56.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 55; SC, sec. 33.

after the homily is far more than merely artificial liturgical action, it rather carries deep implications which express not only an intention to participate in the celebration of the Word but also a moment of encounter with the divine Word himself. We keep silence “so as to listen to him.”²⁸⁵ Regarding the homily, Ratzinger emphasises a general rule that it should conclude with an encouragement to prayer,²⁸⁶ which would provide the content for a short pause. Cardinal Sarah further points out the liturgical significance of silence after the homily by stating how it connects with the Eucharist:

It becomes a genuine prescription addressed to the faithful for the Eucharistic Prayer, when the people, for their part, should associate themselves with the priest in faith and in silence.²⁸⁷

Silence in the Eucharistic celebration is always a “directed silence.”²⁸⁸ Ratzinger has some beautiful descriptions on the silence possibly observed during the Preparation of the Gifts. He regards it to be “an essentially interior process.”²⁸⁹ There is a moment of silence which is not just an external action performed by the priest with the people waiting for it to be done, but rather, an inward silence which “corresponds to what is going on outwardly.”²⁹⁰ Such silence nourishes the people by forming a consciousness which identifies the people themselves as the *gift* being offered, which is, as Ratzinger insists, “the real gift” through sharing in “Jesus Christ’s act of self-offering to the Father.”²⁹¹ Thus, silence during the Preparation of the

²⁸⁵ Sarah, Diat, and Miller, *The Power of Silence*, 135, no. 258.

²⁸⁶ Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 210.

²⁸⁷ Sarah, Diat, and Miller, *The Power of Silence*, 138, no. 262.

²⁸⁸ Mattheeuws, “The ‘ars Celebrandi’ of the Liturgical Congregation,” 134.

²⁸⁹ Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 210.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 211.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 210–11.

Gifts is a non-verbal act of participation which reveals an active intention of the inner spirit disposing itself outwardly through silence. Silence, therefore, becomes a transition to the sacred. The Preparation of the Gifts truly is a prelude to the great Eucharistic Prayer that follows.²⁹²

The structure of the Eucharistic Prayer itself demands a certain moment of silence at a certain point. For instance, the silence during the Consecration at the elevation of the consecrated species. Ratzinger describes it as a “silent gaze *from within*.”²⁹³ The Consecration, Ratzinger explains, is a “the moment of God’s great *actio*,”²⁹⁴ which demands the people to draw their eyes and hearts on it. In other words, it implies a moment of silence which consists of both inner and outer expressions of gratitude and adoration. This is indeed one of the high points in the Eucharistic Prayer as the Lord himself declares: “when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all people to myself” (John 12:32). This silence is so deep to the extent that it touches the whole being of every faithful, directing them into the very dynamic of Christ’s self-giving. This is a moment of silence which recalls the solidarity of Christ, both on the Cross and in the tomb. With this silent gaze at the consecrated species, the faithful recognise their participation in Christ’s sacrifice on Calvary. In such a way, the silent gaze upon the consecrated species is truly a moment which transforms us *from within*. Again, this specific moment of silence is, as Cardinal Sarah frames it, “the only human and Christian reaction to God when he breaks into our lives.”²⁹⁵ Furthermore, in this very moment, a shared silence also formulates a communal

²⁹² Michael Witzak, “The Sacramentary of Paul VI,” in *Handbook for Liturgical Studies: The Eucharist*, ed. Anscar J Chupungco, vol. 3 (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 2004), 152.

²⁹³ Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 211.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 212.

²⁹⁵ Sarah, Diat, and Miller, *The Power of Silence*, 121, no. 231.

silence, a bond to the whole community in union with its head.²⁹⁶ It is in such a way that the Consecration itself provides the content of this sacred silence. At the same time it marks a *full, conscious* and *active participation* of the entire people of God and in his work of redemption.²⁹⁷ In this sense silence itself is fully a ritual.²⁹⁸

We should now consider the silence after Communion, which is, by all means, an interior conversation with the Lord. It is a moment which not only marks the intimacy of communion but also reveals the fruitfulness of the whole Eucharistic celebration, without which the external reception of the Sacrament becomes “mere ritual.”²⁹⁹ This is the mystical moment of silence where the Lord visibly disappeared from our gaze and dwells within us in the inmost depth of our being. The silence after Communion is the Church’s Emmaus experience, “when they recognised him, he vanished from their sight” (Luke 24:31). The man, Jesus, becomes the silent, incarnate word of God.³⁰⁰ The silence after Communion marks the mystery of the Eucharist with both interior and exterior forms of participation. It is a real liturgical event which summons us to the greater mystery by surpassing all words.³⁰¹ Silence, therefore is a *proper disposition* in the liturgy.³⁰² Again, as Cardinal Sarah says, “the quality of our silence is the measure of the quality of our active participation.”³⁰³

²⁹⁶ Mattheeuws, “The ‘ars Celebrandi’ of the Liturgical Congregation,” 134.

²⁹⁷ Cf. SC, sec. 5.

²⁹⁸ Sarah, Diat, and Miller, *The Power of Silence*, 130, no. 250.

²⁹⁹ Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 210.

³⁰⁰ Sarah, Diat, and Miller, *The Power of Silence*, 198.

³⁰¹ Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 209.

³⁰² Cf. SC, sec. 11.

³⁰³ Sarah, Diat, and Miller, *The Power of Silence*, 131, no. 251.

7.3 LITURGICAL SILENCE AND ARS CELEBRANDI

The primary way to foster the participation of the People of God in the sacred rite is the proper celebration of the rite itself. The *ars celebrandi* is the best way to ensure their *actuosa participatio*.

(Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 38)

Another fruitful contribution of the *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and the liturgy received after the Council is the attention given to the art of celebrating the liturgy, namely the *ars Celebrandi*. Like active participation, the newly encountered liturgical vocabulary has undergone discussions not less than the former.

It is widely accepted that modern Catholic liturgy, as deeply influenced by a strong sense of liturgical inculturation and practical concerns, has often neglected the aesthetic dimension of celebrating the liturgy. Modern technology, however, elevates the challenge to a beautifully celebrated liturgy to another level.³⁰⁴ Cardinal Sarah reminds us that the modern world is dominated by a dictatorship of speech, which promotes itself with devastating speed and volume therefore resulting in a world full of senseless noise.³⁰⁵ As a consequence, beauty has also lost its place along with silence. A similar issue has occurred in modern Catholic liturgy. When *Sacrosanctum Concilium* aims at promoting a communal celebration marked by *no-ble simplicity*,³⁰⁶ its reception has often fallen into simple-ness rather than

³⁰⁴ As far as I mentioned in the first part of this paper, modern technology often disturbs the beauty of celebration in terms of sacred architecture and digital mediated worship eventually results a compressed liturgical experience.

³⁰⁵ Sarah, Diat, and Miller, *The Power of Silence*, 56, no. 74.

³⁰⁶ Cf. SC, sec. 34.

simplicity with the sense of *noble-ness*. An extremely progressive attitude is taken up by some labelled as ‘liberals’. As Nichols observes, the ‘liberals’ who propose practical liturgy confers a democratic quality to the rites by oversimplifying liturgical symbols and actions. They dismantled the sense of sacred within the rites.³⁰⁷ Some who earned a label of ‘traditionalist’ today represents the extreme opposite of the other side. They disagree on an over-pastoralized liturgy to the extent that they tend to restore some liturgical practices from the pre-Vatican II liturgy, arguing that sacred realities were destroyed by a liturgy which is too much transparent.³⁰⁸ This book, however, does not have the intention to favour either side, rather, it has the intention to point out the loss of the sense of *sacred*. Therefore, I propose a positive vision enlightened by liturgical silence, out of the tension that exists between the two sides. This will lead us to see how the principle of *active participation* will comply with *ars Celebrandi* towards a fruitful liturgical celebration, and to demonstrate the very foundation of rediscovering the sense of the sacred in modern Catholic liturgy.

To open the discussion on *ars Celebrandi*, I would like to apply the idea given by Archbishop Malcolm Ranjith. In his address delivered at the Gateway Liturgical Conference in St. Louis on November 2008, he refers to the art of celebration as “in relation to skills and disposition of celebrating liturgy well and in such a way that it would become in itself an art, an

³⁰⁷ Nichols, *Looking at the Liturgy*, 54–56.

³⁰⁸ Peter A. Kwasniewski and Martin Mosebach, *Noble Beauty, Transcendent Holiness: Why the Modern Age Needs the Mass of Ages* (Kettering, OH: Angelico Press, 2017), 96. The author quotes from Ronald Knox. Original text: “I first began to consider this because the sacred realities being lived out at Mass are, by their very nature, incomprehensible. The only way to even begin to bring a semblance of understanding of these realities to Catholic people is through symbols in the liturgy. So when one begins to remove signs and symbols and figurative language, the ability of the liturgy to speak of itself is reduced... In a sense, the Extraordinary Form is clearer because it is less clear, and the Ordinary Form is less clear because it is more transparent.”

experience of beauty in a rather aesthetic sense.”³⁰⁹ In other words, *ars Celebrandi* may possibly refer to a fruitful celebration of the sacred mystery through a sense of beauty. If that is so, we need to first consider what constitutes the aesthetic sense of the liturgy, and how it fosters active participation of the people of God in liturgical celebration. The Archbishop continues to explain:

Ars Celebrandi at its roots is, as we saw, not so much a matter of a series of actions put together in a harmonious unity as much as a deeply interior communion with Christ—the art of conforming to Christ, the High Priest, and His sacrificial and *salvific actio*.³¹⁰

Perhaps the Archbishop might surprise some of the readers by not explaining liturgical aesthetic through the application of rubrics or liturgical laws, but he is correct. If we see the ordained ministry alone as the subject of *ars Celebrandi* then we are totally missing the entire point. Mattheeuws sharply points out that “*ars Celebrandi* cannot be narrowed down to the *ars praesidentis*.”³¹¹ It implies the fact that the congregation also has a role to achieve a beautifully celebrated liturgy. In this case, the Archbishop’s comment remains true that liturgical actions should create a sense of unity and interior communion with Christ if the liturgy is considered to be an art. I therefore argue that the art of celebration cannot exclude the active participation of the people.

³⁰⁹ Malcolm Ranjith, “Gateway Liturgical Conference Address: Toward an *Ars Celebrandi* in Liturgy,” *Adoremus Bulletin* 15, no. 1, March 15, 2009, accessed March 25, 2020, <https://adoremus.org/2009/03/toward-an-ars-celebrandi-in-liturgy/>.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹¹ Mattheeuws, “The ‘*ars Celebrandi*’ of the Liturgical Congregation,” 128.

Back to the question of what constitutes the aesthetic sense of the liturgy, the Archbishop has already explained this when he mentions the *art of conforming to Christ*. The aesthetic dimension of the liturgy lies in the fruitful communal celebration, the *actio* of God where we share in the priesthood of Christ through baptism. In this sense, the liturgy is beautiful because it is specifically Christian. Coming together to praise God in the midst of the Church, the faithful, who are made children of God through baptism are called “to take part in the sacrifice and the eat the Lord’s supper.”³¹² Fully aware of their own dignity, the people of God participate, are fully engaged in the rite and are enriched by it.³¹³ Nevertheless, in a good liturgy, as Mattheeuws maintains, the congregation is the subject of the liturgical action, not simply a passive spectator.³¹⁴ In other words, it is through active participation that the art is also celebrated since there is a harmonious unity among the celebrating subjects. That is to say, a harmonious communion springs out from a united spirit embodied in liturgical actions in which the whole community, with different ministers, clergy and lay, take their part as a whole. Hence, we can say that the beauty of celebrating the liturgy underlies active participation intended by both the ministers and the congregation fulfilling each of their pertained role in liturgical celebration.³¹⁵

The liturgy is beautiful also because it unfolds mystery. Liturgy is very familiar with art, as Mattheeuws declares, “both in art and liturgy man wants to give expression to things that cannot be said.”³¹⁶ Since the liturgy is a radiant expression of the Paschal mystery,³¹⁷ the beauty of the liturgy also

³¹² Cf. *C.S.* sec. 10.

³¹³ *Ibid.*, sec. 11.

³¹⁴ Mattheeuws, “The ‘ars Celebrandi’ of the Liturgical Congregation,” 132.

³¹⁵ Cf. *SC*, sec. 28.

³¹⁶ Mattheeuws, “The ‘ars Celebrandi’ of the Liturgical Congregation,” 132.

³¹⁷ Catholic Church, and Benedict XVI. *Sacramentum Caritatis: Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation* (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2007), sec. 35.

lies upon a skilful expression of the sense of the sacred. It follows that, under a skilful mastery of liturgical silence, a true sense of liturgical aesthetic is revealed. “Art is the fruit of silence,”³¹⁸ Cardinal Sarah does not hesitate to explain, “silence is more important than any other human work, because it expresses God.”³¹⁹ The beauty of celebrating the liturgy, therefore, prescribes a good sense of silence, which expresses itself as a medium where “heaven and earth touch each other, where one can tune into the Mystery that carries us.”³²⁰ Indeed, silence carries us to the mystery of Christ.

The liturgy is also beautiful because it expresses love, a mystery which is best expressed in silence. We must not forget that all liturgical activities of the Church celebrate the love of God. In the liturgy we enter into God’s time and his great silence. This great silence, as Cardinal Sarah reminds us, is “a silence of love, trust and active abandonment.”³²¹ Participation in Christ’s silence on the cross is a sign of Christian faith actively engaging in the Divine love by means of being the image and likeness of it. When Thomas Dubay tries to describe the mystical experience of St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross, he expresses the union with God as “oneness of likeness” and “of likeness of love.”³²² When we look upon the cross, we see Christ’s infinite love for us.³²³ Gazing at the cross in silence is an *exchange of look* with God. In silence, Cardinal Sarah says, “we look at God and let him look at us.”³²⁴ This is what happens when silence becomes a sign of love: it signifies the mutuality of will between joint persons. In this

³¹⁸ Sarah, Diat, and Miller, *The Power of Silence*, 34, no. 24.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 54, no. 68.

³²⁰ Mattheeuws, “The ‘ars Celebrandi’ of the Liturgical Congregation,” 133.

³²¹ Sarah, Diat, and Miller, *The Power of Silence*, 152, no. 291.

³²² Thomas Dubay, *Fire Within: St. Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross, and the Gospel, on Prayer* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 176.

³²³ Sarah, Diat, and Miller, *The Power of Silence*, 159, no. 312.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, 203.

case, as Dubay expresses, “the human will is brought into growing conformity with the divine will.”³²⁵ Therefore we shall say, the more we dwell into silence, the more we become the image and likeness of God. Hence, silence becomes the greatest human freedom,³²⁶ an extraordinary simplicity. Liturgical silence, then, is a mutual action between God and his people. It is simple, because it expresses God’s freedom. It is noble, because it unfolds the sacred mystery which honours God’s glory and the sanctification of God’s own people. It is also beautiful, because in such a way it fosters a fruitful liturgical celebration.

To sum up the discussion of the aesthetic sense in the liturgy, I would like to borrow an expression from Peter Kreeft, that Christ is the Divine art.³²⁷ The same applies to the liturgy which celebrates the redemptive work of God. Christ himself is the example of the union between God and humanity *par excellence*. Christ is the *door*, through which we not only enter into Christ himself who is the perfect model of a worshiper of the Father, but also into the infinite love of the Father. Therefore, marking itself with noble silence, the celebration of the mystery of Christ is in itself an art. The art of celebration, hence, is also marked by the active participation of the entire people in the liturgy and indeed the sense of silence therein.

³²⁵ Dubay, *Fire Within*, 176.

³²⁶ Sarah, Diat, and Miller, *The Power of Silence*, 35, no. 25.

³²⁷ Peter Kreeft, *Doors in the Walls of the World: Signs of Transcendence in the Human Story* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2018), 117–19.

SUMMARY

Both active participation and *ars Celebrandi* are two prominent liturgical principles in modern Roman liturgy as received from *Sacro-sanctum Concilium*. Sacred silence, however, is by all means one of the proposals suggested by the council to enrich modern liturgical experience.³²⁸ As in itself fully a ritual,³²⁹ liturgical silence has a profound theological content which demands the entire people of God to experience in the liturgy. Silence is not something we make, but is our very act of responding to the perfect work of God's love in the mystery of Christ which the Church celebrates in every liturgy. As the marker of both active participation and *ars Celebrandi*, sacred silence reveals the fullness of divine worship in the reconciliation achieved in Christ.³³⁰ Sacred silence presents the people of God before the celebrated mystery with noble simplicity.

Facing the crisis of losing the sense of sacred in modern liturgical practice, it is of vital importance to recover silence. No matter how transparent and intelligible it may be in transforming our liturgical experience, modern technology can never replace the sacred role of silence in the liturgy. Rather, technology, as advanced as it is, should help us dwell into sacred silence in a more decent and noble way. The mastery of advanced technology ought to be human art in the service of the Divine art. In this case, it must create room for silence to enhance our liturgical experience.

³²⁸ Cf. Sarah, Diat, and Miller, *The Power of Silence*, 131, no. 251.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, 130, no. 250.

³³⁰ Cf. SC, sec. 5.

As a liturgical minister, I am fully aware of my mission to cultivate silence in the liturgy. In the final chapter, I am going to discuss the intimate relationship between silence and sacred music in its practical aspect, so that the path to retrieving the sense of sacred through liturgical silence may become concrete and persuasive.

CHAPTER 8

SILENCE AND LITURGICAL CHANT

In order to clear the path towards retrieving the sense of the sacred, this last chapter presents, in a deeper manner, the theological value of silence in liturgical music. In the first chapter of this paper, I formulated a critique on the decline of traditional sacred music in modern Roman liturgy, pointing out theological questions between traditional sacred music and the widely used vernacular religious hymns. I then concluded that the loss of the sense of silence by abandoning traditional sacred music is at the same time a loss of the sense of the sacred in modern Roman liturgy. However, this last chapter concludes the whole research by offering a discussion on the possibility of retrieving the sense of the sacred by cultivating the sense of silence in liturgical music. Hence, the theology of liturgical silence, which this book has intended to investigate, is not only presented as a theological discourse but also as one that carries a practical suggestion in reality, which is, the way to a proper spirit to celebrate the liturgy.

The discussion of liturgical chant in this chapter will be done in two phases. In the first phase, I define the subject matter of this chapter: an elaboration on the meaning and theology of liturgical chant. In the second phase, I present the theological value of silence in liturgical chanting. Practical examples will be taken up for a clearer presentation.

8.1 LITURGICAL CHANT: MEANING AND THEOLOGY

The discussion will commence by situating the definition of ‘liturgical chant’.³³¹ Music has a ministerial function in the liturgy, Irwin clearly states that music at liturgy is meant to support the text of the liturgy.³³² Dom Mark Kirby suggests that liturgical chant reveals their full meaning only within their proper ritual context.³³³ Therefore, it is clear in the first place that liturgical music has an intrinsic value in the liturgy itself. It is different from any other type of music in that it exists solely for the liturgy. The *Sacrosanctum Concilium* dedicated one chapter under the title ‘Sacred Music’. However, if we read the chapter carefully, we may find that the Constitution actually speaks of three types of sacred music.³³⁴ In section 116, the Constitution mentions Gregorian Chant, which the Church recognizes as music native to the Roman liturgy.³³⁵ Later on, it also mentions Polyphony³³⁶ and Religious singing.³³⁷ Therefore, it is necessary to distinguish the character of each of these three kinds of music absorbed in modern Roman liturgy, so that our subject matter, which is liturgical chant, with silence as its theological value, is clearly identified.

³³¹ The specific term ‘Liturgical Chant’ is not of my own creation. I borrowed it straight from Dom Mark Daniel Kirby, O.S.B., who published an article titled “Toward a Definition of Liturgical Chant” in *Sacred Music* in 2009. See Mark Daniel Kirby, “Toward a Definition of Liturgical Chant,” *Sacred Music* 136, no. 2 (Summer 2009): 5–39.

³³² Kevin W. Irwin, *Context and Text: Method in Liturgical Theology* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1994), 236.

³³³ Kirby, “Toward a Definition of Liturgical Chant,” 10.

³³⁴ In a talk entitled “Sacrosanctum Concilium on Sacred Music” St. Wilfrid’s on 2014, Dom Cassian Folsom, O.S.B. presents the historical context of the three kinds of sacred chants by giving reference to some prominent magisterial documents on Sacred music, i.e. *Tra le sollecitudini* in 1903 by Pope Pius X, *Musicae Sacrae* in 1967 by Pope Pius XII. Cf. Dom Cassian Folsom OSB, “Sacrosanctum Concilium on Sacred Music” (Video Recording, St. Wilfrid’s, York, UK, May 2014), accessed March 25, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W01ES11Sr9M>.

³³⁵ Cf. SC, sec. 116.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, sec. 117.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, sec. 118.

First of all, liturgical chant has a purely liturgical function. Its value has to be found only in liturgical actions.³³⁸ In the Constitution, when it renders religious singing,³³⁹ it refers to religious chants in the mother tongue and to hymns in particular.³⁴⁰ Historically, the entry of the use of hymns in Roman liturgy became the major part of the contemporary liturgical experience as seen in the incorporation of the ‘four-hymn’ structure in Eucharistic liturgy nowadays.³⁴¹ However, these hymns, according to Kirby, had their origin outside of the liturgy, and therefore can be sung independently outside the liturgy. Their compositions are *devotional* in nature and rarely are their words and inspiration borrowed from the liturgy itself.³⁴² On the contrary, liturgical chant effectively refers to the words of liturgical rites. For instance, the *Sanctus* is a liturgical chant. It is essentially liturgical by nature. The text itself forms a necessary part of the liturgy.³⁴³ As Kirby notices, “the origin of the melody is found in the word.”³⁴⁴ According to Ratzinger, it is a basic law in liturgical music that it is at all times word-oriented.³⁴⁵ It becomes clearer when he explains that “Liturgical music is a result of the claim and the dynamic of the Word’s incarnation.”³⁴⁶ Liturgical chant, being the sung voice of the Church, constitutes liturgical action: an act of worship which carries the inner bestowal of grace and salvation credited to the Paschal mystery which the liturgy celebrates. In such a way it fulfils the purpose

³³⁸ Kirby, “Toward a Definition of Liturgical Chant,” 12. “Liturgical chant cannot stand independently of the total liturgical action without its meaning becoming obscured.”

³³⁹ Cf. SC, sec. 118.

³⁴⁰ Jungmann, “General Principles for the Restoration and Promotion of the Sacred Liturgy,” 1:79.

³⁴¹ Irwin, *Context and Text*, 237.

³⁴² Kirby, “Toward a Definition of Liturgical Chant,” 10.

³⁴³ The theological importance of the *Sanctus*, according to Jungmann, is more than to recall the hymn of the seraphim, rather, it serves to reveal the earthly church taking part in the heavenly singing. See Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite*, 2:128. The text of the *Sanctus*, therefore, not only provides the context of liturgical action, but also in itself a liturgical action.

³⁴⁴ Kirby, “Toward a Definition of Liturgical Chant,” 12. Kirby quoting from Marie Pierik.

³⁴⁵ Pope Benedict XVI, *A New Song for the Lord*, 152.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 153.

of sacred music: the glory of God and the sanctification of the people.³⁴⁷ In other words, liturgical chant has in itself a *sacramental character* which constitutes the living reality of Christian worship and the liturgical reality that is drawn by the Lord on the cross and his resurrection. Through chanting the text of the rite, the Church takes part in the Paschal mystery as an embodiment of the rite and in such a way she becomes the incarnated Word of God. Liturgical chant, therefore, belongs to a spiritualization by way of an embodiment of the Word.³⁴⁸ In this sense, liturgical chant has a purely liturgical function. As such, it is distinct from religious singing.

Polyphonic music, which flourished between 1200—1500, not only represents one of the high points in the development of Western music history but also of the progressive musical shaping of the Roman liturgy. William Mahrt sees the interpolation of polyphonic music into Roman liturgy as an organic outgrowth of already existing practices.³⁴⁹ A musical form which serves as an elaboration of Gregorian chant.³⁵⁰ The use of counterpoint aims at providing a harmonic context not only to the chants which already existed but also to shape and to form further the progress of sacred action in the liturgy.³⁵¹ As the traditional art *par excellence* of the Western Church, William Mahrt holds, liturgical music belongs to a “delight in the splendor of order, of a principle of order embodied in a concrete thing.”³⁵² Therefore, polyphonic music also refers to the word-embodiment of liturgical rites to

³⁴⁷ Cf. SC, sec. 112.

³⁴⁸ Pope Benedict XVI, *A New Song for the Lord*, 154.

³⁴⁹ William Peter Mahrt, *The Musical Shape of the Liturgy* (Richmond, VA: Church Music Association of America, 2012), 18.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 19.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 18.

³⁵² *Ibid.*, 91.

the Word, from whom “they flow and to whom they return.”³⁵³ Polyphonic music, in this sense, also belongs to liturgical chant.

Gregorian chant, which is a form of music native to the Roman liturgy,³⁵⁴ is brought to us solely through liturgical action. Dom Saulnier frames it as the sacred chant which developed and grew *with* Eucharistic celebration and dresses itself like a garment.³⁵⁵ By adapting itself to various ministers in the liturgy, Gregorian chant is intimately bonded to the liturgy of the Roman Church.³⁵⁶ Furthermore, it is the ideal musical setting of the liturgical text, says William Mahrt, for it shows a “distinctly different manner of setting the text to its specific liturgical purpose”³⁵⁷ Take the example of the melodic pattern for the three kinds of lessons: three different cadences are assigned to the tunes for each readings in order to indicate their liturgical character.³⁵⁸ There is a *fall cadence* for the Prophecy; a *Latin cadence*, which carries a rhetoric effect for the Epistles; and a *rise cadence* to indicate the privilege of the Gospel as the culmination of the sequence of the lessons.³⁵⁹ These specific cadences reveal the liturgical function of Gregorian chant by relating it to specific liturgical texts. Moreover, Gregorian chant is fundamentally *recitativo*, which allows the text to be projected clearly in a natural speech rhythm.³⁶⁰ That is to say, Gregorian chant is a

³⁵³ Kirby, “Toward a Definition of Liturgical Chant,” 12.

³⁵⁴ The three general principles of Sacred music, *Holy, True art, and Universality*, as indicated by Pope Pius X in *Tra Le Sollecitudini* are taken for granted when I express Gregorian chant is native to Roman liturgy.

³⁵⁵ Daniel Saulnier, *Gregorian Chant: A Guide*, trans. Edward E Schaefer (Richmond, VA: Church Music Association of America, 2010), 20.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 24–27. Saulnier explains various Gregorian repertoire assigned to three types of ministers in the liturgy: the ordained priest, the people and the *Schola cantorum*. Repertoire assigned to each group of the liturgical body has specific musical characteristic and requires different standards on musical skills, in order to signify the liturgical of each group.

³⁵⁷ Mahrt, *The Musical Shape of the Liturgy*, 118.

³⁵⁸ The Three Lessons correspond to the three readings in the Liturgy of the Word in modern Roman rite (the *Novus ordo*).

³⁵⁹ For details analysis, see Mahrt, *The Musical Shape of the Liturgy*, 120–21.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 120.

perfectly heightened discourse.³⁶¹ Gregorian chant, therefore, also carries the principle of word-orientation, which essentially belongs to liturgical chant.

To sum up, liturgical chant is, first of all, a liturgical action. Its meaning is to be found only in a liturgical context. It possesses the quality of constituting the integrity of the act of worship.³⁶² Secondly, it is word-oriented, the vehicle of the Word³⁶³—a *sung theology* which celebrates and actualizes the Paschal mystery of Christ.³⁶⁴ Lastly, it signifies a spiritual embodiment of the rite. With these definitions, a deeper look into the theological value of silence in liturgical chant is ready to commence.

8.2 THE THEOLOGICAL VALUE OF SILENCE IN LITURGICAL CHANT

Considering that liturgical chant is an integral part in the act of worship,³⁶⁵ together with the sacramentality of silence as proposed earlier, I therefore declare that silence is essential to liturgical chant. Silence, as Mahrt describes, is “the privation of sound, a negative” and “also something very positive, especially for music.”³⁶⁶ In a general sense, music emerges out of silence and returns to silence.³⁶⁷ A good performer can never start to perform a piece of music without observing a brief silence for preparation. A moment of silence is perceived as a sign that the music is finished. This dynamic also remains true to liturgical chant. As Mahrt observes, a perceived

³⁶¹ Kirby, “Toward a Definition of Liturgical Chant,” 14.

³⁶² Irwin, *Context and Text*, 219.

³⁶³ Kirby, “Toward a Definition of Liturgical Chant,” 12.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

³⁶⁵ Cf. Irwin, *Context and Text*, 219.

³⁶⁶ Mahrt William, “Silence,” *Sacred Music* 143, no. 1 (Spring 2016): 3.

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

silence in liturgical chanting allows us to integrate what has just been heard to create room for reflection.³⁶⁸ However, as I mentioned earlier, silence in the liturgy is always a directed silence, which Ratzinger refers to as “a silence with content.”³⁶⁹ Therefore, we should look deeper into the theological value of silence in liturgical chant, so that this directed silence would not become a void liturgical experience.

Silence in liturgical chant reveals the consciousness of creature-ness, it formulates a presence before the Sacred. Music is an analogical art,³⁷⁰ so is liturgical chanting. Physically speaking, apart from the act of delivering words in a melodic form, singing contains the movement of breathing which allows air to flow in and out of the human body. Silence reveals this very movement of life through the act of breathing. In liturgical chanting, silence not only signifies the breathing of the body but also of the spirit. Cardinal Sarah says, “silence allows the soul to breathe.”³⁷¹ Speaking about breathing, Kirby describes beautifully that “by breathing and by speaking, the human person, fully alive, expresses likeness to God.”³⁷² An analogical view of breathing leads us back to the creation of human beings:

Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and *breathed* into his nostrils the *breath of life*, and the man became a *living being*. (Gen 2:7, *NRSV*)

Kirby points out the indissociable relationship between the breath of God and the word of God, and their effect on constituting “the divine economy

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

³⁶⁹ Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 209.

³⁷⁰ Kirby, “Toward a Definition of Liturgical Chant,” 14.

³⁷¹ Sarah, Diat, and Miller, *The Power of Silence*, 129, no. 248.

³⁷² Kirby, “Toward a Definition of Liturgical Chant,” 15.

of creation and redemption.”³⁷³ To put it concretely, in liturgical chanting, it is the soul which absorbs the liturgical text as if it is the breath of God entering into the body. Analogically explained by the creation account, the body then receives the word of God and becomes a living instrument of worship. Strictly speaking, the breathing involved in liturgical chanting has a profound theological implication which reveals our image and likeness of God. Therefore, as a liturgical act, the silence of breathing presents us as a living being in the act of chanting. As the prophecy proclaims “*vivens vivens ipse confitebitur tibi sicut et ego hodie*” (Isa 38: 19a, *Vulgate*).³⁷⁴ Furthermore, the perceived silence, which is the result of breathing within the act of chanting, not only signifies the embodiment of the word in musical form but also carries a sacramental character in the soul where we identify ourselves as the receiver of grace and the object of God’s redemption.

Secondly, silence in liturgical chanting is in itself a process of interiorization. The midway interval of silence in liturgical chant fosters contemplative prayer.³⁷⁵ Apart from embodiment, silence also signifies a process of interiorization of the liturgical text in the act of chanting. As Mahrt suggests, “our most intimate experience of God is pre-eminently interior.”³⁷⁶ Take the example of the Gregorian psalm tones, the restfulness created by the *asterisk* in the middle of the verses allows the meaning of the words to penetrate the heart. Kirby describes this kind of repose specific to the Psalmody as “a gentle and rhythmic regularity,”³⁷⁷ which creates a noble

³⁷³ Ibid.

³⁷⁴ *NRSV*: The living, the living, they thank you, as I do this day.

³⁷⁵ Dom Mark Daniel Kirby, OSB, “The Psalmody of the Divine Office: A Path to Holiness for the Apostolic Religious,” *Sacred Music* 138, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 9.

³⁷⁶ William, “Silence,” 5.

³⁷⁷ Dom Mark Daniel Kirby, OSB, “The Psalmody of the Divine Office: A Path to Holiness for the Apostolic Religious,” 9.

silence, a quiet union with the heart of Jesus.³⁷⁸ It represents a movement of the Word from the outside to the inside. Liturgical chant, theologically speaking, contains such kind of interiorization of the Word when it germinates within itself a sense of silence which points to the secret of the heart.³⁷⁹ In this sense, the silence in liturgical chanting is not simply ‘made’, but rather ‘creative’. It becomes the still voice which transforms a person from within. Ratzinger describes it as “a positive stillness that will restore us.”³⁸⁰ Let us recall that liturgical silence is always contemplative. In liturgical chant, silence reveals the creative power of the divine Word in the depths of the soul. It is in the level of the soul that the art of music becomes the *art of God*, as it is precisely in the soul that God’s creative idea is translated into visible and audible form.³⁸¹ This is also the reason why liturgical chant is always sung in a regular and steady pace. The text which is being chanted carries an inner rhythm in the soul through which the person is allowed to dwell into the mystery. Silence, strictly speaking, is precisely this inner rhythm. Liturgical chant is then “the inner exodus which liturgy always seeks to be and to become.”³⁸² Christian liturgical chant, as Kirby concludes, “begins in the hidden part.”³⁸³

Thirdly, silence in liturgical chanting reveals the constant renewal of the spirit of worship. Silence in liturgical chant fosters the sense of transcendence, upon which comes the communion and friendship with God. One of the theological characteristics of liturgical chant, as suggested by Kirby, is “to accommodate the word from God, the word *to* God and the word *about*

³⁷⁸ Ibid.

³⁷⁹ Kirby, “Toward a Definition of Liturgical Chant,” 16.

³⁸⁰ Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 209.

³⁸¹ Pope Benedict XVI, *A New Song for the Lord*, 134.

³⁸² Ibid., 154.

³⁸³ Kirby, “Toward a Definition of Liturgical Chant,” 16.

God.”³⁸⁴ Given that silence in liturgical chant creates a presence before the mystery and its process of interiorization, silence in liturgical chanting is the marker of a constant communion and of friendship with God as it expresses the transcendence by its distinctive liturgical character. In this case, silence in Gregorian chant is the example *par excellence* of expressing the transcendental character of liturgical chant. According to the study of Mahrt, Gregorian chant distinguishes itself by its free rhythm which suggests “the transcendence of earthly temporal patterns.”³⁸⁵ Under the mission of this specific liturgical purpose, the adaptation of the liturgical text presents itself in distinctly different musical characters,³⁸⁶ in order to formulate a unique musical experience which is subject solely to liturgical worship. Separating it from other musical experiences would enhance its sacredness. Silence in Gregorian chant, therefore, is a recollection of eternity.³⁸⁷ Ratzinger expresses beautifully saying that silence in Gregorian chant signifies the integration of human beings in the *sursum corda* (‘Lift up your hearts’), in which liturgical chanting becomes the framework of the purification of human beings, their ascent to God.³⁸⁸ Silence, therefore, signifies our entry into divine communion and hence into our adorable friendship with God.

Last but not least, silence in liturgical chanting also creates a kind of ‘reminiscence’,³⁸⁹ in other words, a memory. One of the aspects of silence which cannot be excluded in this study is the value of *listening*. Listening, as

³⁸⁴ Ibid., 21.

³⁸⁵ William, “Silence,” 6. “But music can also express the transcendence of temporal order. The temporal order is expressed by regular metric construction, but Gregorian chant by not being limited to a strict metric construction, imitates eternity; by its free rhythm it suggests the transcendence of earthly temporal patterns.”

³⁸⁶ Mahrt observes four distinguishing musical character which is unique to Gregorian chant: 1) recitative; 2) syllabic; 3) neumatic and 4) melismatic. For details analysis, see Mahrt, *The Musical Shape of the Liturgy*, 118–29.

³⁸⁷ William, “Silence,” 6.

³⁸⁸ Pope Benedict XVI, *A New Song for the Lord*, 157.

³⁸⁹ William, “Silence,” 4.

Mahrt explains, is aided by memory.³⁹⁰ It recalls and renews our experience of beauty. The beauty not only refers to the music itself but also to the level of the soul. Mahrt describes it as an “activation of something that belongs to us.”³⁹¹ That is to say, *listening* in liturgical chant recalls and renews our encounter of the mystery. In this sense, listening and hearing contribute to a very active process.³⁹² Cardinal Sarah also states, “great music is listened to in silence.”³⁹³ Given that one of the characters of liturgical chant is the repetition of repertoire in every liturgical celebration and throughout the cycle of the Liturgical year, the experience of silence in liturgical chanting creates the possibility to constitute a *memory of faith*, or a memory of conversion. Take the example of the *Exsultet*, which is a fixed liturgical chant we hear once a year during the Paschal Vigil. Listening to the *Exsultet* in silence in a specific moment signifies a renewal of the spirit of worship evoked by the specific intonation that comes with the chanting itself. As Kirby clearly states, “the first few notes of the *Exsultet* intoned at the Paschal Vigil suffice to evoke the glory of the Paschal mystery in the heart of the hearers.”³⁹⁴ Its theological significance, as Kirby goes on to explain, is “a contemplated context of the liturgical experience continues to contextualize and re-contextualize in an ever-deepening perception.”³⁹⁵ This perception of silence which constitutes a form of memory carries us ever anew to the Paschal Mystery celebrated by liturgical chanting. Silence in liturgical chant, in this sense, reveals itself as a true form of mystagogy.³⁹⁶

³⁹⁰ Mahrt, *The Musical Shape of the Liturgy*, 385.

³⁹¹ Ibid.

³⁹² Ibid.

³⁹³ Sarah, Diat, and Miller, *The Power of Silence*, 34, no. 24.

³⁹⁴ Kirby, “Toward a Definition of Liturgical Chant,” 21.

³⁹⁵ Ibid., 21–22.

³⁹⁶ Sarah, Diat, and Miller, *The Power of Silence*, 127, no. 243.

SUMMARY

We have seen that liturgical chant as a liturgical action, together with the sense of silence it generates, possess anthropological and theological foundation.³⁹⁷ They are, we shall say, intrinsically connected to the liturgy. In fact, a fruitful celebration with effective liturgical chanting is a sign where the liturgy is correctly understood and lived.³⁹⁸ It becomes truly a foretaste of the heavenly liturgy when the unspoken and unspeakable word of God becomes songs to sing. When the proper sense of silence is understood, there will be no room for ‘external actionism’, rather, silence becomes the marker of liturgical togetherness. As Ratzinger describes:

In this togetherness the present congregation can never simply be the subject; rather, it must be understood as an assembly that is open upwards and open synchronically and diachronically into the wide expense of God’s history.³⁹⁹

The sense of silence, as we have seen, displays the path to the Sacred, and constitutes the continuity of faith in salvation history.

Silence in liturgical chanting is truly a liturgical paradigm, a stairway to sacredness. Understanding silence with a profound sense of beauty, silence in liturgical chanting is thoroughly compatible with *full, conscious, and active participation*. It is the sense of beauty that constitutes the very meaning of liturgical chant. It identifies itself when silence fosters presence, interiority, and communality within the theological act of liturgical chanting.

³⁹⁷ Pope Benedict XVI, *A New Song for the Lord*, 142.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 174.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 177.

Nevertheless, it is also important to note that liturgical chanting is a hierarchical participation⁴⁰⁰ which carries an ecclesial dimension. Each participant, as Mahrt explains, whether priest, choir or congregation plays a proper part in liturgical chanting.⁴⁰¹ This formulates a sense of union which signifies the people of God as the mystical body of Christ enjoined in the priestly office of Jesus Christ, the Head, to perform the whole public worship in the liturgy.⁴⁰² Therefore, silence in liturgical chanting points to full awareness and active engagement of the priestly people of God who celebrate the liturgy with proper dispositions.⁴⁰³ Silence in liturgical chanting, being both internal (interiority) and external (perceived silence), which engages itself in liturgical action, truly fulfils the divine purpose of the sacred liturgy: the glory of God and the sanctification of the faithful.⁴⁰⁴

Lastly, we must conclude that without silence, a profound sense of the sacred in liturgical celebration will definitely be lost.

⁴⁰⁰ Mahrt William, "Active Participation and Listening to Gregorian Chant," *Sacred Music* 138, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 21.

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰² Cf. SC., sec. 7.

⁴⁰³ *Ibid.*, sec. 11.

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, sec. 112.

CHAPTER 9 CONCLUSION

“It is time to rediscover silence!”⁴⁰⁵ Silence is at stake in our time. Silence is one of the dimensions of liturgy that is often forgotten.⁴⁰⁶ Modern liturgical practice tends to resolve pastoral concerns to the extent that the proper sense of beauty in liturgical celebrations has always been neglected. However, as this book tries to justify, the issue of losing the sense of silence and hence the sense of the sacred is intrinsically connected to a proper sense of liturgical spirit. A beautifully celebrated liturgy, indeed, is the true remedy to most of the pastoral challenges. Technology has to be skillfully applied to foster a sense of silence. It should never destroy the harmonious architecture of liturgical space. In fact, silence belongs to a fundamental structure of liturgical space. Sacred music is a vital issue and has to be handled with specific care and attention. Liturgical music is more than art, for it expresses the faith of the Church. It carries a transcendental character when it is taken up as an act of worship. Silence provides the possible conditions to generate the sense of the sacred in liturgical chanting. Let us rediscover the sense of silence by paying attention to the beauty and noble-ness during every liturgical celebration so that the sense of the sacred will draw us constantly to God in a world filled with senseless noise and spiritual challenges.

“Silence is a form of mystagogy.”⁴⁰⁷ In order to listen to God, we must learn to be silent. God does not always speak, but his voice is clearly heard in silence. Silence takes us into the inner temple within us where in absolute solitude we discover God accompanying us. Silence initiates us into

⁴⁰⁵ Sarah, Diat, and Miller, *The Power of Silence*, 126, no. 241.

⁴⁰⁶ Mattheeuws, “The ‘ars Celebrandi’ of the Liturgical Congregation,” 133.

⁴⁰⁷ Sarah, Diat, and Miller, *The Power of Silence*, 127, no. 241.

the mystery of Christ. It connects us with Him by allowing us to participate in his Paschal mystery. Silence teaches us to be true disciples who desire to stay and listen earnestly to the Lord. Liturgical silence is a sign that sustains us in the face of mystery. It allows us to look at God and to let God look back at us. In a more mysterious way, it lets God restore us to a right relationship with him. Silence also carries a sacramental character that transforms us. Silence in the liturgy is authentically Christian.

“The quality of our silence is the measure of the quality of our active participation.”⁴⁰⁸ Silence, by all means, fosters active participation. How can we participate in the liturgy without a pause from our daily routine? Liturgical time is the encounter with the sacred. The liturgy is an extraordinary thing, but “what is extraordinary is always silence.”⁴⁰⁹ In order to present ourselves before the sacred, we must learn to observe the rhythm of silence. Indeed, silence is always the inner rhythm of the sacred liturgy. The celestial liturgy from the heavenly realm is revealed to us in wordless silence. How can we have a foretaste of the heavenly banquet of the Paschal Lamb if we are not able to immerse ourselves to the inner rhythm of silence in the liturgy?

Liturgical silence, after all, is a sign of communion. It is an interior harmony. It is not ‘made’, but created and echoes the silent love of God. Liturgical silence is a silence with content,⁴¹⁰ a content which delivers God’s love. Liturgical silence, so to speak, is a loving communion with God.

Silence, the real inner event of the liturgy, is truly the path toward the sacred.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid., 131, no. 251.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid., 34, no. 23.

⁴¹⁰ Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 209.

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