

Transcending Text: Liturgy as Medium of Evangelisation 50 years after Vatican II

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Introduction

In 1939 on the eve of the outbreak of World War II, a bright 24-year-old newly-ordained Australian priest left Rome to travel back to his native Queensland after the completion of his doctoral studies. On his journey home, he stopped off in the USA to visit an isolated Benedictine monastery where he reacquainted himself with a monk who changed the course of his life. The young priest was none other than Guilford Young and the monk was the eminent Benedictine liturgist and leading light of the American Liturgical Movement, Fr. Godfrey Diekmann,¹ whom Young had met during his time in Rome. Young's brief visit to St. John's Abbey at Collegeville, Minnesota, reignited his interest in the work of the Liturgical Movement which eventually led to friendships with other eminent liturgists of the day such as Fred McManus, Clifford Howell, Percy Jones and others 'of a small band who...were known as the "liturbugs";² and who worked assiduously to promote the Liturgical Movement in their respective English-speaking contexts.

In his heyday, Archbishop Sir Guilford Young was a force to be reckoned with: a tireless and brilliant campaigner for the reform of the liturgy, the founding Vice President of the International Commission on English in the Liturgy, one of the 42

¹ Edmund Campion, *Australian Catholics* (Ringwood VIC: Penguin, 1988), 210.

² 'Archbishop Young Probes Decree on Liturgy,' *The Standard* (December 27, 1963): 8.



bishops appointed by Pope Paul VI to the Consilium charged with implementing Vatican II's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, a member of the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship (from 1984) and a Knight of the British Empire for service to the church of Tasmania (1978). Dr Young was the youngest ever Australian bishop, consecrated at the age of 31. He became Archbishop of Hobart at only 38 and held that post for the next 34 years, from September 20, 1955 until his death on March 16, 1988. This long life of leadership and service left an extraordinary legacy, particularly in terms of the liturgy. In February 1988, Fr. Godfrey Diekmann wrote a final letter to his good friend Guilford Young in which he says:

You...have been a Lumen [light], a true and bright reflection of the Lumen who is Christ, Lumen for its enlightenment of countless Fideles [members of the faithful], through your work at the Council and in the Preparatory Commission, and Lumen that also gives warmth to your own priests and people of Hobart... One of my boasts through the year has been that I played a part in your 'conversion' to the liturgy.³

The importance of the liturgical contribution Archbishop Young made both to the Australian and world scene in the years immediately following Vatican II is a topic which has been largely overlooked in Australian Catholic history. This paper will begin to redress this oversight and draw forth some of the still-pertinent liturgical insights of one of Australia's true liturgical pioneers.

Part I: Contextualising Vatican II's liturgical reform in Australia

For a number of years now in the English-speaking Roman Catholic tradition, liturgists have focused a lot of time and attention on coming to terms with the new translation of the Roman Missal. Sometimes we can forget, as we drill down into the textual analysis, pastoral challenges and ecclesial ramifications of implementing the 2010 translation of the Roman Missal that we are experiencing simply the most recent in a long history of liturgical changes undertaken by the church. In 1965, Archbishop Guilford Young wrote:

³ Letter of Fr. Godfrey Diekmann, OSB to Archbishop Guilford Young, quoted in Monsignor Philip R. Green's homily at the Mass of Christian Burial for Archbishop Young, reprinted as: 'An Age of Greatness has Passed,' *The New Standard* (April 1988): 2.

We know that the Church is not perfect and that it must always be subject to reform and change.... it is good that we have been able to see changes taking place frequently in the Mass, which as the centre of the Liturgy is the heart of Catholic life.... So the annoying alterations in the liturgy have helped build into our consciousness of the Faith the great theological principle: *'Ecclesia semper reformanda'* – 'The Church is always in need of reform.' For me as a priest the new liturgy is still difficult... Difficult as the new liturgy may have been for the congregation, it has placed far heavier burdens on the priests.⁴

Young's 1965 summation of the theological principle of ecclesial change and the practical difficulties it can engender for priests and people might well have been written in response to today's circumstances as we continue to adjust to the new translation of the Mass.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Archbishop Guilford Young worked to advance the aim of the Liturgical Movement, namely, 'to restore as fully as possible the expressiveness and sanctifying power of the liturgy and to bring the faithful back to full participation and understanding.'⁵ Young was in good company in his efforts to make this aim a reality. The Archbishop of Milan, Giovanni Cardinal Montini wrote in April 1959⁶ that the liturgy 'is like the central artery to which other streams of private and popular prayer lead and from which others flow for the personal spiritual life.' Montini emphasised the 'stupendous formative capacity' of the liturgy for instructing children and adults, calling it 'dogma in the form of prayer.'⁷ He stated that 'the liturgy is not an action of the priests alone, but also of the faithful, in the forms of participation proper to them,' so that those 'who are lead to this participation will be educated gradually to understand the liturgy and make it their own.'⁸

Montini's 1959 call to encourage lay participation in the liturgy was echoed across the world and was put into practice in the 'liturgical workshop of Australia,'⁹ the Archdiocese of Hobart. By 1960, Archbishop Guilford Young had ensured that 'every Mass in the archdiocese featured the active participation of the laity,'¹⁰ which included all Masses being prayed in dialogue form; laymen reading the Epistle and Gospel; suitable hymns and psalms being sung; and offertory processions 'in which (usually) a man and a woman from the congregation bring the bread and wine to the altar.'¹¹ Historian Edmund Campion explains that 'More than by words from the pulpit,

⁴ Archbishop Guilford Young, 'English is merely the first step,' *The Standard* (September 17, 1965): 7.

⁵ Annibale Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy 1948-1979*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1990), 6.

⁶ Cardinal Montini, 'The Liturgy is Vital to All Catholics Today,' *The Catholic Leader* (April 2, 1959): 8-9.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ 'Hobart is leading the way,' *The Standard* (February 19, 1965): 3.

¹⁰ Campion, 210.

¹¹ 'Archbishop Young Probes Decree on Liturgy,' *The Standard* (December, 27, 1963): 8.

Tasmanians discovered what it was all about by actually doing it. Each Sunday they learnt a new part of the Mass, even though it was in Latin. Mass hymns were set for the whole diocese, thus ensuring homogeneity.¹²

The extent of Archbishop Young's preparation of his people for the reform of the liturgy meant that when Vatican II's changes to the liturgy began to filter through in 1964, he was able to say to his people:

Fortunately, many elements will not be novel and disturbing to you because you have kept pace during recent years with the wishes and directives of the Holy See for the full, conscious and active participation of the people in the Mass.

You are already aware of the distribution of roles in the community's act of worship. You have become accustomed to doing your part and to looking upon your priests as the president of your assembly leading you in the active worship of God. You are completely familiar with the postures – the standing, kneeling, sitting – which the bishops have now laid down for Australia: they are those that you have been following for the past four years.¹³

At the same time that the people of Tasmania began moving without any great difficulty into the new world of the Vatican II liturgy, Giovanni Cardinal Montini of Milan was moving into his challenging new role as Pope Paul VI. As pope, he maintained his great support for and promotion of the liturgical reform he now had ultimate responsibility for implementing, and encouraged priests 'to do everything possible to educate the people to take an active part.'¹⁴ Paul VI candidly told a weekly general audience in April 1965, that they should not assume

...they will be allowed to return to the 'quiet, devout and lazy practices of the past'. He said the new approach must be different and 'must work to banish the passivity of the faithful present at Holy Mass. Before it was enough to assist, now we must participate. Before one's presence was enough. Now attention and action are required. Before some were able to doze and perhaps talk. Now this is not so. One must listen and pray.'¹⁵

Guilford Young was one of the bishops who worked closely with Pope Paul VI to draw up a blueprint for liturgical change¹⁶ and shepherd the church's transition into the major reforms being undertaken.

¹² Ibid., 211.

¹³ 'Pastoral Letter by Archbishop Young on Liturgy Reform,' *The Standard* (June 19, 1964): 3.

¹⁴ 'Pope Emphasises Hymn Importance,' *The Catholic Leader* (February 25, 1965): 11.

¹⁵ 'Mass 'Passivity' Trend Deplored,' *The Catholic Leader* (April 8, 1965): 11.

¹⁶ 'Liturgy Changes Show Confidence,' *The Catholic Leader* (May 27, 1965): 5.

1.1 Renewing the liturgy means renewing the Church

For Archbishop Young, renewing the liturgy was central to the process of renewing the entire church. In 1966 he said: 'I am convinced that the renewal to which the Church in the Second Council of the Vatican directed her energies will hinge on whether the presence and power of Christ in the dynamic mystery of the liturgy is unlocked to the minds and hearts and lives of the Christian community....'¹⁷

A contemporary of Guilford Young's on the Consilium was German liturgist Johannes Wagner, who was put in charge of the revision of the Roman Missal.¹⁸ According to Wagner Vatican II broke new ground with its central belief that 'a general movement for renewal of the Church is *derived from the liturgy*, draws its strength from public worship and makes the renewal of this worship its main purpose.'¹⁹ *Sacrosanctum Concilium* #2 encapsulates this notion, stating that the liturgy 'is the outstanding means whereby the faithful may express in their lives and manifest to others the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church.' SC26 clarifies this by noting that 'liturgical services pertain to the whole body of the Church; they manifest it and have effects upon it.' Archbishop Guilford Young emphasised this point in 1965, writing that:

Slowly we are learning that Christ speaks to us through the Church and principally not by papal encyclicals or bishops' statements or 'what Father said,' but through the liturgy itself. It will take many years for the Word of God poured out by the liturgy to sink down and permeate our consciousness. It at least can happen now that the liturgy is in a language we can understand.²⁰

According to Johannes Wagner, the liturgy is the privileged medium via which the central realities of Christianity are encountered and experienced. Wagner specifies that 'when debating the schema on the liturgy the Council was already engaged on its theme *De Ecclesia*,²¹ and quotes Karl Rahner's view that 'in the liturgy the Church becomes an "event"', in the liturgy

...takes place the sacred *commercium* (exchange) of God with his chosen people: the Lord is in the midst of the gathering of those who are his own, and this gathering is holy precisely because he is in the midst of it. He gives himself to his own and they respond with thanksgiving and praise.²²

¹⁷ W.T. Southerwood, *The Wisdom of Guilford Young* (Georgetown TAS: Stella Maris, 1989), 344.

¹⁸ Piero Marini, *A Challenging Reform: Realizing the Vision of the Liturgical Renewal 1963-1975*, edited by Mark R. Francis, John R. Page and Keith F. Pecklers (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2007), 8.

¹⁹ Ibid. Emphasis mine.

²⁰ Archbishop Young, 'English is merely the first step,' *The Standard* (Friday September 17, 1965): 7.

²¹ Wagner, 4.

²² Wagner, 3. No reference is included for the Rahner quote in Wagner's Preface.

If we take this notion seriously, we cannot help but understand that celebrating the Eucharistic liturgy is central to the very nature of the Church, and hence it *must* play a central role in the process of evangelisation and certainly in any form of new evangelisation. This point will be expanded upon below.

1.2 Establishing a new standard for liturgical celebration

In his promotion of the liturgy of Vatican II, Guilford Young identified a number of key issues that needed focused attention, careful study and persistence in practice if the liturgy was to be celebrated well. In a 1966 article in *Concilium: An International Review of Theology*,²³ Young identified three major liturgical challenges facing the Roman Catholic Church in Australia:

1. No tradition of devotion to the bible
2. No commonly known heritage of hymns
3. No experience of good preaching in terms of content or style.

Further comments and writing of Archbishop Young in other sources reveal the following liturgical priorities that could also easily have been added to this list:

4. The need for clear liturgical language: Young said: ‘Where language is obscure, then the face of Christ is concealed.’²⁴
5. The need for good performance practice: Young said that the way the liturgy is done in actual performance is crucial: ‘If not done properly, the inner meaning of the parts and of the whole will not come across.’²⁵
6. The authority of local episcopal conferences to adapt the liturgy to suit local conditions: Young wrote in 1963: ‘Already the trend to break away from complete control by Rome is obvious. The decree empowers regional conferences of bishops to adapt the liturgy to suit local conditions. Rome will merely confirm their decisions.’²⁶
7. The importance of the role of laity in the liturgy: Young said ‘It is a fundamental Catholic belief that the hierarchy cannot move without the laity. The head cannot move without the body.’²⁷
8. The need for diocesan liturgical commissions: Hobart had a functioning Diocesan Liturgical Commission as early as 1964, and in 1966 Young formed a pastoral council to ‘advise the Archbishop on matters affecting diocesan policy and implementation

²³ As reported in Southerwood, 319.

²⁴ Southerwood, 428.

²⁵ Southerwood, 452.

²⁶ ‘Archbishop Young Probes Decree on Liturgy,’ *The Standard* (December 27, 1963): 8.

²⁷ Archbishop Young, ‘English is merely the first step,’ *The Standard* (September 17, 1965): 7.

of Vatican Council decrees.' Every effort was made to ensure that its membership was truly representative.²⁸

9. The ongoing need for liturgical education: in 1966 Young engaged in a year-long teaching tour of Tasmania, doing much of the teaching himself and training a tutorial group to 'take over the major task of preparing the people of this archdiocese for the full impact of the Vatican Council which will renew the life of the Church throughout the world.'²⁹
10. The importance of regular communication between bishop, priests and people: During his time as Archbishop, Young wrote numerous articles in *The Standard* and took great pains to communicate his knowledge and explanations openly to the people of his Archdiocese.

There is much more to be said about the significance of Archbishop Guilford Young and his contribution to the liturgical life of the church in Australia, but a glimpse into the world of the late 1950s and early 1960s when the last major liturgical change took place is sufficient before considering today's changing scene and contemplating what a pioneer such as Archbishop Young might make of the liturgical situation in which we find ourselves today. Gaining an understanding of the church in the world and in 'the Australia' of 50 years ago is essential, because only by understanding our liturgical history, can we understand our liturgical present and speculate in an informed fashion about our potential liturgical futures.

Part II: Transcending Text

Those of us who like to spend our time reading liturgical documents and charting liturgical trends in the church have looked on in distress at times at the violations of proper ecclesiastical process and the misuse of power that has accompanied the production and implementation of the 2010 translation of the Roman Missal. Pentecost 2011 (June 12) saw its official introduction into Australian Roman Catholic parishes, and over the succeeding 19 months, this translation has gradually, stiltedly, uncomfortably become our way of praying. For some of us getting used to this translation has entailed a significant adjustment of our familiar patterns of prayer which has brought on a concatenation of emotion drawing us through shock, denial, anger, pain, bargaining and depression and toward reluctant acceptance, acquiescence, submission and obedience (in most cases), though some still struggle and resist the changes. Knowledge that there is little choice but to accept this translation has led many who find it difficult or awkward, to a position of 'emotional detachment' from the words of the liturgy. In a recent article in *Worship*, George B. Wilson wrote:

²⁸ Southerwood, 210.

²⁹ Southerwood, 311.

The texts we pray...are sacramental in nature. They open us to the action of the One who is uncreated grace. But that offer of healing and renewal is effective only to the extent that we are spiritually disposed to receive it. The new Roman missal, like every other sacramental reality, must be judged on its efficacy at evoking in the community the desire to hear the voice of the Lord and respond to it with gratitude and commitment.³⁰

The new liturgical words are at times alienating and seemingly deliberately chosen to emphasise the dissimilarity and distance between ourselves and God. At times, these new words *are* poetic, comprehensible and beautiful, but not consistently so. We could reiterate the many critiques and complaints made about the new translation, or we could try again to highlight those of its revisions which are valuable and worthwhile, but it seems that both of these thought tracks are now well-worn and to rehearse them again would just become wearisome. So, given the reality of an officially mandated text with which we shall have to live for the next few decades, where do we go from here? Does our liturgical focus remain trained on textual dissatisfaction and discomfort in something we cannot change, or might we find other more productive ways to focus our liturgical attention?

2.1 Perceiving Liturgy as Text

With the introduction of the most recent English translation of the Roman Missal in the Catholic Church, much of the public (and a fair portion of the scholarly) discourse on liturgy appears to have reverted for a time, to perceiving and focusing on liturgy primarily as text. In fact, a methodological assumption about the nature of liturgy itself underlies the approach taken to translating the Missal of Paul VI as revised by Pope John Paul II in 2002. This assumption is that essentially, liturgy equates to text, and thus could be retranslated in isolation from and largely irrespective of its ritual and performative context. As only minimal rubrical revisions accompanied the new translation [in the form of minor tweaks to the General Instruction of the Roman Missal (2010)], and the majority of the ritual action has remained unchanged, a focus on text among the scholarly appraisals of the new translation is unsurprising. What is surprising, however, is the fact that in a fit of academic nostalgia, much of the liturgical commentary on the new translation thus far has tended to sideline many of the advances made in liturgical methodology over the last 30 years or so; instead reverting back to a prior era of liturgical studies when the methodologies of philology, textual, redaction and source criticism, and comparative liturgiology³¹ dominated. While there is still most assuredly a place for such approaches to liturgical study, these

³⁰ George B. Wilson, 'Forum: But How Will the Introduction of the New Roman Missal Be *Evaluated*?' *Worship* 86/6 (November 2012): 551.

³¹ The chief proponent of this methodology was Anton Baumstark. See his *Comparative Liturgy* (Belgium: Chevetogne 1940, English translation London: Westminster, 1958).

approaches are limited as they remain largely two-dimensional while the lived-reality of liturgy is gloriously three-dimensional, performed by actual people, located in real-time, concrete space and myriad cultural contexts.

A methodological focal reversion which perceives liturgy primarily as text has seen a generalised side-stepping of some of the more difficult questions pertaining to the revised translation of the liturgy that are raised by engaging a holistic methodological study of liturgy as enacted rite. Accessing and evaluating the experiential data of performed liturgy (as opposed to analysing text on a page) has always presented difficulties to liturgical scholarship, but this should not mean that such approaches should be sidelined in our efforts to comprehend and research how the new translation is being received, whether and to what extent it works in practice or not, and what level of revision is recommended in order to make this translation more capable of communicating effectively the word of God to the people of God and enabling their authentic ritual and lived responses. It could be argued that in reality the only way to access this sort of information is to engage those messy and time-consuming social scientific methodologies such as surveys, focus-groups, interviews and the multiple methods employed in ritual studies, which would require moving beyond the safety and closed environment of textual analysis and into the unpredictable and open fields of human research. The real challenge of utilising social scientific methods in liturgical studies is that they entail giving credence to and taking seriously the authentic lived experience and opinions of real people: priest-presiders and assembly members, clerical and lay, expert and novice. Formal assessment of the workability, comprehensibility and 'prayability' of the new translation of the Mass via the crucible of its enacted performance by specific assemblies of worshipers, predictably has yet to have occurred on any significant scale.

2.2 A question of methodology

It could be argued that a methodological focal reversion to textual analysis is one of the unfortunate consequences to have emerged from the decision to place the task of revising the translation of the liturgy of Paul VI primarily into the hands of those trained not in the specialist history, literature, methods and social scientific approaches utilised in contemporary liturgical studies, but rather into the hands of those trained more generally as Latinists, scripture scholars or systematic theologians. Theological expertise is understood in terms of a scholar's mastery of a particular body of literature and thought and their use of the methodologies developed for understanding, critiquing and applying that particular body of literature and thought. A lack of specifically *liturgical* methodological depth among the revisionists and translators responsible for producing the final text of the 2010 Roman Missal appears to have narrowed the understanding of liturgy to text and sidelined the integrally

related issues of performability, liturgical theology and practical concerns pertaining to the liturgy as enacted public prayer. Faced with the task of revising the translation of the Missal of Paul VI, it is not surprising that Latinists, scripture scholars and systematic theologians should revert to form, focusing on text (as their training has conditioned them to do) as a hermetically sealed two-dimensional entity which might make perfect sense in theory, but when enacted as performed ritual, as a living entity among existent diverse assemblies of worshipers, takes on vastly different dimensions and frequently fails in practice. This has been the experience of many of those trying to proclaim, receive and pray the overly long sentences, broken logic and convoluted attempts to maintain accuracy in translation at the expense of aural comprehension that are found frequently in this new translation.

2.3 Beyond the Text

So while the parameters of the discussion have been set thus far by those who understand and define liturgy primarily as text, I would suggest that it is time now for scholarly discourse on the new translation of the Mass to move beyond its myopic focus on text in isolation, and once again to take seriously the liturgy in its entirety as it is performed and prayed by real people, and not just in theory on the page.

As many as 26 years ago, Jewish liturgist Lawrence Hoffman pointed out in his book *Beyond the Text* that 'to study prayers as if they were inert literary specimens separable from the praying actors is not to comprehend their nature as prayers.'³² In this book, Hoffman defines liturgies as 'acted-out rituals involving prescribed texts, actions, timing, persons, and things, all coming together in a shared statement of communal identity by those who live with, through and by them.'³³ This is a good working definition of liturgy, and if we take seriously Hoffman's contention that liturgical scholars need to go beyond the text in order to comprehend liturgical prayer holistically, then alongside text and textual criticism we also need to engage in an extended and unemotional critique of the *enacted* meaning of the revised liturgy, taking a 360-degree view of it, transcending text alone in order to perceive the texts, actions, timing, persons, things, environment and sounds that *are* the liturgy in its entirety.

Vatican II called on the church to develop a liturgy that was clear, comprehensible, communal, culturally aware, engaging and unencumbered by useless repetitions, and while the text of the liturgy is central to enabling these aims, we need to ask whether 50 years on from the council we have come to rely on words too greatly in our liturgical celebrations, elevating them too far as the predominant vehicle of faith

³² Lawrence A. Hoffman, *Beyond the Text: A Holistic Approach to Liturgy* (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1987), 6-7.

³³ *Ibid.*, 3.

expression, while neglecting other vitally important facets of our rituals. Can we re-connect with the liturgy by transcending the text in order to reclaim and learn from some of the other modes of non-verbal participation utilised by Christians for centuries when the liturgy was prayed in a language most did not comprehend? Could a refocus on the other communication media of the liturgy help us today to re-engage ritually if the new texts of our liturgy fail to engage us?

PART III: THE POWER OF OTHER LITURGICAL MEDIA TO CONVEY PRESENCE AND COMMUNICATE THE FAITH

Vatican II's constitution on the sacred liturgy specifies that 'in the liturgy, by means of signs perceptible to the senses, human sanctification is signified and brought about in ways proper to each of these signs...' (SC7) In 1965, Archbishop Guilford Young explained that 'the Mass is a sacrament – something we should be able to see, hear, touch, taste, feel. It reveals God, not shrouds him.'³⁴ Both of these views offer encouragement to look beyond text alone when celebrating the liturgy.

For liturgical scholars, it is certainly not news to hear that good liturgy entails engaging all of the senses in our enactment of the ritual, and yet, how many times when liturgy is celebrated in parish contexts, do we really see an effort being made via good, carefully considered performance practice, to utilise all of the possibilities the liturgy offers to engage the senses and enable the rites done well to reveal the presence of God and communicate the faith? In general, alongside the significant work still to be done on the way in which the text of the liturgy is proclaimed and prayed, there is also room for much improvement in the performance practice of the non-textual aspects of the liturgy.

'Performance practice' is a term that comes from the field of musical performance, where techniques for performing specific musical genres from specific time periods are employed to facilitate accurate and authentic playing of that music. Examples of this would be the use of ornamentation in baroque music or the use of vibrato in some forms of jazz.³⁵ 'Performance practice' is a useful concept for us to consider in relation to the liturgy because it offers us a way of referring to the manner of celebrating the liturgy and to techniques that are implied, but not necessarily written down³⁶ or present in the rubrics. If our liturgical performance practice remains overly focused on the correct delivery of the text of the liturgy, and underplays the symbolic and ritual-action aspects of the liturgy or, even worse, utilises still further non-scripted words to explain the symbolic or ritual action (instead of just allowing the symbols and ritual actions to speak for themselves), we run the risk of robbing the ritual of its latent mystery or ambiguity and missing the opportunity to engage the religious ritual imaginations of our assemblies.

³⁴ Archbishop Young, 'English is merely the first step,' *The Standard* (Friday September 17, 1965): 7

³⁵ See: www.music.vt.edu/musicdictionary/textp/Performancepractice.html, accessed January 17, 2013.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

3.1 Shifting perceptions of 'presence'

In today's busy world, it may be the case that our perception of 'presence' and understanding of 'connection' are different from what they were 50 years ago. Today, technology has changed our sense of 'presence' with electronic media and especially social media providing an immediacy of connection anywhere at any time. With wifi and broadband, we are guaranteed immediacy of contact, instantaneousness of feedback/response/reaction, and with that, consequent expectations/preferences (particularly among younger generations) of non-stop entertainment, rapid shifts from one thing to the next. We have a different pace of speech, information access and processing; different rhythms of life (the 24-hour news cycle, late-night and weekend shopping, widespread shift-work, constant connection to the internet and friends/family through social media); we have different patterns of interaction/modes of connection than there were in the 1960s. As a consequence of this we also have a tendency toward impatience, a need for instant gratification, and an expectation of acknowledgment and reward for any effort exerted. In such a world, how is the presence of Christ to be recognised, experienced, communicated? A good place to start is by exploiting all of the communicative potential of the various media to which we have access in the liturgy, and doing all we can to make use of the liturgical sensorium.

3.2 Engaging the liturgical sensorium

If we are to engage all of the senses in liturgical celebration, we need to think about the liturgy in 360-degree terms. What does the assembly see, hear, taste, feel, and smell in the liturgy? Are those Powerpoint presentations we all seem to be addicted to really helping us to celebrate the liturgy better or are they hindering our celebrations in some ways? The human eye is drawn to movement and whatever moves in the liturgy attracts our eyes – so, if the Powerpoint slides are moving, that is where people's eyes are going to focus. If this communication medium is not used properly, we could inadvertently draw attention away from important liturgical action and toward unimportant Powerpoint slides. Are we going to permit the use of I-pads on the altar and in the pews as people begin to use e-missals rather than cumbersome books? What message is being conveyed by incorporating such technology into our ritual environments?

Are we engaging in aural bombardment of our assemblies with our use of the amplification systems in our churches? Is it too loud or squealing? Is it too soft? Do our liturgical presiders and ministers understand properly how to use the sound-system and microphones so that the presence of amplification is not noticeable rather than being an aural distraction to the assembly? I remember Fr. Michael Joncas saying

some years ago that we need to be aware that human beings do not have ear-flaps – we cannot just close our ears to sounds in the way that we can close our eyes to things we do not want to look at. Whenever someone has access to the amplification system during liturgy, for the assembly, there is no escaping from what that person says or sings into it. We need to ensure that the aural environment of liturgy is respected, and that only the very best and most worthwhile sounds are included and amplified.

Have we ever actually stopped to taste the bread and wine we serve in the liturgy? Do these really taste like the bread of heaven and the wine of salvation or do we simply just keep filling the order for the same stale bread and bland wine we have always used in the parish without stopping to consider that it is actually food for the tasting and wine for the drinking?

Do we use real flowers, real candles, real fire in our liturgies? Consider the use of fire in the liturgy celebrated to consecrate a new ritual space. During the rite of dedication a fire is lit on the altar. This is a particularly exciting moment in the liturgy because this is a rare act in our ritual vocabulary – generally, we do not intentionally set fire to the altar except in this rite, and this is a particularly powerful ritual action that awakens and arouses some of our most basic instincts. Fire evinces both fear and fascination in us and setting fire to the altar ought to make our heart-rates increase. We ought to be somewhat concerned that the living fire we bring into our ritual space might get out of control – this is something that cannot be simulated – genuine fire is essential for the ritual to evoke all of its inherent symbolic meanings. Using real symbolic elements fully and well in our liturgies should always be a priority in terms of good liturgical performance practice.

Another question to ask is: is the cheap and nasty incense really the best the parish can afford, or have we just not bothered to investigate the possibility of using good quality incense and thinking about changing it according to the liturgical season (why not consider using Frankincense during Christmas or Rose on Gaudete Sunday or Sage for cleansing during Lent?) Do our altar servers know how to light incense properly and use it appropriately in the ritual?³⁷ Our olfactory system has the capacity to convey a sense of presence, meaning and memory alongside all of our other senses, if only we stopped to think about how we can engage it fully.

When was the last time we considered the comfort of the chairs in which assemblies are required to spend so much of their time? Are the kneelers too close to the pews to be comfortable to kneel in? Are the pews too close together? Is the wood of the pews in need of sanding and repolishing so it that feels beautiful under the hands and knees? Are temporary plastic chairs really the best and most appropriate choice for our worship space?

³⁷ See: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VVF7rOGHzIY>.

Have we taken the time to look around at the space and environment in which we worship to see whether there is any coherence in the objects, decorations, vestments, art, lighting, windows, and positioning of persons in relation to ritual action and assembly, or is there visual dissonance in our ritual spaces that generates a sense of subconscious disquiet which pushes us to spend much of the liturgy with our eyes closed so that we are not visually assaulted by what we see? Have we stopped to consider and watch the way in which we make ritual gestures? Is there room for improvement in our gestural and postural embodiment of the liturgy? How does time operate in our liturgical celebrations? Do we take too long on some parts of the liturgy while giving short shrift to others? The point of all of these questions is clear.

If we put our efforts into cultivating excellent, meaningful, reverent performance-practice of the liturgy through beautiful, well-played, appropriately-chosen music; through thoughtful, rich and well-proclaimed homilies; through the full use of our rituals' symbolic potential rather than the minimum we can get away with, then the actual text we are praying becomes less of a focus, less the be-all and end-all of the celebration.

3.3 The Distraction Factor

Liturgy performed poorly can test even the stoutest faith largely because of what I term the 'distraction factor.' The distraction factor in liturgy operates similarly to the distraction which occurs when someone switches on their mobile phone in the cinema during a movie. When this happens, the light from the mobile phone screen draws attention away from the movie screen and suddenly the viewer is pulled out of the 'world' or 'atmosphere' of the movie and back into the reality of the movie theatre, losing momentarily their rapport with the 'world' of the movie they were enjoying before their attention was diverted by something that has no place a movie theatre. Similarly, when elements of liturgy are ill-prepared, stumbled over or poorly executed, one's attention can become drawn toward the person responsible for disrupting the ritual flow and away from the liturgical action. The problem with this type of distraction is that rather than just moving one from movie-world into reality, in the liturgy, one's attention is being drawn away from the paschal mystery unfolding anew in the liturgy and toward the mundane. If the 'distraction factor' in liturgy can test even the stoutest of faith, then what is it going to do to nascent faith, waning faith, and faith being questioned or tested?

An ongoing challenge for liturgists is to ensure the minimisation of distractions in the liturgy by knowing the church's teaching on how liturgy should be celebrated ideally, by thinking through what are the likely distractions and eliminating them as far as possible, and by ensuring that those who are chosen to serve in the various

roles of the liturgy are the most appropriate persons to undertake those roles, that they are properly trained and capable of understanding the responsibility with which they have been entrusted and that they undertake this service on behalf of the community with the primary purpose of facilitating the community's prayer to God.

If the liturgy is the medium via which we encounter God and the medium performed poorly becomes a means of distracting us from the message/encounter/relationship being built or reinforced or nurtured, then there is a problem in the manner in which the message is being received, a problem of reception, an interruption of smooth communication. It is important to minimise the 'distraction factor' as much as possible in the celebration of liturgy.

Part IV: The role of liturgy in the new evangelisation

That the liturgy is at the centre of what it is to be church is a notion that many contemporary Christians need to rediscover or in some cases, discover for the first time. The assumption that those who have been baptised have actually heard and accepted the faith can no longer be made. Research³⁸ demonstrates that a notable level of religious illiteracy, apathy and disinterest is prevalent among a majority of younger Christians, even those who have been educated in Christian schools. For many younger Christians, it is not necessarily that they have heard the message of Christ and actively turned away from it to embrace other consciously chosen religious paths, rather what is more likely, is that they have gradually drifted away from practicing their Christian faith in many cases because they have never been taught the message of Christ properly or fully, or they have not heard it preached in a way that makes sense to them and ignites and keeps burning the fire of faith in their young adult lives.

A challenge with younger generations is that by and large, they do not share the same mentality as middle-aged and older Christians regarding the necessity of attending liturgy on a regular basis, and if when they do attend liturgy, they find it boring, not well prepared, or not well performed, there is a strong likelihood that they will not return. A major generational difference also, is that in the main, they will not feel guilty about not returning. There is no shame attached to non-attendance at church among younger Christians today.

In the Australia of the 1950s and 1960s there was no question that to be a Christian meant that one would attend church regularly – this was both an ecclesial and a cultural expectation. Today, with weekly church attendance in the Roman Catholic

³⁸ See: Michael Mason, Ruth Webber, Andrew Singleton and Philip Hughes, "The Spirit of Generation Y: Young People's Spirituality in a Changing Australia." <http://dlibrary.acu.edu.au/research/ccls/sppub/sppub.htm>, last accessed January 20, 2013.

denomination down to 13.8%³⁹ of self-identified Catholics, clearly things have changed. Church attendance, participation in the liturgy, and taking one's place amidst the body of Christ gathered to worship God do not seem to hold the same meaning for many of today's Christians as they once did.

4.1 New evangelisation

Pope John Paul II introduced the notion of the 'new evangelisation'⁴⁰ when he recognised a need to reawaken the Christian faith in parts of the world which had been evangelised or converted to Christianity many centuries earlier (especially in Europe), and which were considered traditionally or culturally Christian. John Paul II explained that what was new about the new evangelisation was that it would be 'new in ardour, in method and expression.'⁴¹ Throughout his tenure as pope, John Paul II continued to explore and explain this notion of a new evangelisation⁴² and under the leadership of his successor, Pope Benedict XVI, the call to a new evangelisation has been taken up with a renewed vigour and urgency⁴³ as the rapidly changing contemporary world and its processes of secularisation have challenged the Roman Catholic tradition and the Christian approach to life in ways not seen before. In 2010, Benedict XVI outlined 5 specific aims for this new Pontifical Council,⁴⁴ but surprisingly among them there is no mention of the role to be played by liturgy in the process of new evangelisation. However, in October 2012 at the conclusion of the Synod of Bishops, Pope Benedict XVI spoke of the need for new evangelisation in the lives of 'the baptised whose lives do not reflect the demands of Baptism,' and said that the Church is particularly concerned 'that they should encounter Jesus Christ

³⁹ This data comes from The National Church Life Survey which reports that in 2006 13.8% of Catholics attended Mass on a weekly basis. http://www.ppo.catholic.org.au/pdf/SummaryReport_MassAttendanceInAustralia.pdf, last accessed October 24, 2011.

⁴⁰ Pope John Paul II's first extended discourse on this concept came in an address to the Latin American Bishops in Haiti in 1983. See: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/speeches/1983/march/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19830309_assemblea-celam_it.html, last accessed January 15, 2013.

⁴¹ John Paul II, Discourse to the XIX Assembly of C.E.L.A.M. (9 March 1983), 3: *L'Osservatore Romano*: Weekly Edition in English, 18 April 1983, p. 9: AAS 75 (1983) 778.

⁴² An extended expression of John Paul II's teaching on this matter can be found in his Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 'At the beginning of the third millennium,' on the occasion of the end of the Jubilee Year 2000, January 6, 2001. http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_20010106_novo-millennio-ineunte_en.html, last accessed January 15, 2013. Also of significance in relation to John Paul II's call to new evangelisation is his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Christifidelis Laici*, on the vocation and mission of the lay faithful in the church and in the world, (December 30, 1988), see especially articles 4, 30, 33, 34, 35, 49, 64. http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_30121988_christifideles-laici_en.html, last accessed January 15, 2013.

⁴³ Pope Benedict XVI has gone so far as to establish a Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelisation. See: Pope Benedict XVI, *Motu Proprio*, 'Ubicumque et Semper', September 21, 2010, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/apost_letters/documents/hf_ben-xvi_apl_20100921_ubicumque-et-semper_en.html, last accessed January 15, 2013.

⁴⁴ These aims are: to examine the theological and pastoral meaning of the new evangelisation; promote and foster the study, dissemination and implementation of the Papal Magisterium on the new evangelisation; to make known and support initiatives linked to the new evangelisation; to study and encourage the use of modern forms of communication as instruments for the new evangelisation and to promote the use of the Catechism of the Catholic Church as an essential and complete formulation of the content of the faith for the people of our time. See the *motu proprio* 'Ubicumque et Semper,' for details.

anew, rediscover the joy of faith and return to religious practice in the community of the faithful.⁴⁵ New evangelisation is not about conveying a new message – the message has not changed. What is new about it is the manner, medium and method of conveying the one message of Christ's Gospel both for those who have not heard it and for those who have, but who may have lost interest or never really received the message in the first hearing.

4.2 Liturgy as medium of evangelisation

It seems obvious to state that when the Church speaks of 'new evangelisation,' surely the notion that the liturgy is at the heart of the church and that being a member of the church means participating in the liturgy on a regular basis, ought to be central. This was certainly the belief expressed in *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 9, which directly links liturgy and evangelisation.⁴⁶ So how can the liturgy play a leading role in fostering a new evangelization? Liturgy is the primary medium for the Word of God, the Gospel which is in need of communication to the next generation alongside current generations of Christians. Liturgy can certainly serve as a primary medium of evangelisation by communicating the central tenets of the Christian faith in ways that can be heard, understood, digested and acted upon in life. Those who are life-long practicing Christians know the difference between attending a liturgy that is performed well and enduring a liturgy that is performed poorly. The first type feeds and nourishes the spirit and one is energised by one's partaking of the feast of Word and sacrament beautifully prepared, served and consumed. The other gets the job done, fulfils an obligation but leaves one with a feeling of dissatisfaction and sometimes even just relief that it is over. While we can survive on a diet of poor liturgy, the question remains of whether we run the risk of spiritual malnutrition if we attempt to live on a diet of poor liturgy consistently.

The liturgy of Vatican II performed properly and celebrated well by embracing fully all of its' communicative, connective, aesthetic and sensorially affective potential can play a major role in igniting and maintaining the fire of faith among Christians today. The power of ritual performed well, effective and dynamic leadership of the presider, a sense of belonging to a vibrant worship community, the richness of symbols used lavishly, the excellence and beauty of music, the demonstrable faith of well-trained lectors, cantors, ministers of Holy Communion, etc. can all serve in the task of evangelisation accomplished through the liturgy.

⁴⁵ Pope Benedict XVI, Homily at the Concluding Mass of the Synod of Bishops, (October 28, 2012). <http://www.zenit.org/article-35830?l=english>

⁴⁶ SC9 states: 'Before people can come to the liturgy they must be called to faith and to conversion: 'How then are they to call upon him in whom they have not yet believed? But how are they to believe him whom they have not heard? And how are they to hear if no one preached? And how are men to preach unless they be sent?' (Rom 10:14-15). Therefore the Church announces the good tidings of salvation to those who do not believe, so that all may know the true God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent and may be converted from their ways, doing penance. To believers, also, the Church must ever preach faith and penance, prepare them for the sacraments, teach them to observe all that Christ has commanded, and invite them to all the works of charity, worship, and the apostolate.'

http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html, accessed January 17, 2013.

CONCLUSION

If we were to ask whether Archbishop Guilford Young's expectations for a liturgy-led renewal of the church have been realised 50 years after Vatican II, the answer would be both yes and no. His ten liturgical priorities (considered earlier) have been met to an extent, some more than others. Today, among Catholics, there is better devotion to and knowledge of the Bible in some ways than there was in the mid-1960s; there is a repertoire of commonly known hymns (whether many of these can be considered to be good music or liturgically appropriate is up for discussion). In pockets there is good preaching in terms of content and style, but there is still a long way to go before good preaching can be seen in a majority of parishes a majority of the time. Whether the new translation of the Mass can be said to constitute clear liturgical language is debatable. In many parishes, there is much room for improvement in terms of fostering good liturgical performance practice. The authority of local episcopal conferences to adapt the liturgy to suit local conditions has been severely compromised by the current trend toward Roman centralisation and over-regulation in all liturgical matters. I believe Archbishop Young would have been very pleased to see the way in which the laity have taken up and embraced with enthusiasm their roles in the liturgy both as members of an active assembly and as liturgical ministers. One imagines Young would be quite disappointed to see the state of many of Australia's diocesan liturgical commissions today: while in some dioceses they continue to operate effectively, in other dioceses they have been discontinued altogether. Archbishop Young would likely be pleased with the number of opportunities available to people today to become further educated in liturgical matters, but he would probably also be advocating for more people to avail themselves of these opportunities, and for the Australian bishops to encourage much more of a focus on the study of liturgy in seminaries, universities and theologates than we have at present. One imagines that Archbishop Young would have encouraged bishops to make far greater use of the opportunities offered by today's social media to communicate regularly their knowledge, wisdom and explanations of the faith to and with their priests and people.

It is appropriate to conclude with a final word from Archbishop Sir Guilford Young, whose wisdom holds remarkable relevance still today. In 1965 he said:

We still have a long way to go before our people find that the liturgy is a perfect expression of their faith.... But just getting familiar with the Mass text is far from becoming the sort of Catholic the Vatican Council's liturgy revolution is supposed to produce. We have to go much deeper and become conscious of the liturgy for what it is – God here and now intervening in history in a direct and immediate manner.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Archbishop Young, 'English is merely the first step,' *The Standard* (September 17, 1965): 7.