

Anscar J. Chupungco. *What, Then, Is Liturgy? Musings and Memoir*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010. 251 pages. \$29.95.

By its title, *What, Then, Is Liturgy? Musings and Memoir*, one might mistakenly categorize this book as merely a memoir of a liturgical scholar. But this book is more than recounting historical events related to liturgy. Indeed, Chupungco (1939–2013) proffers a liturgical theology that is shaped by his understanding of Church history and leadership in liturgical enculturation within the confines of the Roman Catholic tradition.

In and through the five chapters of this book, Chupungco dialogues with several sources including the Patristic Fathers and the theological thoughts of his teachers in the likes of Salvatore Marsili, Adrien Nocent, Cipriano Vagaggini and Balthasar Fischer, laying claim that the reforming effort of the second Vatican Council was timely and appropriate and expressing his concern about the process of reforming “the reform of Vatican II” (xv).

In his first chapter, Chupungco establishes the framework of liturgical concerns by noting the uncertainty and conflicts that still persist within the ecclesial community although fifty years have passed since the liturgy was reformed. In his candid observation, he notes,

The liturgical movement and the council wanted worship to be an agent of human renewal. There are times when, as I step back to view the state of liturgical reform, I become disheartened by what seems to be a misplaced concern for rubrical details that have little consequence on what goes on in the world (9).

Across chapters two to four, Chupungco offers a liturgical theology framed by the liturgical reform of 1963 and is ably reinforced by his strong command of liturgical history. Adopting the scholarly approach, he takes time to explain the theo-liturgical concepts and their developments, never neglecting the contexts that shape such thoughts. Considering the doxological Trinitarian formula that is presently in use, Chupungco briefly mentions Joseph Jungmann’s *The Place of Christ in Liturgical Prayer* (Liturgical Press, 1989) to explain why the original “Glory to the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit,” which clearly articulated the relationships involved in salvation history that better served liturgical worship, was changed to equal glorification leading to the loss of this divine interrelationship (101). It is Chupungco’s magisterial understanding of the field that enables this book to take on a significant scholarly task *sans* footnotes! For any emerging liturgical scholar or worship enthusiast, one would be wise to take note and follow up on Chupungco’s almost cursory-like mention of sources to benefit fully from reading this work.

In chapter 5, he focuses on the externals of the liturgy, namely the place of rubrics, symbols, music, sacred images, the use of vernacular language, vestments, and mass media as external acts of the liturgy. In this final chapter, Chupungco once again reminds the readers that the primary focus of the reform was “full, active, and conscious participation of the faithful in liturgical celebrations” (169). It is in this light that he calls for all reforming efforts to align themselves to this task accordingly. I can best illustrate this through Chupungco’s commentary on music. He writes,

The classical liturgical movement successfully called our attention to the fact that texts should be first in our ranking the components of liturgy. I believe that the time has come to treat music in the liturgy not only as a servant but ‘as worship,’ . . . Surely we need to enhance the word and foster active participation through congregational singing, but we should not forget that music is a ritual language that progresses according to the solemnity of the occasion (216–217).

Broaching the subject of ritual language, Chupungco takes pains to examine the use of the vernacular in liturgical celebration. He rises admirably to the defense of the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL) and successfully argues that while Latin remains preeminent as an ecclesial language, it ought not be mistakenly upheld as being “a wholly other kind of language that is reserved exclusively for religious purposes” (186). Chupungco asserts that Latin liturgical language is a ritual language and not a sacred language. By this differentiation, he notes that the directive of Pope Paul VI reminded all language translators that “their aim is principally to promote active participation in the liturgy, as the council desired. . . . The sacrifice of so noble a heritage should thus be compensated by vernacular texts that are ‘within the grasp of all . . .’” (189–190).

In conclusion, I posit that this advocacy for full, conscious, and active participation of the assembly in liturgical celebration explains Chupungco’s deep seated *raison d’être* of his teaching ministry and his untiring call for liturgical enculturation. So it is fitting that in the year that Chupungco joins S. Anita Stauffer “to sing the divine praises in the company of the heavenly throng” (165) that this book is offered as a suitable road map for those who remain to chart the course of liturgical reformation, keeping in mind “that in all things, God may be glorified” (241).

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