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Desiderio desideravi: A Prolegomena to Liturgical Formation? The Relationship between Pastoral Care and the Liturgy Itself in the Process of Formation in the Liturgy

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Abstract: Pope Francis' apostolic letter *Desiderio desideravi*, promulgated in 2022, highlights the crux of the formation in the liturgy of the faithful. This has become especially poignant in a contemporary world, where the attribute of the symbol, stemming from a technological world, has stemmed the window into the transcendent (The double meaning of the verb "stem" is intentional). An important point is the role of formation through the liturgy itself. However, how does this formation of the liturgy through the liturgy itself have potential benefit for the faithful? Regarding the experience which the liturgy imparts to the participants, this cannot occur without the role and the dynamics of the whole person involved in the experience. This paper seeks to address the role of pastoral care and its relationship to worship and to show how said process of formation in the liturgy through the liturgy itself can yield the highest spiritual and transformative benefit.

Keywords: pastoral care; worship; encounter; transformation



Citation: Buttigieg, Dorianne. 2023. *Desiderio desideravi*: A Prolegomena to Liturgical Formation? The Relationship between Pastoral Care and the Liturgy Itself in the Process of Formation in the Liturgy. *Religions* 14: 1475. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14121475>

Academic Editor: Greg Peters

Received: 24 October 2023

Revised: 12 November 2023

Accepted: 13 November 2023

Published: 28 November 2023



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1. Introduction

Be not afraid, and never be afraid, and do not be in misery. Just as long as repentance does not grow scarce within you—then God will forgive anything. And indeed there is and can be no sin upon all the earth that the Lord will not forgive the truly repentant. And there is no sin that man could commit so great as would ever exhaust God's infinite love. For could there ever be a sin that could exceed God's love? Care only for repentance, unceasing repentance, but as for fear, drive it out altogether. (Dostoevsky 2003)

We are starting this analysis by referring to an episode of confession between the Elder ("starec") Zosima and a woman who confesses who killed her husband. It is a passage taken up by Romano Guardini, a theologian who bears an indelible imprint on Pope Francis' apostolic letter *Desiderio desideravi*, discussed later on. Ruminating on Guardini's reflection on this episode, Pope Francis affirms that

The woman is convinced she will be condemned, but the priest shows her a way out: her existence has meaning, because God receives her at the moment of her repentance The woman is transformed by her confession and her hope is revitalized. (Francis 2015)¹

This episode attests to the role of healing, which is brought on not only by the role of Elder Zosima in receiving the confession but also in the role of the woman, who opens up to transformation toward a process of healing. It is a sacrament of reconciliation in all respects, especially a reconciliation within the woman's own inner being. It also affirms the fact that liturgy is inherently pastoral.

The relationship between pastoral care and the liturgy has been present since early Christianity, yet it has remained largely in oblivion and has only recently been the subject

of exploration. It is undeniably the case that this relationship merits a deeper analysis in order to transmit a tenable encounter with the contemporary world, since this is deemed a centripetal force amidst a “rugged individualism” which characterizes a society marked by history and disconnectedness, not only between individuals but, as a corollary, within the church and between church and liturgy, where the notion of a ritual has become even more remote and perfunctory. To this end, this paper explores the dynamics of interconnectedness and how this relationship between pastoral care and liturgy, abetted through liturgical formation, can be further explored. The document *Desiderio desideravi* sheds a very important light on how this formation can take place, and it provides a framework in order to fully re-establish the relationship between pastoral care and participation in the liturgy. It also does so in order to equip each of the faithful with a complex story of his/her life to participate in a deeper story of which s/he is an important participant and through which the complexity of life can be redeemed.

2. The Relationship between Liturgy and Pastoral Care

Embarking on an analysis of the relationship between liturgy and pastoral care would necessitate a brief analysis of what constitutes pastoral care, in order to proceed to a fuller understanding of the relationship between the two.

Alastair V. Campbell's entry in the *Dictionary of Pastoral Studies* describes pastoral care as “Those activities of the Church which are directed towards maintaining or restoring the health and wholeness of individuals and communities in the context of God's redemptive purposes for all creation” (Campbell 2002). Pastoral care itself encompasses a multi-faceted aspect, which certainly hinges on the role of the person's wellbeing set in a plurality of contexts, including the theological context, encompassing social justice and the environment. Precisely because pastoral care itself entails action and movement toward change from the conditions of sin, “it needs to be flexible, variegated and able to respond at different levels of existence, according to human need” (Pattison 1988). The process itself underlies a transformation of the person, yet this goes beyond the four functions adequately delineated by Clebsch and Jaekle of healing, sustaining, guiding and reconciling (see Clebsch and Jaekle (1964, pp. 33–66)). This must also be aligned by a positive role of proactivity toward transformation, apart from understanding what is entailed in the role of ministry within this perspective, and this also calls for creativity. To this end, Clinebell adds the important form of nurturing, which “embodies the positive, preventive and growth emphasis which is also present in pastoral care” (Pattison 1988, p. 17; Clinebell 1984, p. 43). This is especially crucial in considering an empowering transformation in the course of our analysis.

Before proceeding further, with the aim of presenting the link between pastoral care and liturgy, we wish to pause on the famous Michelangelo painting of *The Creation of Adam* on the Sistine Chapel. God's hand is depicted as reaching out to Adam. Adam reaches back, somehow hesitantly. According to Robert Taft, “liturgy happens in the gap between the two hands reaching for one another: one in action, one in response” (Farwell (2013, p. 3); see also Taft (2002, p. 139)). It is the space which facilitates the encounter between the divine and the human, as well as the writing of the life story of humanity. Creation is not simply the molding of the human person at a point in time but the start of a narration of encounter between the human and divine, even despite the former's limitations, an event described at length in the *Book of Genesis*. It is the encounter which occurs at the intersection between liturgy and pastoral care.

Thus, the relationship between liturgy and pastoral care transcends the sole purpose of *rites de passage*. Although undeniably important, the relationship between the two goes deeper. The fact that the liturgy is only tied to a number of events, though foundational, would cease to retain the dynamism of the encounter.

The encounter constantly encompasses and transforms a person. Focusing solely on *rites de passage* would limit the ritual to a particular point in time with the risk of disconnection between the continuity of a related life. Authors who delve deeper into this

relationship include Victor Hunter, Stephen Pattison, William Willimon, Elaine Ramshaw, Anderson and Foley, and Pembroke.²

Léon Van Ommen presents six levels of intersection between the two areas, and it is worth reproducing them here in our analysis. These intersections occur at the levels of subject matter, narrative, relationships, community, liberation and the priestly office. Thus, this relationship traverses the complexities of the faithful's stories within the embrace of the overarching story of salvation, a relationship between God and people which is particularly expressed through worship and the re-inclusion of the suffering into the community, which leads to liberation on various levels. Finally, the role of the priest serves to cement this relationship between the liturgy and pastoral care. The rite of ordination also entails "appointing someone into the pastoral ministry" (Van Ommen 2015, p. 8). A number of authors appear to put the relationship between the two in terms of a dichotomization between the anthropocentric and the theocentric (Van Ommen 2015, p. 9). However, it must be asked whether there is a clear line of demarcation between the two, and to what extent the focus of worship in a ritual is primarily to give glory to God. However,

In liturgy the community comes before their God. God and people meet, dialogue, tell stories and perform rituals. While the relationship is not between equal partners and reverence for the Holy is in place, the two parties relate to each other intimately as friends and partners. (See Van Ommen (2015, p. 9))

DeGrocco describes a foundational principle of what constitutes good liturgy, namely the proper balance between what he calls "the other worldly" and "this worldly; the vertical and the horizontal dimensions (DeGrocco 2013, p. 2). Thus, "our immersion in the 'this worldly,' or immanent aspects of liturgy should be the vehicle, the conduit, to experience the other worldly, or holy" (see also DeGrocco (2013, p. 3)).

It might be said that, in the worship experience, in enacting the act of thanksgiving and celebrating the memorial of the Eucharist, in celebrating the sacraments and in the Liturgy of the Hours, the faithful bring their stories which become en-fleshed within the greater story of salvation which, in turn, transforms the faithful. Ultimately, both liturgy and pastoral care deal with the same subject matter.

However, a deeper reflection on the dynamism between the liturgy and pastoral care calls for greater urgency in contemporary times, in situations where the complexities of human stories appear unsurmountable with little connection to the greater story lived in the worship experience. This fact is further exacerbated by the disenchantment and disconnectedness with the symbol-laden rites themselves, which appear to be stumbling blocks in the meaningful encounter between the human and the divine through the liturgy. The present technocratic world has accelerated the loss of the sense of wonder, a world where symbols have lost their meaning beyond the apparent and the immediate. (O'Malley 2019, p. 30). Crispino Valenziano is so correct in affirming that "in speaking of symbols, it is always possible to err under the pressure of operative aspects of symbolism. This seriously distracts us from the perception of the source of our symbolic system" (Valenziano 1998). Being little understood, they speak another language and harken to a past which seems to be made even more remote by this language barrier. Most importantly, this brokenness extends to a disruption in the flow of communication between the immanent and transcendent and between the human and the divine. Once this flow is interrupted and consistency itself is lost, the ritual again becomes a hollow rite. This becomes especially poignant when we consider that the ritual is primarily about doing. Ritual participation involves doing on various levels, even the listening of the Word and ruminating on the homily. In turn, ritual participation is transformative; it engages the whole person on all levels (see also Smith 2012).

As reiterated by Marianne Moyaert,

Ritual is a doing; it is performative through and through: breaking the bread and drinking from the wine (Eucharist); making the sign of the cross; touching

the relics of a saint; kneeling before an altar; lighting candles; embarking on a pilgrimage. . . (Moyaert 2015)

Another major malaise which plagues contemporary life and has serious ramifications on the way we conduct worship and also pastoral concerns, together with their mutual relationship, is what Thomas Merton used to call “the heresy of individualism”. (Merton 1968, p. 143). This “rugged individualism”, as dubbed by Timothy O’Malley, is a major factor in the phenomenon of the personal experience of God at the cost of everything else (see O’Malley 2019). As Pope Francis affirms in *Gaudete et Exsultate*,

We are never completely ourselves unless we belong to a people. That is why no one is saved alone, as an isolated individual. Rather, God draws us to himself, taking into account the complex fabric of interpersonal relationships present in a human community. God wanted to enter into the life and history of a people. (Francis 2018)

3. *Desiderio desideravi* and a Dynamism toward Pastoral Care

Attention to pastoral care becomes especially poignant in considering the disconnectedness of the contemporary human being with the role of symbols. This disconnectedness is countered at length in the apostolic letter *Desiderio desideravi*, promulgated on 29 June, 2022. *Desiderio desideravi* takes its title from the words of Jesus at the Last Supper in Lk 22, 25: “I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer”. The document can be seen as both a completion of and a shift from the polemics caused by *Traditionis custodes* (2021), with its severe restrictions on the traditional Latin Mass, or the “extraordinary form”. The columnist Rev. Raymond de Souza, writing in the aftermath of the promulgation of the apostolic letter, affirms that “the whole of *Desiderio* gives the sense of a pastor thinking that a soothing balm is needed after the bruises of the past year” (De Souza 2022). *Desiderio desideravi* is a reiteration of the main themes inherent in the works of Pope Francis (O’Brien 2023). Espousing connectedness or “encounter” across various levels among the main themes, and pertinent to this article, Pope Francis pays homage to a series of papal documents such as *Laudato si’*, *Deus caritas est* and *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, the latter two documents also emphasizing the very notion of connectedness even with his predecessors Popes Benedict XVI and John Paul II. The continuation between Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis is also evident in the various references to the theologian Romano Guardini.

Rather than an instruction or a directory, *Desiderio desideravi* is a meditation “. . . with a biblical, patristic and liturgical imprint, which offers diverse motivations in order to understand the beauty of the truth of the liturgical celebration”.³ It can be stated that this apostolic letter expresses the dynamic of affirming the truth of “beauty in meaning” in liturgical participation by the faithful. Beauty transcending the ephemeral is the linchpin of meaningfulness in a world fraught with complexity which seeks to reconnect. The document is pastoral in nature; it addresses the difficulties strewn along the road toward meaningful encounters.

Renewed attention to the pastoral aspect would serve to place the human being at the center, rebalancing the role it occupies amidst the problem of a technocratic world which has a bearing on the experiences of the human person. The recentering of the human being entails a revision of the whole of the human being’s relationship with God and with the rest of the community. This recentering would be crucial when placed at the experiential level of encounters with God and the community. It is this experience which a reconfiguration of the role of the liturgy explores in *Desiderio desideravi*, wherein an authentic celebration is a transformative celebration:

A celebration that does not evangelize is not authentic, just as a proclamation that does not lead to an encounter with the risen Lord in the celebration is not authentic. And then both of these, without the testimony of charity, are like sounding a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. (1 Cor 13:1) (Francis 2022)

Since pastoral care and liturgy intersect on so many levels, it is important to consider how the attention of pastoral care would lead to a deeper experience of this relatedness with both God and the community.

Desiderio desideravi explores the problem of disconnectedness with the symbols which characterize the ritual itself. To this end, the apostolic letter proposes a twofold formation in the liturgy, that is formation for the liturgy, entailing traditional study in the liturgy, and formation by the liturgy itself, the apex of an authentic formation, which involves being formed “from participation in the liturgical celebration” (Francis 2022).

The following question arises: how would the invitation posed by *Desiderio desideravi* toward an authentic celebration by the whole people of God better serve attention to pastoral care in the formation by and through liturgy? As stated at the outset, it is all a pastoral matter if we look at it from a deeper perspective. However, we must avoid the caveat of avoiding the distinctiveness of both worship and pastoral care. Pastoral attention to each individual in the community would place the individual in a better vantage point in the experience of God, as the tools would equip him/her to participate in the experience in the fullest way possible.

Attention to the totality of the person, even in the relationship with rituals and symbols, would only serve an authenticity experienced through worship. Here, we can refer to Guardini again, who focuses on what actual participation in the liturgy entails. An integrated liturgical act is realized through the “act” of looking and of gazing, as well as through an encounter with the mystery through actively looking at what is going on around oneself (Guardini 1964). Properly looking at and contemplating the actions, symbols and gestures wherein even they are participants, such as the rite of baptism, attests to the potential transformation this carries with it. The role of water in the baptismal rite exposes the healing aspect, which intersects the pastoral care of the faithful in need of regeneration and renewal. Indeed, “the “symbol” is in itself something corporal-spiritual, an expression of the inward through the outward, and must as such be co-performed through the act of looking” (Guardini 1964).

This challenge, outlined by Guardini in his times and taken up in *Desiderio desideravi*, is a stark reminder of the urgency of formation. “Here there is outlined the first task of the work of liturgical formation: man must become once again capable of symbols” (Guardini 1923, p. 43).

Formation in liturgy enables this intersection; the embedding of the person’s story into the Christian story and taking place as the Paschal Mystery (the crux of the caring ritual) are being celebrated anew.

The subject matter of both liturgy and pastoral care is humankind in all its aspects, before the face of God. When we hear confessions, absolve sins, bless, care, love, this all forms people into the image God. All these things help people become who they are—beloved children of God. Through care-ful liturgy and prayerful pastoral care, the community and its leaders participate in liturgical formation of the people. (Van Ommen 2015, p. 11)

Movement from liturgy to formation in and through the liturgy and the relationship with pastoral care requires renewed attention to the stories of the lives of the faithful in order to equip them with a proper understanding of how to approach rituals in worship. How can attentiveness to pastoral care cement further formation in and through liturgy?

4. What Liturgical Formation?

Since the interrelatedness between pastoral care and worship operates on various levels, there is no one way of reaching out toward formation, even within the twofold proposition in *Desiderio desideravi*. One question that needs to be asked is “Do we give attention to the pastoral needs of the faithful before liturgical formation in order to bring the faithful back to worship?” Willimon reminds us that “one of the best ways to arrive where we are today is to first know where the church’s worship has been before” (Willimon

1979). On the other hand, Elaine Ramshaw, in her work *Ritual and Pastoral Care* goes further in enlisting the importance of pastoral attentiveness and ritual creativity.

Rituals enable human growth and maturity, hence the importance of authenticity and the mediation of this authenticity through worship. The faithful should be made aware that the life stories they live are not disconnected from the relationship with God and that rituals are not addenda to an otherwise “normal” life. Attention to the meaning of the ritual entails attention to the different realities faced by the faithful and to the various transitions in life, including celebrations and the vicissitudes. This authenticity, marked by sensitivity, was the hallmark of the early church, as described in Acts. The hospitality of meeting together and the breaking of the bread was extended by the sharing of the bread with the poor. This authentic encounter could then enable the individual to further explore and become transformed by that very ritual.

Rituals are desperately needed to enable human growing and maturing, both through times of suffering and through times of transition. . . . It is the role of the churches which have a stake in the maturing of every baptised Christian, to learn, teach, and practise the conducting of such rites with life-giving competence. (Smith 2012)

Authenticity allows room for the handling of ambivalence in a person’s feelings and in the sense of conflicting feelings. Ritualization may not always be successful in dealing with this ambivalence. Ramshaw speaks of two ways in which ritualization serves to deal with the conflicting feelings espoused by humans. Although “reinforcement of the preferred emotion” may appear more ubiquitous prima facie for the believer, room must also be made for the “contained expression of the unwanted, conflicting emotion” (Ramshaw 1987). The expression of certain feelings such as anger and lament serve to herald the beginning of the healing process itself (Smith 2012, p. 97). The Scriptures are very telling of the various human emotions in the encounter with and response to God, and Ramshaw takes stock of these:

We can give thanks and beg mercy, but we can also bargain with God like Abraham, mourn like Rachel, protest like Job, press our case beyond a dismissal like the Syrophoenician woman, our cry out of our abandonment like Jesus. A liturgical practice springing from biblical roots can certainly voice lament along with praise. (Ramshaw 1987)

The faithful must be made aware of how their very different emotions, springing from experience, all establish a connection with God. If we take the rites during the Holy Week, from Good Friday, into Holy Saturday and to Easter Sunday, we can witness a diversity of rites which in themselves entail a process and progress in the story, leading toward life and hope at times marked by vicissitudes. It allows for a process of the most difficult life experiences, such that these vicissitudes cannot be simply brushed off, but they themselves lead on to hope. Hope is not a positive attitude disconnected from the complexity of suffering and death experience but, rather, is identified in terms of its relationship with the former. The devotional pilgrimage to the fourteen stations of the cross within the Roman Catholic world is very significant, even though today it is performed within the confines of local churches or in the space of one church. Its popularity might stem from the fact that a journey riddled with suffering is universal, and it is inextricably bound to hope.

Being aware of this reality and how this connects with the story of each individual serves to make the rites themselves more relevant. Hence, worship can be considered “the moment when human *pathos* is brought into juxtaposition with divine *ethos*” (Smith 2012, p. 97).⁴ This encounter can be potentially transformative.

This authenticity must be marked by reciprocity. The faithful and the estranged returning to Mass for comfort must be encouraged for them to realize that they, too, are active participants. They, too, bring their gifts to the table. As Rita Ferrone affirms, “you don’t get anywhere unless the recipient is an active subject, conscious and co-responsible” (Ferrone 2016). A priest who is sharing the homily, while addressing a multi-faceted

congregation and empowering it with a reflection on the Word, is also addressing himself and is also challenged by the very words he is sharing. During the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, a renewal of the sacraments, the congregation renews the sacrament of baptism as a result of the catechumens, who are to be initiated and received into the Church. The insertion of the neophyte into the church serves to renew the church itself (see, for example, [Various 1 \(1988, par. 236\)](#)).

This brings the meaning of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and the development of *Desiderio desideravi* full circle regarding the full, active and conscious participation by the faithful, a participation which reverberates with the wholeness of life. It is where the greatness and the brokenness of the world encounter the beauty of worship. Christianity is both the story of one person and the story of a people. It is worth noting that, although pastoral care is individual (while avoiding the caveat of restricting pastoral care to individualism), liturgy is communal. Each member of the people of God who worships together becomes fully him/herself when his/her story is embedded within the greater story of salvation. It is then that a whole new meaning of identity is acquired. As Guardini asserted back then,

Of particular importance for the liturgical act is the action and full participation of the congregation as a body. The act is done by every individual, not as an isolated individual, but as a member of a body which is the “we” of the prayers. ([Guardini 1964](#))

The liturgy becomes the place where the “we”, both in prayers during Mass and also in the various examples of reciprocity just highlighted, counters the pervasive “I” of an individualistic culture. ([DeGrocco 2013, p. 10](#))

5. A Reconfiguration of the Relationship with Symbols

Desiderio desideravi speaks at length about reintegration into the world of symbols and the visible role they play for the community that believes. As Susan Marie Smith argues, “What is effective about symbols and rituals is that they invoke a higher reality or ‘world’ into which participants are invited. This aspect of ritual is liberating, because participants are freed to enter a realm greater than themselves” ([Smith 2012](#)). This reiterates Paul Tillich’s argument that “man’s ultimate concern must be expressed symbolically because symbolic language alone is able to express the ultimate” ([Tillich 1957](#)). Knowing the full meaning which transcends the symbol entails trust or letting go in order to be empowered and be immersed in something bigger. Full awareness of the meaning of symbols moreover, beckons again to the collective integration of each person, including learning and appropriation, again in the face of the rugged individualism which is also made manifest in worship itself. This acquires a more poignant perspective when we consider that the people in the community themselves are symbols. Indeed, the worshippers “represent the holy church in all times and all places” ([Smith 2012, p. 83](#)). This symbolism also attests to the inextricable bond which exists between local and universal churches, wherein each local church is an expression of the universal church. This is crucial since it links each of the participants to the universal story wherein each of the faithful finds meaning and is a veritable participant.

An important role toward the re-appropriation of symbols is the re-appropriation of metaphors. Attending to the meaning of metaphors is important in order to make people aware of the power of rituals to carry persons through the initiatory process to the healing process and to a process of self-maturation. Entering the world of metaphor involves entering into a collective world.

Working with metaphor generates an aesthetic distance from the particular individuals involved in order that the universality of the situation may be seen. Focal persons may see that they are not alone, because their story is actually a part of the whole human story of salvation as revealed in Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience. ([Smith 2012, p. 84](#))

The various rites and prayers within Mass also reflect the process of a person's self-development regarding how a person progresses from the forgiveness of sins, to healing, to nourishment through the Word and the Eucharist and to a rediscovery of a new self in a communal activity in order to be empowered to live and transmit the encounter in all life circumstances.

Moreover, apart from communicating the complexity of life (it is within the various aspects of a complex human life that the story of salvation is narrated and effected), the metaphor reveals symbolic actions (Smith 2012, p. 74). Again, this brings us to action. The liturgy is the voice of a tradition which is relevant and dynamic in the face of the faithful. The symbol itself entails action. This has important ramifications for the formation in the re-appropriation of the symbols themselves.

"Making" liturgical symbols "understood" does not mean adding an explanation to the rites or clothing ritual in discursive ideas that inevitably distort it. Instead, it means directing the celebration and its celebrants in accord with the *taxis* within which it is constructed and within which they are active participants. . . (Valenziano 1998)

Each repetitive action and gesture, perpetrated throughout generations, serves not only to connect the individual within tradition, with tradition itself becoming an identity marker and an anchor, but also serves to redirect the person anew into the dynamic of the encounter. "Every gesture and every word contains a precise action that is always new because it meets with an always new moment in our own lives".⁵ The faithful partake in repetitive actions and gestures during Mass, such as kneeling in the presence of the Lord and asking for forgiveness, yet at different moments in our lives. This "moulds our inner depths and then thereafter shows itself externally in our relation with God and with our brothers and sisters".⁶

The movement from metaphor to symbol to sacrament is a very powerful dynamic which nudges the believer to the meeting point of the encounter between the theocentric and the anthropocentric (wherein the worldly mediates the holy) without subsuming each of the two sides. Such an encounter is guaranteed through the liturgy itself; it has no place as a vague memory.⁷

Sacrament makes sacred, by setting a symbol (e.g., water, wine, bread) into action. A sacrament, then, is a symbolic action, accompanied by scriptural words, done by a designated person, with the intent to do what the church intends with the action. If the incarnation teaches us that the particular can mediate the universal—that one man in one time and place can save all people in all times and places—it also teaches us that flesh is the medium of the holy, a means of grace. (Smith 2012, pp. 77–78)

Hence, the faithful are better equipped to recover the sense of mystery mediated through worship and are also made to realize how everyday graces, triumphs and struggles are redeemed through the mystery in the encounter with the Lord.

6. Conclusions

We conclude the episode we started at the outset with the woman who confesses to Elder Zosima in Dostoevsky's "The Brothers Karamazov". The woman who, at the beginning, appears to be reticent about receiving confession confesses, and she is liberated. The woman herself, who represents the brokenness of life, enters into the encounter and is transformed. Through her entrance into the mystery, she is empowered to look deeper and forward beyond her present brokenness. Her story also attests to a redemption of the timeframe itself. The limitations of the present become aligned within a greater timeframe where both past and present harken toward a future, where the future is already aligned within the present, where "the Kingdom of God is at hand". Thus, the overpowering brokenness at a particular time in life is redeemed because that timeframe no longer holds sway over the individual. This happens at the moment the human being encounters the

Lord in the moment of worship, where, through the liturgy itself and through the actuation of the symbols themselves, the faithful are liberated and can look forward to a veritable hope because their vicissitudes have been given meaning and redeemed in a collective “we”-process. This is why empowering proper formation is key to re-establishing the relationship with worship as inherent to an individual’s life:

The churches have a stake in learning to do rites to help the baptised grow and mature. But this is based on a prior stake in doing worship well, for regular Sunday worship is the sustaining food for every life crisis. (Smith 2012, p. 13)

The liturgy itself, through its apparent repetition, if approached in the proper way, allows for this transformation and irruption to take place, but only if the faithful have been allowed to go through the process of aligning their stories within the transformative life story. To this end, it is the task of the priests, pastors, catechists and other people in the various ministries to equip each of the faithful in order to truly be “formed” in different ways in order for them to be authentically “trans-formed”.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Notes

- ¹ Here, Francis refers to Guardini’s own work on Dostoevsky, *The Religious World of Dostoevsky*.
- ² See (Van Ommen 2015). Although the aim of this paper is not to address the relationship between pastoral care and worship, it is worth noting particular authors which go beyond the role of addressing the notion of worship simply in terms of the particular stages of transition. Important authors who address this interrelatedness include William Willimon, Elaine Ramshaw, Anderson and Foley, and Neil Pembroke, who focus on various aspects of this interrelatedness in their respective works.
- ³ See (Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments 2022). The original Italian text is as follows: “... è, piuttosto, un testo di meditazione, con una vivida impronta biblica, patristica e liturgica, che offre molte motivazioni per comprendere la bellezza della verità della celebrazione liturgica”.
- ⁴ For more detail see (Saliers 1994, pp. 21–38).
- ⁵ DD, 53.
- ⁶ See note 5.
- ⁷ See DD, 11.

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