

The Spirit of the Liturgy
Pope Benedict XVI

Part III: Art and Liturgy

1. The Question of Images

The Ark of the Covenant and the icon of the Resurrected Christ (p. 116)

“All sacred images are, without exception, in a certain sense images of the Resurrection, and for that very reason they are images of hope giving us the assurance of the world to come, of the final coming of Christ.”

“...[T]he images of the early Church have a thoroughly sacramental significance. They have the character of mysteries, going far beyond the didactic function of telling the stories of the Bible.” (p. 118)

The Original Icon: ‘Acheiropoietos,’ Not made by human hands



‘camulianium’

‘mandylion’ (Edessa)

“A new kind of seeing”

“The icon is supposed to originate from an opening up of the inner senses, from a facilitation of sight that gets beyond the surface of the empirical and perceives Christ, as the later theology of icons puts it, in the light of Tabor” (p. 121).

The transcendence of faith (p. 122)

The icon is Trinitarian (pp. 122-123)

The icon's ontological proportions (p. 123)

“[T]he light of the first day and the light of the eighth day meet in the icon.”
Creation/Redemption

The modern problem

“...which can no longer apprehend the transparency of the spirit in the senses, almost inevitably brings with it a flight into purely ‘negative’ (apophatic) theology” (p. 124)

Apophatic—“recognizes only the wholly Other-ness of the God beyond all images and words, a theology that in the final analysis regards revelation as the inadequate human reflection of what is eternally imperceptible”(p. 124).

“God is the Wholly Other, but He is powerful enough to be able to show himself. And he has so fashioned his creature that it is capable of ‘seeing him and loving him’” (p. 124).

The Theology of Icons-Images

Early Church up to 13th c.—no essential difference between East and West

ROMANESQUE:

“Art is still ordered to the mystery that becomes present in the liturgy...the heavenly liturgy” (p. 125).

“The risen Christ...on the cross.”

GOTHIC: The crucified Lord

“The historical and narrative aspect of art comes to the fore...[T]he mystical image has been replaced by the devotional image” (p. 126).

“Salvation history is seen less as a sacrament than as a narrative unfolded in time” (p. 127).

“The images (of Christ suffering) are consoling, because they make visible the overcoming of our anguish in the incarnate God’s sharing of our suffering, and so they bear within them the message of the Resurrection”(p. 129).

RENAISSANCE:

“...[S]uch religious art is no longer sacred art in the proper sense. It does not enter the humility of the sacraments and their time-transcending dynamism” (p. 129).

BAROQUE:

“This art is intended to insert us into the liturgy of heaven” (p. 130).

The fundamental principles of art ordered to divine worship (p. 131)

- The absence of images is not a Christian option.
- Sacred art includes all of salvation history (Scriptural) especially the lives of the saints.
- Images point to a presence; they are essentially connected with what happens in the liturgy. The icon of Christ is the center of sacred iconography. Every image of Christ must contain these three essential aspects of the mystery of Christ: Crucified, risen Lord, the One who will come again and who here and now hiddenly reigns over all.
- The icon is to lead us beyond our sense perception to a new kind of “seeing”—a fruit of contemplation.” The image must reflect the “seeing faith of the Church”—an ecclesial dimension is essential.
- The fundamental lines of the theology of the icon as shared with the Christian East should be normative in the Latin West. No sacred art can come from an isolated subjectivity.

2. Music and Liturgy

The Resurrection—A New Song

“...[A]ll the sufferings of history must be endured, all pain gathered in and brought into the sacrifice of praise, in order to be transformed there into a song of praise” (p. 138).

The Psalms—proper source for liturgical song (pp. 139-140)

- Variations of the song of Moses (crossing the Red Sea)
- Rise up from affliction that only God can help
- Trust, even in darkness, that God has the ‘last word’ in life and in death
- The Church uses the Psalter as her “prayer book”; we can speak through Christ in the Holy Spirit to the Father.

False inculturation in sacred music (pp. 144-145)

- Canticles
- Gnostic entry into Christianity
- Council of Laodicea

Parallels between the history of liturgical music and the evolution of the image (p. 145)

EAST

- Purely vocal music with no instrumental accompaniment or performance
- Iconography

WEST

- Gregorian chant
- Polyphony
- Use of instruments in the liturgy
- Iconography with later developments in 'plastic arts' (sculpture, oil painting)

Church music and secular music (Renaissance)

“Music was no longer developing out of prayer, but, with the new demand for artistic autonomy, was now heading away from the liturgy; it was becoming an end in itself...” (p. 145).

“The Council of Trent intervened in the culture war that had broken out. It was made a norm that liturgical music should be at the service of the Word; the use of instruments was substantially reduced; and the difference between secular and sacred music was clearly affirmed” (p. 146).