

BOOK REVIEW

Called To Participate: Theological, Ritual, And Social Perspectives. By Mark Searle. Barbara Searle and Anne Y. Koester, editors. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2006. 104 pages. ISBN 978-0814629420

With the upcoming publication of the 3rd edition of the Roman Missal and its new translation of the Order of Mass, much attention will be turned in the months ahead toward the Church's celebration of the Eucharist. While many of the materials published for the catechesis of the faithful will focus on the wording of the new translation itself, there will also be much written to capitalize on this "teachable moment" for a renewed understanding of a theology of worship. Liturgists are hoping this moment in the life of the Church will be an opportunity to do some significant liturgical formation that was perhaps overlooked during the period immediately following the Second Vatican Council. Mark Searle's *Called to Participate: Theological, Ritual, and Social Perspectives* is an important resource that can make a significant contribution to this renewed liturgical catechesis in the United States.

Dealing theologically with the subject of liturgical participation as seen through the lens of American culture, Searle offers his readers rich insights into the theology of liturgical participation, insights that are thankfully free of any politicizing of the liturgy; it is clear that there is no agenda in this book other than to explore this very necessary topic. Barbara Searle sets the tone and the program for the book when she quotes Mark Searle in the Foreword, saying, "We have reformed the rites according to conciliar directives and our own best notions of what they were supposed to look like, but our ideas of what they were supposed to look like have perhaps been colored more by our secular culture than the tradition they were meant to vivify" (ix). Thus, the book seeks to call the reader to a deeper understanding of what it means to participate in the act of liturgy, an understanding that includes both the internal and external dimensions. In fact, it is perhaps its presentation of what interior participation is, and the connection between interior participation and living the Christian life, that is one of the greatest strengths of the book. In the Foreword's reminder to us that "...the liturgical movement was, at its best, also an ascetical movement, calling us to return to the sources of the common spiritual life and to take up the discipline inherent in the Christian vocation" (xi) it is clear that this is a book that seeks to make a much-needed theological connection between worship and everyday life.

Searle begins the book with a brief historical survey of the liturgical reform movement that began with the French priest Prosper Guéranger in the

19th century. He presents the idea that the movement can actually be viewed as two liturgical movements that embrace two different approaches to liturgical participation. The first and earlier movement, according to Searle, was more counter-cultural than the second that grew out of it. To put it in broad strokes, the first movement had the goal of re-forming people to the spirit of the liturgy; the second recognized that liturgy had to be accommodated to the people. Hence, a dilemma: "Should we accommodate the liturgy to ourselves, encouraging a subjective approach to liturgy or engage in standing under the liturgy, regarding it in a more objective way?" (13) For Searle, we are at a crossroads and must decide which way we will go. Thus, a renewed synthesis of the two approaches is necessary for our day, and the remainder of the book explores the issues involved in trying to achieve that synthesis.

Searle then goes on in the next chapter to explore a theology of participation according to three levels: participation in ritual behavior; participation in the liturgy of the Church as the work of Christ; and participation in the life of God. The two subsequent chapters are devoted to an exploration of the inward, or contemplative, dimension of liturgy and the outward, or public, dimension of liturgy, respectively.

The text is replete with gently-issued challenges that call everyone, ordained and lay, to re-examine their understanding of liturgical participation, especially in terms of a critique of the various ways that our American mind-set and attitudes have shaped (corrupted?) our understanding of worship. For example, Searle addresses the mistaken notion that liturgy should always produce a good feeling: "The problem with liturgy is that while it may on occasion be cathartic, it does not set out to be so. For one thing, there is simply no way of guaranteeing that everyone is going to feel the same way on any given occasion or at any given point in the liturgy. More importantly, there is something more basic at work in the context of liturgy than feeling, and that is *attitude*" (61). Another American "heresy" he tackles is that of our fascination with innovation: "...we suffer from the practical heresy of believing that insight comes only with the new and unfamiliar, that repetition breeds only boredom, and that the old is old hat and must be discarded. This is a practical heresy as dangerous as any theological heresy, for it cuts us off from the sources of life in the liturgical practices of the Church" (66). A final example is the connection he makes with Robert Bellah's pointing to the "cult of intimacy" in American culture and the problems that creates for liturgy: "Very often, our liturgies are used in awkward attempts to create pseudo-communities...they invariably serve simply to obscure the real basis of our identification with each other — which is not ethnic, or socio-economic, or affective, or a matter of institutional pride or loyalty, but our common life in Christ" (73). Searle is at his best when he

challenges us to put liturgical theology in dialogue with our own presuppositions and preferences; in his words, “The liturgy requires of us a setting aside of the quest for personal satisfaction; it demands self-abnegation, self-emptying, self-forgetfulness, so that our emptiness may be filled with the memory of Christ...” (85).

The book manages to maintain that rare balance of being appropriate both for scholarly use and for the student or interested person who might just wish to pursue further reading on this topic. The student and scholar will find in it content that presents major themes for a theology of liturgical participation that indeed, as the sub-title suggests, intersect with ritual and social perspectives. As such, the text can easily act not only as a source in itself, but also as a springboard for further research. The interested reader will find in it writing that is easily accessible and thought-provoking beyond just its academic content.

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