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In honor of its fortieth anniversary (1978–2018), Ignatius Press presents a special Commemorative Edition of one of the most important works written by Joseph Ratzinger, The Spirit of the Liturgy.This edition includes the earlier classic work with the same title by Servant of God Romano Guardini, a book that helped Ratzinger to "rediscover the Liturgy in all its beauty, hidden wealth and time-transcending grandeur, to see it as the animating center of the Church, the very center of Christian life".Considered by Ratzinger devotees as one of his greatest works, this profound and beautifully written treatment of the liturgy will help readers to deepen their understanding of the"great prayer of the Church". The cardinal discusses fundamental misunderstandings of the Second Vatican Council's intentions for liturgical renewal, especially about the priest's orientation of prayer to the Father, the placement of the tabernacle in churches, and the posture of kneeling.Other important topics are the essence of worship, the Jewish roots of Christian prayer, the relationship of the liturgy to time and space, sacred art and music, and the active participation of the faithful in the Mass. © 1996-2015, Amazon.com, Inc. ou ses filiales, Jump to ratings and reviewsOriginally written in 1918, this profound reflection on the nature of liturgical worship still stands as a guiding light for today's renewal of worship and prayer. In poetic terms, it clarifies the underlying principles and existential implications of the belief that when Christians join in the Eucharist and other liturgical celebrations, they do so not as discrete individuals but as interconnected members of the one People of God.TheologyCatholicReligionChristianitySpiritualityChristianNonfiction Romano Guardini was a Catholic priest, author, and academic. He was one of the most important figures in Catholic intellectual life in the 20th century.Guardini was born in Verona, Italy in 1885. His family moved to Mainz when he was one year old and he lived in Germany for the rest of his life. After studying chemistry in Tübingen for two semesters, and economics in Munich and Berlin for three, he decided to become a priest. After studying Theology in Freiburg im Breisgau and Tübingen, he was ordained in Mainz in 1910. He briefly worked in a pastoral position before returning to Freiburg to work on his doctorate in Theology under Engelbert Krebs. He received his doctorate in 1915 for a dissertation on Bonaventure. He completed his "Habilitation" in Dogmatic Theology at the University of Bonn in 1922, again with a dissertation on Bonaventure. Throughout this period he also worked as a chaplain to the Catholic youth movement. In 1923 he was appointed to a chair in Philosophy of Religion at the University of Berlin. In the 1935 essay "Der Heiland" (The Saviour) he criticized Nazi mythologizing of the person of Jesus and emphasized the Jewishness of Jesus. The Nazis forced him to resign from his Berlin position in 1939. From 1943 to 1945 he retired to Mooshausen, where his friend Josef Weiger had been parish priest since 1917. In 1945 Guardini was appointed professor in the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Tübingen and resumed lecturing on the Philosophy of Religion. In 1948, he became professor at the University of Munich, where he remained until retiring for health reasons in 1962. Guardini died in Munich on 1 October 1968. He was buried in the priests' cemetery of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri in Munich. His estate was left to the Catholic Academy in Bavaria that he had co-founded.Get help and learn more about the design. Preview Preview (Photo: Marc Salvatore | marcsalvatore.smugmug.com) Last year was a year of many anniversaries. One that was perhaps less noticed was the fortieth anniversary of Ignatius Press. As part of that observance, its founder, Father Joseph Fessio, decided to reprint what has become a classic of the "new liturgical movement," Joseph Ratzinger's The Spirit of the Liturgy. The choice of both author and work was most appropriate: first, because Ignatius Press introduced the then-relatively unknown author to the Anglophone world (indeed, I suspect not a few of those early publications of Ratzinger sat in a warehouse until he came into his own as prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and eventually as Pope!); second, because Father Fessio has always seen the Sacred Liturgy as the locus privilegiatus. Reprinting the Ratzinger volume was not enough; included was the eponymous work by Romano Guardini, precisely during the centennial year of its original publication – a work consistently identified by Ratzinger as one of the most formative books for his personal spiritual life and for his academic orientation as well. The commemorative edition is graced by a preface of Pope Benedict and by a foreword by Cardinal Robert Sarah, prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments, and one whom many of us consider to have assumed the liturgical mantle of Cardinal Ratzinger/Pope Benedict. Indeed, Pope Francis told him to continue the liturgical program of Pope Benedict. For the most part, I intend this review to concentrate on the salient insights of Father Guardini since, unfortunately, his name has been frequently invoked by all too many of the would-be liturgists of the post-Vatican II era, all the while failing to make a holistic presentation of the material found in his work. It is interesting to note that Guardini doesn't offer particular suggestions for liturgical renewal as much as provide an over-arching framework for a genuine understanding of the Sacred Liturgy. Permit me to highlight but a handful of his many jewels. Guardini places a heavy stress on the corporate nature of liturgical worship, the "we" of it, its universality, thus eliminating "the ephemeral, adventitious, and locally characteristic elements." He asserts that it is "sustained by thought," "governed and interwoven with dogma." And what about the place of the heart? "The heart must be guided, supported, and purified by the mind"; even more, the heart must be "directed by thought, and not by feeling." He goes on to speak the unspeakable in our era of egalitarianism and, even more, an era which canonizes the cult of the slob: "A fairly high degree of genuine learning and culture is necessary in the long run in order to keep spiritual life healthy"; yet again, "spiritual life should be impregnated with the wholesome salt of genuine and lofty culture." A key virtue for one involved in liturgical education and action is that of "humility," which demands the "acceptance of the spiritual principles that the liturgy offers and that far transcend the little world of individual spiritual existence," calling for the "subordination of self." He has the temerity to declare that "liturgy keeps all vulgarizing elements at a distance" and that one "must learn to subscribe to the noble, restrained forms that etiquette requires in the House and at the Court of the Divine Majesty." Imagine: "the House and Court of the Divine Majesty"! And that "House and Court" require a unique liturgical style: "clear in language, measured in movement, severe in its ideas, languages, ceremonies, and imagery fashioned out of the simple elements of the spiritual life; rich, varied, and lucid; its force further intensified by the fact that the liturgy employs a classic language, remote from everyday life." Yes, one of the "grand-daddies" of the liturgical movement thought the use of Latin was important because it is "remote from everyday life." Guardini takes on the relationship between liturgy and devotional exercises, holding that both are needed, but in proper proportion. He warns: "If private devotion were nonexistent, and if the liturgy were the final and exclusive form of spiritual exercise, that exercise might easily degenerate into a frigid formula. . . ." I have long maintained that one of the reasons why the liturgy itself has taken on such an emotional and pietistic hue in so many places is precisely due to the near-total banishment of devotions like novenas and Benediction, which gave a space to the affective dimension of worship. He confronts the resurgent Gnostic heresy which would denigrate a rich liturgical experience as it would maintain that a purely "spiritual" dimension is sufficient for the spiritually mature. Decades before Guardini, Blessed John Henry Cardinal Newman gave a response to such arguments: The Bible then may be said to give us the spirit of religion; but the Church must provide the body in which that spirit is to be lodged. Religion must be realized in particular acts, in order to its continuing alive. . . . There is no such thing as abstract religion. When persons attempt to worship in this (what they call) more spiritual manner, they end, in fact, in not worshipping at all. This frequently happens. Every one may know it from his own experience of himself. Youths, for instance (and perhaps those who should know better than they), sometimes argue with themselves, "What is the need of praying stately morning and evening? why use a form of words? why kneel? why cannot I pray in bed, or walking, or dressing?" they end in not praying at all. Again, what will the devotion of the country people be, if we strip religion of its external symbols, and bid them seek out and gaze upon the Invisible? Scripture gives the spirit, and the Church the body, to our worship; and we may as well expect that the spirits of men might be seen by us without the intervention of their bodies, as suppose that the Object of faith can be realized in a world of sense and excitement, without the instrumentality of an outward form to arrest and fix attention, to stimulate the careless, and to encourage the desponding.1 Guardini sees through the problem of neo-Gnosticism because he has a profound appreciation of sign and symbol, a precursor of Mircea Eliade forty years later, with his magisterial The Sacred and the Profane. No slouch in this regard, either, was the late Father Andrew Greeley with his admonition that when we are talking about a "symbol," it is never possible to modify it by the adverb "just." Nothing is "just a symbol." Guardini also devotes considerable space to a consideration of "the playfulness of the liturgy" – an expression which must not be mistaken for tomfoolery; rather, it means that the liturgy is not done for any personal gain or for any "payback." Josef Pieper teased out some of this meaning in Leisure, The Basis of Culture (1947), while Hugo Rahner2 produced Man at Play (1963). Closely aligned with this point comes Guardini's assertion that liturgy is not didactic (pace, the Eastern Orthodox who would disagree) – although we can learn from it. He explains: ". . . the liturgy has no thought-out, deliberate, detailed plan of instruction. In order to sense the difference, it is sufficient to compare a week of the ecclesiastical year with the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius. In the latter, every element is determined by deliberate choice, everything is directed toward the production of a certain spiritual and didactic result. . . . It is not so with the liturgy. The fact that the latter has no place in the Spiritual Exercises is a proof of this." Perhaps this helps us appreciate the Jesuit Pope's apparent lack of interest and even seeming boredom during the celebration of the Sacred Mysteries. Are there guides for us in navigating a path? Yes: "The play of the child and the creation of the artist" Thus, the liturgy "has toiled to express in a thousand forms the sacred, God-given life of the soul to no other purpose than that the soul plays before God." If the liturgy teaches anything, it is that "the soul [ought] not to see purposes everywhere, not to be too conscious of the end it wishes to attain, not to be desirous of being overly clever and grown-up, but to understand simplicity in life." St. John Vianney's parishioner comes to mind: "I look at Him, and He looks back at me." Or, as I used to tell my high school students who said they "got nothing out of Mass," "You're not there to get anything out of it. You're there to give – your adoration." While having a highly developed appreciation for signs and symbols, Guardini also warns against having a merely "aesthetic" appreciation of the liturgy. It was often said of certain Anglicans that they were "all dressed up with nowhere to go." Or, of some young priests who love Latin liturgy but can't conjugate "amo." Indeed, he levels a very harsh critique of "aesthetes" because he believes that "pride of place" belongs not to beauty, but to truth. To be sure, beauty inspires awe – the "Ah" of a child upon entering a Gothic cathedral. His point, however, is that beauty "eludes those who pursue it for its own sake"; otherwise, "the 'house of prayer' becomes once more, in a different way, a 'den of thieves.'" He quotes with approval Abbot Idefons Herwegen: ". . . the liturgy has developed into a work of art; it was not deliberately formed as such by the Church." That said, I don't think he would take issue with Hans Urs von Balthasar's observation: Beauty is the word that shall be our first. Beauty is the last thing which the thinking intellect dares to approach, since only it dances as an uncontained splendor around the double constellation of the true and the good and their inseparable relation to one another. Beauty is the disinterested one, without which the ancient world refused to understand itself, a word which both imperceptibly and yet unmistakably has bid farewell to our new world, a world of interests, leaving it to its own avarice and sadness. No longer loved or fostered by religion, beauty is lifted from its face as a mask, and its absence exposes features on that face which threaten to become incomprehensible to man. We no longer dare to believe in beauty and we make of it a mere appearance in order the more easily to dispose of it. Our situation today shows that beauty demands for itself at least as much courage and decision as do truth and goodness, and she will not allow herself to be separated and banned from her two sisters without taking them along with herself in an act of mysterious vengeance. We can be sure that whoever sneers at her name as if she were the ornament of a bourgeois past — whether he admits it or not — can no longer pray and soon will no longer be able to love.3 Do we "get anything" out of liturgical prayer? At times, we experience genuine tranquillity and awe: "But these moments are fleeting, and we must be content to accept them as they come or are sent." Closely tied to this awareness is what Guardini calls the problem of "the will" and the desire for autonomy, "the will to power" of Nietzsche, whereby "Superman" fashions his own forms of worship, so as to achieve what he wants to experience. The way to avoid such a development is found in the primacy of the "contemplative": "the wonderful power of relaxation proper to the liturgy and its deep reposefulness" – "contemplation, adoration, and glorification of divine truth" (Can we see Cardinal Sarah smiling here?). Some years ago, having had some truly distressing liturgical experiences during an extended visit to France, I was delighted to concelebrate Holy Mass for the Solemnity of the Mother of God with the rector of the Cathedral of Avignon. When I complimented his ars celebrandi, he replied: "In the Sacred Liturgy, dear Father, we should 'repose, not compose.'" Between Guardini's opus and that of Ratzinger, stand two magisterial documents: Mediator Dei of Pope Pius XII and Vatican II's Sacrosanctum Concilium. Those two documents mine the gold from the early liturgical movement, epitomized in Guardini. Also lying between the two German theologians was a massive cultural devolution (one which Guardini could only espy from afar). Ratzinger's Part One develops much of Guardini's theoretical foundations, taking into account the magisterial and cultural developments. The rest of the Ratzinger work is application, as if to say, "If you understand and accept these principles, then this is what you should be doing." Thus, we are treated to the Cardinal's "take" on neuralgic issues like: ad orientem celebrations of Mass; the place of Latin; the nature of sacred music; the placement of the tabernacle; what constitutes sacred art during a revival of iconoclasm; the importance of kneeling; the centrality of silence. I have given somewhat short shrift to the Ratzinger work because it was a best-seller when it first hit the book stores and continues to be a point of reference. Pope Benedict would not be offended and would actually agree. Why? Because he has always seen the importance of laying a proper foundation. In the previous paragraph, I said, "If you understand and accept these principles, then this is what you should be doing." That is the crux of the matter. In the liturgy wars, we often have argued about liturgical dance and Renaissance polyphony and modes of distributing and receiving Holy Communion. At the end of the day, those matters are symptomatic of a far deeper problem, namely, that all too many among us (especially in the liturgical elite circles) do not "understand and accept these principles." Which is to say that our difficulties are not about taste but about doctrine. Christ bids us "worship in spirit and in truth" (Jn 4:24). These two texts can do much to lead us on that royal path. Endnotes: If you value the news and views Catholic World Report provides, please consider donating to support our efforts. 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