

# “Convertere, Israël, ad Dominum Deum Tuum!”

Whether the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass Ought to be Celebrated Towards the East

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*All the ends of the earth shall remember,  
And shall be turned to the Lord:  
And all the kindreds of the Gentiles  
Shall adore in his sight.*

(Ps. 21:28)

## Introduction

In this paper I would like to examine the question of whether the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass ought to be celebrated facing towards the East, commonly referred to as *ad orientem*. Since the liturgical reforms that began in the 1950's and reached their climax in the 60's and 70's, celebrating the Mass with the priest facing towards the people, *versus populum*, has become the norm in the New Order of the Mass. And yet, strong archaeological and historical evidence suggests that facing towards the orient was the common tradition of the Church beginning from apostolic times.

What has caused such a dramatic change in how the Church worships in the Holy Liturgy? In most churches, the apse was where the cross was placed and where the blessed Sacrament was reposed, and it was traditionally built facing the orient. Eastward was from time immemorial symbolic of the risen Lord. Facing eastward was thus equivalent to facing towards the Lord. If the worship of the liturgy has Christ as its focal point, then it is quite natural to face eastwards and towards the cross during the sacred rites of the liturgy. But if, on the other hand, the liturgy is not so much about celebrating Christ's coming to us, but instead about celebrating the community, then to have everyone facing the same direction, towards the rising sun, makes little sense. If we, the community, are what is most important, then we should be the center of the liturgy. And thus it would seem to make more sense that the priest and the people face each other in the liturgy, celebrating each other.

In order to answer the question of whether the priest and the people ought to face each other or else together face eastward, we must look closely at the nature of the Mass and the principles of worship in order to see what is the best and most fitting way to adore our Lord. So as to make the truth of our conclusion more evident, we will first examine a number of objections that argue against Mass being celebrated *ad orientem*. By first building up the opposing position as much as possible, we hope that then our response will become even more apparent when contrasted to these arguments. Following our main response, we will answer each of the objections individually.

## Objections

It would seem that the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass ought not to be celebrated towards the East.

1. For, the reason to face eastward or any other particular direction of the compass is basically unintelligible to modern man since he neither cares nor is able to understand the eschatological and cosmological symbolism of the orient.<sup>1</sup> But, what is unintelligible or seemingly irrational in liturgy ought

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<sup>1</sup>“Modern man has little understanding of this ‘orientation’. ... in the Western world, an abstract way of thinking, which in a certain way is the fruit of Christian influence, has become dominant. God is spiritual and God is everywhere: Does that not mean that prayer is not tied to a particular place or direction?” Joseph Cardinal

to be rejected, since the first rule of liturgy, especially with regards to language, is that it be revelatory and thus able to be understood.<sup>2</sup> But symbolism is a kind of language. Thus, in order to keep the symbolism of the Mass intelligible to modern man, the priest should not face any determinate direction.

2. Furthermore, God is everywhere, since it is written, “Shall a man be hid in secret places, and I not see him, saith the Lord? do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord?” (Jer. 23:24). Therefore we ought not to worship toward the East as opposed to any other direction.<sup>3</sup>

3. Furthermore, “The true adorers shall adore the Father in spirit and in truth” (Jn. 4:23). But what is done in spirit alone is not done by the body, whereas one adores with the body when they turn eastward to pray, or else in any other particular direction. Therefore we ought not to turn eastward or any other particular direction, if we would be ‘true adorers.’<sup>4</sup>

4. But if we grant that we should at least face one determinate direction, nonetheless that direction should not be eastward. For, the practices of the pagan nations ought not to be imitated by Christians, but facing east was the practice of the pagan nations who worshiped the sun, thus we ought not to worship facing east.<sup>5</sup>

5. Rather we ought to worship facing westward. The reason being that the Jews in the temple worshiped towards the west, but the God whom the Jews worshiped is the same as whom we worship, therefore in order to manifest that continuity, we should worship towards the west as the Jews did.<sup>6</sup>

6. Furthermore, Christ, when he died on the cross, was facing westward.<sup>7</sup> But the priest, when he celebrates the Sacrifice of the Mass and ‘confects the Eucharist’, does so ‘in the person of Christ’.<sup>8</sup> Therefore the priest ought to face westward as Christ did on the cross.

7. But if we do not wish to face in the liturgy according to the heavenly bearings, then at least we ought to face the Holy Land. For, the liturgy in its fullness commemorates the incarnation, life, passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus. But all of this occurred in the Holy Land, and particularly in Jerusalem. Therefore we ought to face Jerusalem when we celebrate the liturgy.

8. But if the priest does not celebrate Mass towards the east, the west, or the Holy Land, then at least he should be towards the people. And this is because Church authorities first allowed mass to be celebrated towards the people,<sup>9</sup> and over the years that allowance has grown into a strong

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Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2000), 75.

<sup>2</sup>“The liturgy, viewed solely from its linguistic structure, is built on an intermingling of the ‘I’ and the ‘ye’, which are then continually being united in the ‘we’ of the whole Church speaking to God through Christ. In a liturgy of this kind language is not for the purpose of concealment but for the purpose of revealing. ... it is an indisputable truth and a basic liturgical law that the language of the liturgy should be intelligible.” Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, “Catholicism After The Council,” trans. Patrick Russell, *The Furrow* 18, no. 1 (January 1967): 7–8, 12.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Christian Classics, 1981), I. q.8 a.2; Thomas Aquinas, *Commentarium In Libros Sententiarum*, n.d., III. d.9, a.3c, ad.3.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I. q.84, a.1, ad.1.

<sup>5</sup>“Worship towards the west was introduced in the Law to the exclusion of idolatry: because all the Gentiles, in reverence to the sun, worshipped towards the east; hence it is written (Ezech. 8:16) that certain men ‘had their backs towards the temple of the Lord, and their faces to the east, and they adored towards the rising of the sun.’ Accordingly, in order to prevent this, the tabernacle had the Holy of Holies to westward, that they might adore toward the west. A figurative reason may also be found in the fact that the whole state of the first tabernacle was ordained to foreshadow the death of Christ, which is signified by the west, according to Ps. 67:5: ‘Who ascendeth unto the west; the Lord is His name.’” Ibid., I.II, q.102, a.4, ad.5.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., I.II, q.102, a.4, ad.5.

<sup>7</sup>Robert, S.J. Bellarmine, *Roberti Bellarmini Politiani S.J., Opera Omnia* (Paris: Vives, 1870), vol. III, chap. 3, pg. 269.

<sup>8</sup>Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, III. q.82, a.1, co.

<sup>9</sup>“The main altar should preferably be freestanding, to permit walking around it and celebration facing the people.” Sacred Congregation of Rites, *Inter Oecumenici*, September 26, 1964, 91. This article seems to have binding force, especially with article 99 that follows it: “Pope Paul in an audience with Cardinal Larraona, Prefect of the Congregation of Rites, gave it specific approval as a whole and in its parts, confirmed it by his authority, and ordered it to be published and faithfully observed by all concerned, beginning on the first Sunday of Lent, 7

encouragement,<sup>10</sup> and finally in some cases to decrees that Mass must always be celebrated towards the people and all future churches ought to be built in such a way as to accommodate this practice.<sup>11</sup> And since the majority of the Church has followed these encouragements and decrees, so should we follow them so as to ‘sentire cum ecclesia’, to have the same mind as the Church.

9. Furthermore, in St. Peter’s basilica, the papal Masses were always celebrated facing the people. But the church as a whole ought to manifest her union with Rome by celebrating Mass as the pope does. Therefore Mass should be celebrated everywhere towards the people.

10. Furthermore, the last supper, at which Christ presided, was essentially a common meal. And common meals, being social events, are had with people facing each-other. But the Mass is to be modeled after the last supper. Thus priest and people must face each other.

11. The liturgy is essentially a dialogue,<sup>12</sup> and dialogue is only possible where there is communion and community. But communion and community can only happen when the members are ‘turned towards each other’, towards the community.<sup>13</sup> Therefore the Mass ought to be celebrated towards the community.

### **But to the contrary:**

1. Christ, when he finally departed from his disciples before Pentecost, ascended into heaven to the east since it is written, “Sing ye to God, Who mounteth above the heaven of heavens, to the east (Ps. 67:34).”<sup>14</sup> And as he ascended, so shall he return (Acts 1:10-11). “Behold, the glory of the God of Israel came in by the way of the east (Ezek. 43:2).” But if Christ goes and comes “by way of the east” then when we worship him, we ought to turn our faces towards the east.

2. And again, traditions that have been practiced and handed down by every rite of the Roman Church from antiquity are certainly derived from the apostles. But celebrating Mass ‘ad orientem’ was, up until the liturgical reforms of the 50’s and 60’s, practiced by every rite of the Roman Church.<sup>15</sup> Therefore celebrating Mass ‘ad orientem’ is certainly derived from the apostles themselves and ought to be imitated.

3. And again, God’s most marvelous work in nature, that of the turning of the heavens, has its source in the east, for the heavens turn from east to west. But we come to know God through contemplating his highest and most noble creation, and the sun and turning heavens are the highest and

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March 1965.” Ibid., para. 99.

<sup>10</sup>G. Lercaro, “Letter of Cardinal Lercaro, President of Consilium, to Presidents of the Conferences of Bishops,” *Le Renouveau Liturgique*, June 30, 1965, para. 6; “The Altar should be freestanding to allow the ministers to walk around it easily and Mass to be celebrated facing the people.” *The Roman Missal: General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 1975, para. 262; *Cerimonial of Bishops*, 1984, para. 48; “The altar should be built apart from the wall, in such a way that it is possible to walk around it easily and that Mass can be celebrated at it facing the people, which is desirable wherever possible.” *The Roman Missal: General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 2003, 299 Note that this official English translation was confirmed and approved in 2002 by Cardinal Arinze of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments.

<sup>11</sup>See for example the directives for the Italian Bishop’s Conference: “L’altare fisso della celebrazione sia unico e rivolto al popolo” [the fixed altar of celebration should be unique and facing the people]. “Principi e Norme per L’uso Del Messale Romano – Precisazioni Della Conferenza Episcopale Italiana,” n.d., para. 14; and also see *ibid.*, para. 17.

<sup>12</sup>“The essence of Christian worship is that it is the announcement of the glad tidings of God to the congregation bodily present, the answering acceptance by the congregation of this announcement, and the whole Church talking together to God...” Ratzinger, “Catholicism After the Council,” 7.

<sup>13</sup>“The altar versus populum certainly makes for a celebration of the Eucharist which is truer and more communal.” G. Lercaro, *L’Heureux Développement* (Notitiate 1966), #6.

<sup>14</sup>This text is traditionally understood by the Church Fathers to refer to Christ’s ascension into heaven. For example Thomas Aquinas, *Super Epist. ad Ephesios*, n.d., cap.4 lect. 3 “In the second place he shows the term of the ascension when he says, “Who mounteth above the heaven of heavens, to the east.” (Ps. 67:34).

<sup>15</sup>Uwe Michael Lang, *Turning Towards the Lord: Orientation in Liturgical Prayer* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 98.

most noble of all corporeal beings. Therefore, it is most fitting that we turn our face towards the source of the turning heavens, that is towards the east, when we worship and adore the creator of the Universe.

## Response

### *1. That Worshipping Eastward Is Necessary*

I respond that celebrating liturgy towards the east is necessary. And yet, it is important that we distinguish what we mean here by the term ‘necessary’. Necessity means, simply speaking, that something is “not able not to be” i.e., it must be. But this necessity can be said in several ways.<sup>16</sup> For something is necessary either from an intrinsic principle of its own being, such as it being necessary that any incorruptible being continue to exist, or that a triangle have three right angles, and this we call ‘natural’ or ‘absolute’ necessity. Or else something is necessary from an extrinsic principle of its being, such as from the agent who ‘coerces’ the thing to be. And from this we have necessity ‘of constraint’. Or it is necessary on account of the ‘end’ and ‘purpose’ whose fulfillment is required for the completion of the act. And from this we have necessity ‘of the end’. And this final kind of necessity can be either that without which it is impossible to attain the end, such as the eating of food being necessary to attain the ‘end’ or purpose of life, or else it can consist in not only attaining the desired end, but attaining it well, such as traveling very long distances being better done by car or by plane than by foot.

Now worship towards the east is only necessary with regards to this last kind of necessity, that is with regard to the ‘fittingness’ or the ‘well-being’ of how the end is attained.<sup>17</sup> For the Mass is not something absolutely unchanging like God’s nature or the definition of a triangle. This is manifest from the fact that the Mass has developed organically throughout the centuries while still maintaining what is essential to the sacrifice. And neither is the Mass something that coerces us to face east towards the rising sun every time it is celebrated, and this is manifest for the simple fact that in many churches throughout history, Mass has been validly and licitly celebrated facing other directions besides eastward.<sup>18</sup> Thus the necessity of facing east in the worship of the Mass is neither an absolute or natural necessity, nor is it a necessity of constraint, but rather it is a necessity of ‘fittingness’ or ‘well-being’, that is, given the ‘latreutic’ purpose of the Mass, namely being ordered towards worship and adoration, it is thus bound to follow certain norms so as to best achieve that purpose.

Given also that the Mass is something that can admit of change, variation, and growth, then it must also be said that it can be done either well or badly. For in the processes of nature, change, variation, and growth always occur with respect to some end or purpose. But to the extent that something falls short of that purpose, it is done badly, while insofar as it attains more closely to that purpose it is done well. Assuming then that our end is not only to do the absolute minimum so as to achieve a valid and licit Mass, but also to give what is best and most worthy when giving worship and sacrifice to God, thus in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass we ought to worship in the best, most noble, and fitting way possible.

### *2. That We Must Worship With Our Bodies*

An offering of adoration is more perfect and noble insofar as it is more complete. Therefore, our adoration and worship of God will be more perfect insofar as it encompasses more of our nature, and that we thus make a more complete and perfect offering of ourselves in the worship that we give to God. But in the Liturgy, God is worshiped first of all as the Creator of the universe, and secondly as the Incarnate Word, as God made flesh. We worship him as Creator because he has made us in our entirety, and thus we

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<sup>16</sup>See for example Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I. q.82, a.1, co.; Aquinas, *In Libros Sententiarum*, III. d.20, a.1c, co.; IV. d.7, q.1, a.1b, co.

<sup>17</sup>“There is a certain fittingness in adoring towards the east.” Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II.II q.84, a.3, ad.3.

<sup>18</sup>Even before the advent of Mass ‘versus populum’, Churches were frequently built such that the priest was not able to face directly east when reciting the Canon, not due to a desire to face other than east, but simply that the topological features of the place did not permit an eastward facing apse.

ought to worship him with everything that we are, both in our bodies and our souls. As St. John Damascene states,

It is not without reason or by chance that we worship towards the East. But seeing that we are composed of a visible and an invisible nature, that is to say, of a nature partly of spirit and partly of sense, we render also a twofold worship to the Creator;<sup>19</sup>

Thus, as Creator, we must adore him with the twofold worship of our souls and our bodies.

But God is worshiped in the Mass not only as Creator, but also as Incarnate Word, as the Word made flesh. Benedict XVI himself says that, “the Catholic liturgy is the liturgy of the Word made flesh.”<sup>20</sup> And again as Damascene continues,

we render also a twofold worship to the Creator; just as we sing both with our spirit and our bodily lips, and are baptized with both water and Spirit, and are united with the Lord in a twofold manner, being sharers in the mysteries and in the grace of the Spirit.<sup>21</sup>

The Word fully took on human nature in its dual reality of body and spirit. And thus is our humanity “united with the Lord in a twofold manner.” Because of this union of human nature with the Word, it has been essentially re-created by being sanctified and divinized in its totality. So, just as we ought to adore and worship God the Creator with our whole being for bringing us out of nothing, so also must we worship him as Incarnate Word with everything that we are for bringing us again out of sin and to the new life of grace, both in our bodies and our souls. And so, As Benedict XVI puts it, our worship must become “incarnational.”

Just as God assumed a body and entered the time and space of this world, so it is appropriate to prayer – at least to communal liturgical prayer – that our speaking to God should be “incarnational”, that it should be Christological, turned through the incarnate Word to the triune God.”<sup>22</sup>

Because God has created us in the beginning, and recreated us through the sending of his Son, thus ought our prayer to be in imitation of Christ in his incarnate nature. And so we ought we offer to God a twofold adoration, namely “spiritual adoration, consisting in the internal devotion of the mind; and a bodily adoration, which consists in an exterior humbling of the body.”<sup>23</sup> And it is the interior adoration of spirit, the *oratio*, that is most important and to which the exterior *actio* of the body is ordered. In the very sacramental celebration of the Mass in particular, as Benedict XVI remarks, the external actions of the liturgy become quite secondary.

*Doing* really must stop when we come to the heart of the matter: the *oratio*. It must be plainly evident that the *oratio* is the heart of the matter, but that it is important precisely because it provide a space for the *actio* of God. Anyone who grasps this will easily see that it is not now a matter of looking at or toward the priest, but of looking together toward the Lord and going out to meet him.<sup>24</sup>

Since we come to know and experience things first of all with our exterior senses and then with our interior understanding, so is it necessary first to humble the body by certain bodily gestures of adoration so as to dispose the spirit that it might in turn be moved to go out and meet God in worship and adoration. As Ratzinger continues,

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<sup>19</sup>John Damascene, *An Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. E.W. Watson and L. Pullan, vol. IX, Anti-Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Church 2 (Buffalo, NY: The Christian Literature Company, 1899), bk. IV. chap. 12.

<sup>20</sup>Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 220.

<sup>21</sup>Damascene, *On the Orthodox Faith*, vol. IX, bk. IV. chap. 12.

<sup>22</sup>Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 76.

<sup>23</sup>Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II.II. q.84, a.2, co.

<sup>24</sup>Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 174.

The body must be trained, so to speak, for the resurrection. ... This training is an essential part of everyday life, but it has to find its inner support in the liturgy, in the liturgy's 'orientation' toward the risen Christ. ... The body has a place within the divine worship of the Word made flesh, and it is expressed liturgically in a certain discipline of the body, in gestures that have developed out of the liturgy's inner demands that make the essence of the liturgy, as it were, bodily visible."<sup>25</sup>

Since the Word became flesh in a determinate time, in a determinate place, and in a determinate human nature, thus ought our worship to be determinate, most of all by the fact that we are human beings, just like Christ, made up of body and soul. Therefore our worship will be bodily, and through the means of the body, it will also ascend to the level of the spiritual.<sup>26</sup>

### 3. *That Sacrifice Involves the Sanctification Of Time and Space*

Because of our bodily nature, our worship will be determined by the fact that we are in space and time. For, just as our body is, as it were, an 'instrument' of worship through which the mind ascends to God,<sup>27</sup> so also must space and time which contain the body become instruments of worship so that through them we can come to draw near to God. In order then to be used well in the liturgy, space and time must be oriented, consecrated, and thus made sacred for divine purposes. It is this determination and 'turning' of space and time "through the incarnate Word to the triune God," that consecrates them for the sake of worship and which makes them sacred.<sup>28</sup> This determination though of sacred space for the sake of worship is not something arbitrary, rather it must be in the most noble and worthy way possible. For in the worship that is due to God it is essential that one offers to him what is best and most noble. And this is how sacrifice comes into worship. By the very fact that we worship God, we must give to him what is most noble, and in this giving of what is most noble does adoration become true sacrifice. And it is by means of the external sacrifice that the internal sacrifice of the soul is signified. By these external sacrifices we represent "the interior true sacrifice in which the human mind offers itself to God."<sup>29</sup> Thus, it is through the sacrifice of our own bodies and of the space in which we worship by orienting them toward the Lord that these things are made holy, *sacra facta*, and thus do we offer to God a true "sacrifice of praise (Ps. 49:14)."

Worship then, by its very nature, makes a sacrifice to God of the best of the corporeal realities that pertain to us, such as our material belongings, the spaces in which we live and worship, the actions which we do, our very bodies themselves. Since then worship and adoration consists in giving the best and most noble things to God, then we will not only offer to God our bodies and the postures of worship and obeisance that are proper to adoration, but also the physical direction in which we adore the Lord. In worship, we are called to make all creation into a sacrifice, an offering to God. By consecrating our direction of worship to the Lord, we sanctify space and the entire corporeal dimension in which we live. Now, in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, of all the possible directions for the worship of God, that orientation ought to be used which is most worthy and most noble. For the Mass is itself the highest sacrifice that we as humans can offer to God, the victim who is sacrificed on the altar being the very Son of God. Thus the Mass deserves the most worthy postures and directional worship that can possibly be given to it.

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 176.

<sup>26</sup>"the human mind, in order to be united to God, needs to be guided by the sensible world, since 'invisible things . . . are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made,' as the Apostle says (Rm. 1:20). Wherefore in the Divine worship it is necessary to make use of corporeal things, that man's mind may be aroused thereby, as by signs, to the spiritual acts by means of which he is united to God. Therefore the internal acts of religion take precedence of the others and belong to religion essentially, while its external acts are secondary, and subordinate to the internal acts." Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II.II. q.81, a.7, co.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., II.II. q.83, a.17, co.

<sup>28</sup>Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 76.

<sup>29</sup>Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles Book III*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Burns & Oates; Liturgical Press, 1928), chap. 120.9.

#### 4. *That Worship Involves Orienting Ourselves According to the Heavenly Bearings*

Of all the bearings and directions that might be used by the priest and the congregated faithful in the offering of the Mass, which indeed are the most worthy? The bearings taken according to the motions of the heavens are the most worthy. In order to see why this is the case, let us first look at what it means for something to be ‘worthy’ or ‘noble’. Simply speaking, one thing is more noble or more excellent than another on account of its having more ‘being’ and thus more perfection than another.<sup>30</sup> God is the most noble since he contains all perfections, and because his being is his very essence.<sup>31</sup> And any creature, either spiritual or material, in turn has more nobility insofar as it draws near to imitating God’s perfection. Thus spiritual beings are more noble than all of material creation insofar as the human intellect or those of angels are made in the image of God. But of all material creation, those bodies are most noble which, in their natural state, draw the closest to imitating God’s nobility either on account of their longevity, their universal causality, or else their superiority. And thus do they imitate God insofar as he is eternal, as he is the Creator and cause of all being, and insofar as he is exalted above all things. But, of all corporeal beings, it is the heavenly bodies that imitate God most of all in these three ways. Of all bodily creatures, they are the least likely to be destroyed and corrupted. They are, for all sakes and purposes, permanent. The planets and the stars just don’t go away. They rise and set every night just as they have been doing for as long as history has been recorded. The sun itself rises every morning, and we can be sure it will rise again tomorrow. The heavenly bodies then are the closest visible realities that we have to anything eternal. But they are also universal in their causality. The universal effect of gravitation would be an example of this. If the gravitation of the planets and the moon have an effect on the tides of the sea, then they will also have an effect, no matter how slight, on all corporeal beings that lie in their range of influence. Thus the heavenly bodies occupy a preeminent place among all other bodies on account of their universality as causes. And furthermore, they are the most noble on account of their being most exalted above all things. Certainly, with the Copernican revolution and the advent of Newtonian physics, one is apt to associate the center and thus the reference point of our turning galaxy either with regard to the sun, or else with the center of gravity between the planets. But if one abstracts from those theories, and focuses on what is first and most apparent to the senses, then we see that indeed the heavens are above us and that the earth is below. We look up from this little planet upon which we stand and see that there is something beyond and far above our world here, something much bigger, better, and more beautiful. Thus, in this sense the stars, the heavens, and the revolving planets are far exalted above us. The breadth and depth of the heavens staggers the mind and imagination. Their immensity, magnificence, mystery, and motion moves one to believe that their must be a God. A sign of this is that nearly all natural human religions have begun by first of all worshiping the ‘sky-god’. For it is in the motions of the heavens above that God’s presence is most apparent to the senses.

#### 5. *That Worship Must Be Towards the East*

If the heavenly bodies and the revolving stars are the most noble and divine of all corporeal being, thus our worship of God must be oriented according to them. And since the stars, the planets, and the sun all move continually from east to west, therefore our direction of prayer ought to be in that same line. This directional and ordered motion of the heavens is, as it were, a finger that points. It points to God, their cause, the one who created them, sustains them, and who, as the first mover of all things, continues to move and affect them both by his universal physical causality, as well as by holding them in their being. And thus when we worship the God who created the universe, we ought to turn our gaze in the direction by which he moves all things. Of the two directions that lie in the plane of the heavenly motions, namely east and west, which of them is most noble and thus most worthy of our direction of worship? Eastward is the most noble direction. That this is so is based on the witness of nature, Tradition, and

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<sup>30</sup>Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles Book I*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benzinger Brothers, 1924), chap. 28.2; Aquinas, *In Libros Sententiarum*, I. d.17, a.1, ad.6.

<sup>31</sup>Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I. q.4 a.2 co.

Scripture.

### a) Argument from nature

The east is more noble than the west because that which comes first in any order is always more essential to the being of a thing than that which comes second. And thus, that which is the first principle and thus most prior in the order of motion will have a certain eminent dignity with regards to all that which comes after. But, in the motions of the heavens, the orient is the most prior, for the heavens take the origin of their motion from thence, whereas its motion ends, as it were, in the west. Thus the east has greater dignity than the west and is thus the most excellent part of all corporeal being.<sup>32</sup> As such, the orient manifests in a most excellent way the magnificence of the Creator.<sup>33</sup> And by gazing upon this turning of the heavens from east to west, the soul is moved to turn itself from worldly things to divine things and to submit itself to the almighty God.<sup>34</sup>

The east also has a particular dignity insofar the sun rises from thence every day. The sun itself is the most noble of all the heavenly bodies insofar as it is the universal source of all light and life. Every nation, every living and breathing thing depends upon the sun for its life. Without it we simply could not live on this planet. Because of its universality in giving light and life to all, the sun is appropriated in a special way to God as signifying the source of all life and knowledge.<sup>35</sup> Whence, Benedict XVI states that “the cosmic symbol of the rising sun expresses the universality of God above all particular places and yet maintains the concreteness of divine revelation. Our praying is thus inserted into the procession of the nations to God.”<sup>36</sup> On account of its incredible power and primacy as giving all things their light and life, thus the rising sun ought to be in a special way our point of reference when giving worship and adoration to the Creator.

### b) Arguments from Tradition

We do not only come to know how we ought to fittingly worship God through the world of created nature, but we also come to see this from the testimony of tradition. And the authority of tradition holds more weight than the indications of nature, since its authority traces all the way back to the teachings of the apostles and finally to Christ himself who, being God, is the author of nature. And the Church must be obedient to this tradition, and if it must make any revisions of the liturgy, they are only to be done “in the light of sound tradition.”<sup>37</sup> Tradition then is the guiding principle to determine the legitimacy of requested changes to the mode of the liturgy. “That sound tradition may be retained, and yet the way remain open to legitimate progress careful investigation is always to be made into each part of the liturgy which is to be

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<sup>32</sup>“The heaven begins to move and rise from the east, and it is thus the most excellent part of the corporeal world. And thus when we pray we turn our corporeal face towards the most excellent body since on the one hand, as Justin says, to God ought to be given the best things, and then also that we might be urged to turn the spiritual face of the soul towards the most excellent spirit, who is God, as Augustine says.” Bellarmine, *Opera Omnia*, III:269; Aquinas, *In Libros Sententiarum*, III. d.9, a.3c, ad.3.

<sup>33</sup>Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II.II q.84, a.3, ad.3.

<sup>34</sup>“In the second place, to show God’s benevolence, he says ‘who art in heaven’ (Mt. 6:9), not for a certain bodily place, for ‘I fill heaven and earth, says the Lord’ (Jer. 23:24), but on account of preeminence. Whence he provides here for the weak, that they might understand that God ought to be worshiped through that which is highest in bodies. On account of this we pray towards the east, because the heavens are turned from the east. And just as heaven is above the body, so is God above the spirit. Whence, just as the body is turned towards the heavens, so is the spirit turned towards God. That therefore the spirit might be called back from earthly things, he says, ‘Our Father, who art in heaven.’ Thomas Aquinas, *Super Evangelium Matthaei*, n.d., Cap. 6, Lect. 3.

<sup>35</sup>“The illumination of our minds is from God, just as corporeal light from the east.” Aquinas, *In Libros Sententiarum*, III. d.9, a.3c, ad.3.

<sup>36</sup>Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 76.

<sup>37</sup>Pope Paul VI, “Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*,” 1963, para. 4, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19631204\\_sacrosanctum-concilium\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html).



revised.”<sup>38</sup>

What then is this tradition which is to be the guiding light when investigating the liturgy? *Sacrosanctum Concilium* refer to this “venerable tradition” as the “tradition going back to early Christian times,” the “centuries-old tradition of the Latin rite,” and finally the “tradition handed down from the apostles.”<sup>39</sup> This centuries-old tradition that has been handed down from the apostles is in turn constituted from different parts, both written and unwritten. As St. Basil says,

Of the beliefs and practices whether generally accepted or publicly enjoined which are preserved in the Church some we possess derived from written teaching; others we have received delivered to us “in a mystery” by the tradition of the apostles; and both of these in relation to true religion have the same force. And these no one will gainsay—no one, at all events, who is even moderately versed in the institutions of the Church. For were we to attempt to reject such customs as have no written authority, on the ground that the importance they possess is small, we should unintentionally injure the Gospel in its very vitals; or, rather, should make our public definition a mere phrase and nothing more. For instance, to take the first and most general example, who is thence who has taught us in writing to sign with the sign of the cross those who have trusted in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ? What writing has taught us to turn to the East at the prayer? ... On what written authority do we do this? Is not our authority silent and mystical tradition? Nay, by what written word is the anointing of oil itself taught? And whence comes the custom of baptizing thrice? And as to the other customs of baptism from what Scripture do we derive the renunciation of Satan and his angels? Does not this come from that unpublished and secret teaching which our fathers guarded in a silence out of the reach of curious meddling and inquisitive investigation? Well had they learned the lesson that the awful dignity of the mysteries is best preserved by silence. What the uninitiated are not even allowed to look at was hardly likely to be publicly paraded about in written documents. ...<sup>40</sup>

Faithful to the teaching of St. Basil and the Fathers, the Vatican II Constitution on Divine Revelation continues in this thought saying,

There exists a close connection and communication between Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture. For both of them, flowing from the same divine wellspring, in a certain way merge into a unity and tend toward the same end. For Sacred Scripture is the word of God inasmuch as it is consigned to writing under the inspiration of the divine Spirit, while Sacred Tradition takes the word of God entrusted by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit to the Apostles, and hands it on to their successors in its full purity, so that led by the light of the Spirit of truth, they may in proclaiming it preserve this word of God faithfully, explain it, and make it more widely known. Consequently, it is not from Sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed. Therefore both Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of loyalty and reverence. Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture form one sacred deposit of the word of God, committed to the Church.<sup>41</sup>

The unwritten tradition of the Church then is intrinsically united to the written Gospel. If one falls, they both fall. Just as the walls of a house uphold the roof and keep it stable against the winds, so does Scripture uphold the unwritten tradition. And just as the roof protects the house from the rain and snow, so does perennial Tradition handed down by the Apostles protect the Gospel from being undermined. They both “have the same force” and are both a source of the Church’s “certainty about everything which has been revealed” such that both are to be “venerated with the same sense of loyalty and reverence.”<sup>42</sup>

John Damascene gives several examples of venerable traditions handed down from the Apostles which

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid., para. 23.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., para. 24, 84, 89, 101, 106.

<sup>40</sup>Basil, *De Spiritu Sancto*, ed. Migne and B. Pruche, PG 32: 91–93.

<sup>41</sup>Pope Paul VI, “Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation - Dei Verbum,” *Vatican.va*, 1965, 9, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19651118\\_dei-verbum\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html).

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

remain unwritten, among which we find, like in St. Basil's account, worshiping towards the east. "In expectation of His coming we worship towards the East. But this tradition of the apostles is unwritten. For much that has been handed down to us by tradition is unwritten."<sup>43</sup> And again,

[Veneration of images] is an unwritten tradition, just as is also the worshiping towards the East and the worship of the Cross, and very many other similar things. . . . Moreover that the Apostles handed down much that was unwritten, Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles, tells us in these words: "Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you have been taught of us, whether by word or by epistle (2 Thes. 2:15)." And to the Corinthians he writes, "Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things, and keep the traditions as I have delivered them to you (1 Cor. 11:2)."<sup>44</sup>

One can find numerous citations from the early Church Fathers, besides these ones, demonstrating with abundant clarity that worshiping towards the east was the common custom in both east and west.<sup>45</sup> The archaeological excavations demonstrate as well with overwhelming evidence that turning towards the east was held to be the primary direction of prayer.<sup>46</sup> But not only in the ancient Church was the east held to be the proper direction of worship. In all the intervening centuries, even up to the eve of the liturgical changes of the past century, every rite in the Roman Church offered the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass towards the east. Fr. Michael Lang remarks that celebrating the Sacrifice of the Mass towards the east

was the virtually universal practice in the Latin Church until the most recent times and is part of the liturgical heritage in the Churches of the Byzantine, Syriac, Armenian, Coptic, and Ethiopian traditions. It is still the custom in most of the Eastern rites for priest and people to face the same direction in prayer, at least during the anaphora. That a few Eastern Catholic Churches, for example, the Maronite and the Syro-Malabar, have lately adopted the *celebratio versus populum* is owing to modern Latin influence and not in keeping with their authentic traditions.<sup>47</sup>

One can conclude then that if every rite of the Church celebrated the Mass towards the east according to their authentic tradition, then it can be certainly traced back to the institution of the Apostles themselves.

Given then the overwhelming probability that this practice originated with the apostles, nonetheless, does it hold the same force of necessity as the other things passed on by the Apostles, such as baptizing in the name of the Holy Trinity? Aquinas makes a two-fold distinction regarding the things that are done in the administration of the Sacraments.

Human institutions observed in the sacraments are not essential to the sacrament; but belong to the solemnity which is added to the sacraments in order to arouse devotion and reverence in the recipients. But those things that are essential to the sacrament, are instituted by Christ Himself, Who is God and man. And though they are not all handed down by the Scriptures, yet the Church holds them from the intimate tradition of the apostles, . . .<sup>48</sup>

Thus, those things pertaining to the form of the sacraments that the apostles received from Christ himself as man and God are necessary to the very being of the sacrament. They are the *sine qua non*. And some of these have been given in Scripture by Christ while others have been handed down orally by the Apostles themselves.<sup>49</sup> And yet those things regarding the 'solemnity' of the sacraments which the apostles instituted on their own authority as men are only necessary for the fittingness and the 'well-being' of the sacrament, insofar as these conform more to the actions of our Lord, are derived from the authority of the apostles, and also make the recipients of the sacrament more disposed to receiving the grace contained

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<sup>43</sup>Damascene, *On the Orthodox Faith*, vol. IX, bk. IV, chap. 12.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., vol. IX, bk. IV, chap. 16.

<sup>45</sup>Lang, *Turning towards the Lord*, 35–56.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 56–88.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 98.

<sup>48</sup>Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, III, q.64, a.2, ad.1.

<sup>49</sup>Aquinas, *In Libros Sententiarum*, IV, d.23, q.1, a.4a, ad.1.

therein.<sup>50</sup> And facing towards the east, as we have sought to manifest, would be one of these sacred traditions originating with the apostles which pertains to the solemnity of the sacrifice. Given the witness of the fathers that celebrating mass towards the east is of apostolic origin, therefore it is of utmost fittingness that, in union with that tradition, the Church continue to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in this way.

### c) Arguments from Scripture

From the inspired testimony of Sacred Scripture we also have several passages that indicate the preeminence of worshiping towards the east. These are of two kinds, either they indicate that Christ departs into and returns from the east, or else that certain geographical locations are to be found in the east that are known for the eminent nobility of their symbolism.

The verse from Psalm 67 where God is said to “mount above the heaven of heavens, to the east” (Ps. 67:34) is attributed by John Damascene, Augustine, Aquinas, Bellarmine, and the fathers in general, to Christ’s resurrection and ascension into heaven.<sup>51</sup> It is stated that Christ will come again from the east just as he ascended (Acts 1:10-11) and that his appearance will be like lightning that comes “out of the east and appeareth even into the west” (Mt. 24:27). Christ is also referred to as “the light of the world” (Jn. 8:12; 9:5), a term that could only be derived from the sun which shines over all. At the transfiguration his face “shines like the sun” (Mt. 17:2). He is the “sun of justice” (Mal. 4:2). He even replaces the sun by becoming our “everlasting light” (Is. 60:19), and finally he is the very east itself, for “the orient is his name” (Zech. 6:11-12), and from the east he calls to us.<sup>52</sup> And thus, as the great doctor of the Church Robert Bellarmine concludes, “so that we might signify in our prayer that we are illuminated by Christ, the sun of justice, thus just as those who look to the east are illuminated by the corporeal sun, so in the same way do we use this ceremony [of facing towards the east].”<sup>53</sup> Likewise, Christ himself was crucified facing west, as Damascene and Bellarmine attest, and thus we must face east so as to look upon him whom we worship.<sup>54</sup> And since Christ ascended to the east, so do “we turn to the east just as if we were stretching out to him in his ascending with our prayers and our offerings.”<sup>55</sup> And we must expect him to come again from the east at the last judgment.<sup>56</sup>

Besides the numerous texts from Scripture that refer to Christ as going into and coming from the east, and as being light, sun, and orient, there are also other places that refer to the nobility of the east as the origin of the human race and as the most fitting dwelling place for God’s people. According to the

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<sup>50</sup>For example, it would pertain to the “solemnity” and sacredness of the sacraments that they be administered with the use of a sacred language. In this regard, the conciliar documents have shown nothing but encouragement for the use of latin in the liturgy. “the use of the Latin language is to be preserved in the Latin rites. ... steps should be taken so that the faithful may also be able to say or to sing together in Latin those parts of the Ordinary of the Mass which pertain to them. ... In accordance with the centuries-old tradition of the Latin rite, the Latin language is to be retained by clerics in the divine office.” *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, para. 36, 54, 101 (cf. 91).

<sup>51</sup>Damascene, *On the Orthodox Faith*, vol. IX, bk. IV, chap. 12; Augustine of Hippo, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, n.d., in Ps. 67:34; Aquinas, *Super Ep. Ad Ephesios*, cap.4 lect. 3; Bellarmine, *Opera Omnia*, III:269.

<sup>52</sup>“The orient calls to you, and you look to the west!” Augustine of Hippo, *Sermones*, n.d., sermon 100; Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II.II. q.189, a.10, co.; Thomas Aquinas, *Contra Doctrinam Retrahentium*, n.d., chap. 9.

<sup>53</sup>Bellarmino, *Opera Omnia*, III:269.

<sup>54</sup>Damascene, *On the Orthodox Faith*, vol. IX, bk. IV, ch. 12: “Christ, when He hung on the Cross, had His face turned towards the West, and so we worship, striving after Him”; Bellarmine, *Opera Omnia*, III:269: “Since the Lord himself, dying on the cross, was looking towards the west, so do we pray to the east, as if we were to look into the face of the crucified one.”

<sup>55</sup>Bellarmino, *Opera Omnia*, III:269.

<sup>56</sup>Damascene, *On the Orthodox Faith*, vol. IX, bk. IV, chap. 12: “And when He was received again into Heaven He was borne towards the East, and thus His apostles worship Him, and thus He will come again in the way in which they beheld Him going towards Heaven (Acts1:11) as the Lord Himself said, ‘As the lightning comes out of the East and shines even unto the West, so also shall the coming of the Son of Man be’ (Mt. 24:27).”

Septuagint, the Lord planted Eden in the east.<sup>57</sup> And thus, as Basil the Great concludes, “we all look to the East at our prayers, but few of us know that we are seeking our own old country, Paradise, which God planted in Eden in the East.”<sup>58</sup> Likewise Moses placed his tent in the east, the tribe of Judah camped there as well, and the gate of the temple of Solomon was turned in that direction.<sup>59</sup> And then finally, the star of Bethlehem that led the wise men to worship at the crib of our Lord rose in the eastern sky (Mt. 2:2,9).

## Responses to the Objections

1. It is true that the first rule of liturgy is that its symbolism must be intelligible. However, any symbol is said to be intelligible either with respect to the intellect which understands the symbolism, or else with respect to the thing signified. In the first way, since human intellect does not change or evolve in itself, being immaterial, thus the capabilities of knowledge with respect to nature do not diminish or increase, but only with respect to the individual insofar as the individual learns or forgets the symbolism of the liturgy. Thus, the liturgy will never be simply unintelligible with respect to human nature, though it might not be understood by an individual. And yet, if it is not understood by an individual, nothing prevents them from being taught the symbolism of facing the orient. Regarding the thing signified, the intelligibility of the liturgy is never lost, for the east is always the most noble direction, and in sacrifice one always offers what is most noble to God. And since the liturgy is always sacrifice, thus the east is always the best direction for offering the sacrifice of the Mass.

2. God is everywhere and thus in every direction, and yet since man is not everywhere but in a determinate place, and since worship is an act of man whereby he gives what is best to God, thus man must worship God in a determinate place and a determinate direction, and that direction and place must be the best and most noble which, as we have shown, is to the east.

3. We “adore the Father in spirit and in truth” (Jn. 4:23) when the intellect and will submit themselves to God completely. But the intellect comes to knowledge of God through the bodily senses. And the will is disposed to humbling itself before God when the body is in turn humiliated. Thus the body must first be humbled and ‘turned’ towards the east so that in the light of the rising sun, the intellect might perceive an image of God’s light, and by that submission of the body, the will might be moved to adore him.

4. While the pagans faced east so as to adore the sun with the worship of *latría*, nonetheless we Christians turn east so as to move our souls to offer worship to the God of heaven. Therefore, even though Christians might have the same external orientation as the pagan nations, yet the internal orientation of the Christian is essentially different, since we worship the Creator and not the created sun, as the pagans do.

5. The Jews worshiped facing west so as to prevent them from falling into the sun-worship of the pagans. But, since Christ has come making void the old law (cf. Eph. 2:15), therefore we worship facing east, and yet not so as to completely do away with the Jewish observance, but to fulfill it. For just as the Jews faced a determinate direction for divine worship, according to the heavenly bearings, so do we when we face eastward.

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<sup>57</sup>See Bellarmine, *Opera Omnia*, III:269: “The Hebrew word is able to be turned either way: for it means ‘Anterior’ and ‘Orient’, which is the most ‘anterior’ part of the world. Whence also our translator in Gen. 4 translated the same name as ‘the eastern side.’”

<sup>58</sup>Basil, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 32:93; see also Damascene, *On the Orthodox Faith*, vol. IX, bk. IV, chap. 12: “Moreover the Scripture also says, ‘And God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there He put the man whom He had formed’ (Gen. 2:8): and when he had transgressed His command He expelled him and made him to dwell over against the delights of Paradise, which clearly is the West. So, then, we worship God seeking and striving after our old fatherland.”

<sup>59</sup>“Moreover the tent of Moses had its veil and mercy seat towards the East (Lev. 16:14). Also the tribe of Judah as the most precious pitched their camp on the East (Num. 2:3). Also in the celebrated temple of Solomon the Gate of the Lord was placed eastward.” Damascene, *On the Orthodox Faith*, vol. IX, bk. IV, chap. 12.

6. Christ faced westward at the Crucifixion, but since Christ is God, therefore he is due the worship of *latría*. Therefore we ought to face Christ, that is towards the east. The priest in the Mass, although he acts ‘in the person of Christ’, nonetheless he makes offerings to God on behalf of himself and all the people, for he is a sinner just like the rest. Therefore both priest and people ought to face towards the crucifix and towards the rising sun, the symbols of God’s presence.

7. It was likely that in the early church the Christians worshiped towards Jerusalem, just like the Jews of the diaspora. It was necessary over time, however, that the Christian mode of worship be distinguished from the Jewish mode. And since we no longer look forward to Christ’s first coming to Jerusalem, as the Jews do, but to his second coming, which will be from the east, hence we worship eastward.

8. It is true that celebrating Mass towards the people and building Churches with such altars is allowed and that, according to “Inter Oecumenici”, it is even ‘desirable’. However it does not follow that it ought to be done. “Inter Oecumenici” and the subsequent directives for the Roman Missal ought not to be interpreted in such a way as to make celebrating Mass towards the people in any way mandatory or binding. Such an interpretation, as Pope Benedict states, “was rejected by the Congregation for Divine Worship ... when it declared that the word *expedit* (‘is desirable’) did not imply an obligation but only made a suggestion.”<sup>60</sup> In addition, regarding the decree from the Italian bishops conference, it should be understood that such a statement does not bind individual bishops or priests to celebrate *versus populum*, because the Bishops conference has no juridical authority, but is only a consultative body. And finally, “sentire cum ecclesia”, to have the same mind as the Church, does not mean that all members of the Church ought to conform to the majority and thus face towards the people in the liturgy, but it means rather that all Christians ought “to be intimately acquainted with the doctrine of the Church which is ‘the pillar and the ground of truth’ (1 Tim. 3, 15).”<sup>61</sup>

9. The fact that the pope faced the nave during Mass in St. Peter’s Basilica where the people were seated was completely unrelated to their presence there. Because of the contours of Vatican hill, the basilica could only be built with its doors and the nave facing eastward, and not the apse, as was the traditional model. So as to preserve the eastward direction of prayer, the pope together with all of the congregation would turn towards the doors of the Church, that is eastward, during the Sacred Canon of the Mass. Thus, if priests wish to truly manifest their union with Rome as far as the direction of worship, then they too, together with their congregations, ought to face eastward as was the tradition in St. Peter’s Basilica.



10. The last supper began indeed with a paschal meal. However the institution of the Eucharist occurred after the eating of the paschal meal itself, “μετὰ τὸ δεῖπνῆσαι (cf. Lk. 22:20),” and yet while they were still at table “Ἐσθιόντων δὲ αὐτῶν, λαβὼν ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἄρτον (Mt. 26:26).” Thus the comparison does not apply. But even if it did, in common meals at that time the ones dining did not face each other. Rather they would have reclined on couches at a semi-circular or ‘U’ shaped table with one end being kept open (cf. Mk. 14:18). The table-waiters would enter at this open end to distribute drinks and the dishes of food. The host would sit at the left corner of the table, as this mosaic from the 5<sup>th</sup> century in Ravenna shows. Given this single orientation of the last supper, it is more fitting to face in one direction, that is towards God, from whom we are nourished in the holy Eucharist from whom all goodness comes.

11. Although certain parts of the liturgy take the literal form of a dialogue or a proclamation between

<sup>60</sup>From the Foreward by Pope Benedict: Lang, *Turning towards the Lord*, 9.

<sup>61</sup>“Lettera di sua Santità Pio XII al Clero Indiano, ‘During Recent Years We Have Been’,” accessed May 3, 2015, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/letters/documents/hf\\_p-xii\\_lett\\_19480130\\_episcopato-india.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/letters/documents/hf_p-xii_lett_19480130_episcopato-india.html).

the priest and the people, such as the liturgy of the word, the homily, the *Dominus vobiscum*, etc., yet the majority of all the prayers said in the liturgy are addressed directly to God. Thus, it is wrong to say that it is essentially a dialogue between the priest and the people. It is proper nonetheless at certain times that the priest turn to face the people, when he addresses them. And yet, it follows that for every other part of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in which he intercedes for the Church, he ought to face towards the cross, towards the tabernacle, and towards the risen Lord who is coming again from the east.

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