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The Liturgy from the Perspective of Pope Francis's Apostolic Letter *Desiderio Desideravi*

Abstract: The Apostolic Letter *Desiderio desideravi* of Pope Francis goes beyond the debate between the “Tridentine liturgy” and the liturgy after the reform of the Second Vatican Council because of its theological, liturgical and spiritual depth. A careful analysis of this document allows to conclude that the theology of the liturgy presented by Francis does not reduce the liturgy to its celebration only. In Francis's understanding, the liturgy includes the work of creation itself and the salvific mission of Christ. Its celebration, as part of the sacramental economy, causes this mystery to be fulfilled in its participants, who live their lives in an ethical way resembling that of Jesus Christ (Christoformation). The preliminary premise of this article, that the liturgical theology of Francis is an expression of the liturgical theology of the Roman school, proves to be correct. The liturgy indeed includes the saving mystery (M), celebration (A), and life (V).

Keywords: Pope Francis, *Desiderio desideravi*, Eucharist, liturgy, liturgical formation, liturgical participation, liturgical celebration

Pope Francis covers various aspects of Christian doctrine in his teaching. His teaching includes the liturgy. The liturgy, especially in its sacramental dimension, is given attention in his principal documents, his encyclicals. First, in the encyclical *Lumen fidei*, the pope writes about the sacraments as means of transmitting the faith, resulting from a direct encounter with God (cf. *LF* 40–45). In the encyclical *Laudato Si'*, he presents sacramental signs in relation to the created world (cf. *LS* 233–37). He asserts here that, “The sacraments are a privileged way in which nature is taken up by God to become a means of mediating supernatural life. Through our worship of God, we are invited to embrace the world on a different

plane” (*LS* 235). In his most recent encyclical, *Dilexit nos*, Pope Francis analyses statements of the Fathers of the Church and later theologians on the symbolism of the pierced side and open heart of Christ as a source of grace and sacraments, and thus as a symbol of intimate union with Christ (cf. *DN* 102–7).¹ Taking into consideration the extent of this teaching in his encyclicals, it could be argued that it is not very extensive, yet its content is significant. A special document of Pope Francis on the topic of the liturgy, however, is his apostolic letter *Desiderio desideravi* (*DD*), given on the solemnity of the Apostles Peter and Paul, 29 June 2022. His analysis is so important because it allows us to understand the essence of the liturgy and all its dimensions in the thinking of Francis. And this allows us to respond to the stereotypical assessment of his teaching as underestimating the liturgy, its importance in Christian life and the liturgical tradition (García-Huidobro 2022, 578–95). In addition, an effort will be made here to present the theology of the liturgy contained therein as liturgical theology as understood in the liturgical theology of the Roman school. This school, and especially its main representative Achille Maria Triacca SDB (1935–2002), started from the assumption that liturgy cannot be reduced solely to celebration (*Actio*), and its understanding should take into account everything that is present in the celebration which is the mystery of the Christian faith (*Mysterium*) and the Christian life (*Vita*). This theology, focusing on and to some extent being inside liturgical celebration, allows a deeper entering into both the mystery of Christ and the Christian life. This is “panenliturgical” theology, that is the one whose source and peak are in liturgy. Triacca clearly ascertained, however, that this does not mean reducing the whole of theology to liturgy (panliturgism). He understood liturgical theology as the way of developing theology which fully acknowledged liturgy and created a synthesis of the whole of theology oriented to the Christian life (cf. Migut 2007, 127–46; Triacca 1982, 321–37; 1986, 193–233).

¹ A comprehensive discussion of the documents and statements of Pope Francis on the liturgy to date has been made by Kasper Mariusz Kaproń from the Faculty of Theology of the Catholic University of St. Paul in Bolivia (Kaproń 2023, 13–27).

The basis of Polish liturgical theology of the Roman School was developed as what is known as liturgical hermeneutics by Adam Durak and Andrzej Żądło. However, the understanding of the liturgy itself and a related understanding of the liturgical theology of the Roman School have been deepened and expanded by Bogusław Migut. In this approach, the liturgy unites the salvific mystery of Christ on the level of its announcement and fulfilment in Christ (*Mysterium*) and its liturgical celebration (*Actio*) for the life of the faithful (*Vita*), but it is also the life of the faithful (*Vita*) expressed in the celebration (*Actio*) so that it is embraced by the saving mystery of Christ (*Mysterium*). Each of these components of the liturgy is also a liturgy in the sense that its main model (paradigm) and goal is liturgy, that is to say, sanctification and worship, and, ultimately, worship. In this sense, the Roman School of liturgical theology, which is built upon this understanding of the liturgy, shows it as a theology within the function of the liturgy, that is, a theology discovering and revealing the liturgical character of all the M–A–V components, but above all, discovering and showing the close bond and even affiliation of these three elements to each other, creating liturgy in a broader sense.

1. Reason for Writing the Letter

Pope Francis's apostolic letter *Desiderio desideravi*, published on the Solemnity of the Apostles Saints Peter and Paul, 29 June 2022, is dedicated to the liturgy and liturgical formation. This letter, though it alludes to *Traditionis custodes*, is in fact a deep theological reflection on the liturgy, particularly the Eucharist, and formation for participating in it. After the pope's opening words giving his reasons for writing this letter and stating that with it he wishes to reach all the faithful after the publication of the motu proprio *Traditionis custodes* (TC) on July 16, 2021, and as could be supposed from the critical reactions to the provisions of that document, it might be expected that *Desiderio desideravi* would be entirely devoted to discussion with the communities concerned, along the lines of the nomenclature adopted by Pope Benedict XVI in his motu proprio *Summorum Pontificum*, on the so-called "extraordinary form of the Roman rite."

Indeed, in his *moto proprio Traditionis custodes* Pope Francis clearly states that the liturgical books promulgated after the Second Vatican Council by Paul VI and John Paul II are the only expression of the *lex orandi* of the Roman Rite (TC 1), and that the use within each given diocese of the Roman Missal of 1962 (known as the Missal of John XXIII), in accordance with the guidelines of the Holy See, is to be decided by the local ordinary (TC 2).

A logical result of the reason for writing the letter, indicated in the first sentence, would seem to be a discussion with “tradition-*alists*.” The pope does not engage in such polemics directly. However, he firmly points to the need for unity in the Church, both on the dogmatic and liturgical levels (*lex credendi* = *lex orandi*), stating that, “The priestly prayer of Jesus at the Last Supper that all may be one (John 17:21) judges every one of our divisions around the Bread broken, around the sacrament of mercy, the sign of unity, the bond of charity” (DD 16). Elsewhere, the Pope distinguishes “admiration” for the saving paschal mystery of Christ celebrated in the Eucharist from a “sense of mystery” which he considers harmful to participation in the liturgy (DD 25). The places where the pope writes about the true goal of the liturgical reforms of the Second Vatican Council can be regarded as this type of allusion to *Traditionis custodes*, and these reforms are the answer to the main problem facing the Church: “how do we recover the capacity to live completely the liturgical action?” (DD 27). But the strongest words of criticism addressed to opponents of post-conciliar liturgical reform come in the words that liturgical reform is an expression of the deepened and renewed ecclesiology contained in the documents of Vatican II and not an arbitrary change in the ritual form (cf. Zammit 2004, 105–18). And so it states strongly, “I do not see how it is possible to say that one recognizes the validity of the Council – though it amazes me that a Catholic might presume not to do so – and at the same time not accept the liturgical reform born out of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, a document that expresses the reality of the liturgy intimately joined to the vision of Church so admirably described in *Lumen gentium*” (DD 31). The pope returns to this statement again in the conclusion of *Desiderio desideravi*, emphasizing that we cannot return to this form of the Roman rite for which the Council saw need of reform

and approved the principles of the reform itself, with Popes Paul VI and John Paul II, by approving the reformed liturgical books *ex decreto Sacrosancti Oecumenici Concilii Vaticani II*, guaranteeing the reform's faithfulness to the directives of Vatican II (cf. *DD* 61). In the conclusion of *Desiderio desideravi*, Pope Francis also points to the need for unity in the Church as his chief reason for writing *Traditionis custodes*. The goal of that document was, "that the Church may lift up, in the variety of so many languages, one and the same prayer capable of expressing her unity. [...] I intend that this unity be re-established in the whole Church of the Roman Rite" (*DD* 61).

2. The Salvation History: The Mystery of the Liturgy

The most important emphasis in the document was placed on a proper and full understanding of the liturgy, particularly the Eucharist, and, next, on participation in a way suitable to its nature. Francis expresses very clearly that with this letter he would like to invite the entire Church to rediscover, preserve, and live the truth and power of the liturgy (cf. *DD* 16). For this purpose, the Pope reaches back to the history of salvation, especially to the stage of the earthly life of Jesus Christ, begun in the mystery of the Incarnation and fulfilled in His Paschal mystery, an important element of which was the instituting of the Eucharist (cf. Fischer 2023, 241–42).

It is worthwhile here, however, to recall the thoughts contained in the encyclical *Laudato Si'*, in which the pope turns to the work of creation as the foundation of the liturgy, pointing to the sacraments as privileged ways in which God uses nature and transforms it into a mediator of the supernatural life. This is because all creatures of the material universe find their true meaning and fulfilment in the Incarnate Word. The Son of God in His own person, in the mystery of the Incarnation, accepted the material universe into which He introduced the seed of its ultimate transformation, which also provides for the transformation of man (cf. *LS* 235). In the liturgy, the whole of creation fulfils its destiny, because by including it in the action of Christ, and of human beings united with Christ

as priests of creation (the Church), it gives glory to its Creator. "It is in the Eucharist that all that has been created finds its greatest exaltation," since "Joined to the Incarnate Son, present in the Eucharist, the whole cosmos gives thanks to God" (*LS* 236). In this sense, the liturgy, and the Eucharist in particular, is an act of cosmic love.

Francis drew this idea from Pope John Paul II's encyclical, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (*EdE* 8), but a similar idea can also be found in Benedict XVI's apostolic exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis*, where the transformation of the substance of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ is shown as bringing into the interior of creation the foundation of a radical transformation, [...] "a process leading ultimately to the transfiguration of the entire world, to the point where God will be all in all (cf. 1 Cor 15:28)" (*SCar* 11).

An important statement for "rediscovering, preserving, and experiencing the truth and the power" of the liturgy is the title itself, that is, the first words of his letter: "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer" (Luke 22:15). These are the words of Jesus Christ Himself, who uttered them not only in the past at the Last Supper, but this desire of His Heart expressed in these words resounds unceasingly in His Church until His second coming. The Eucharist is not an "idea" of some early Church community but the gift and desire of the Lord Jesus Himself, so in this way to build up a community with Him, and in Him, among those who believe in Him.

The Eucharist is the longing of the Heart of God, as it is the means and place of "loving us to the end" (John 13:1), the place of God's complete self-abasement, putting Himself into human hands, so as to rebuild communion with each person but most importantly, this communion with each person occurs in the Eucharist not only individually, but within the community of the Church. Unity with God, and, in God, with others, had originally been granted to man in the act of creation, but was lost through original sin. For this reason, becoming reunited with God and in God is the goal of the entire history of salvation, and the eschatological feast will be the fulfilment and eternal celebration of this.

Discovering the Eucharist as the place and greatest means of union with God is the ongoing challenge of the faith, and also the most

important response to the question on the necessity of participating in the Eucharist. To discover the Eucharist means not being focused on the outer layer of ritual in itself, but seeing in it the “becoming,” the “today,” of the entire history of salvation (cf. *DD* 2–9). Citing Leo the Great, Francis states, “From the very beginning the Church had grasped, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, that that which was visible in Jesus, that which could be seen with the eyes and touched with the hands, His words and His gestures, the concreteness of the incarnate Word – everything of Him had passed into the celebration of the sacraments” (*DD* 9). In other words, the most important discovery for the believer is that the history of the salvation of the world has its centre in the Person of Jesus Christ; it leads through the Church, and in Him through the Eucharist, which is the Paschal gift of Christ, and His most certain and close presence.

The liturgy, and especially the Eucharist, contributes to the fact that faith in Jesus Christ is not simply a set of truths (doctrine) and therefore does not only have a purely intellectual or cognitive character, but is a living relationship with the Person of Christ Himself, present “here and now.” This relationship is built upon every level and every dimension of the human person. If we had come into Jerusalem after Pentecost and had a desire to know about Jesus of Nazareth, writes Pope Francis, we would have looked for His disciples to tell us about Him, but if we wanted to meet Him, we would have had no other option but to participate with the community of His disciples in the celebration of the Eucharist (cf. *DD* 8).

The sacramental economy, that is, the sacramentally making present the salvific acts of Jesus Christ within the Church, is the continuation of the work of salvation begun with the Incarnation of the Son of God. Through the sacraments and the liturgy closely bound to them, the saving Mystery of Christ reaches people of every generation. The liturgy fits within the Incarnation of the Son of God, which, as the pope writes, is at once the salvific event and “also the very method that the Holy Trinity has chosen to open to us the way of communion. Christian faith is either an encounter with Him alive, or it does not exist” (*DD* 10). This last statement entitles us to present the liturgy as a condition for fully experiencing the Christian faith and the fullness of Christian spirituality.

An analysis and interpretation of Francis's letter makes us see that when speaking about the liturgy, primarily here the Eucharist, the pope does not start from the celebration itself, but he expands our understanding of it to include the historical dimension of salvation. Moreover, he clearly shows that the main paradigm of creation and salvation is the participation of creatures in the glory of God, that is to say, that creatures are called to take part in this glory, but they are also called to give glory to God. In this sense, the mystery of creation and salvation have a liturgical dimension, or, as the Catechism of the Catholic Church shows, it is a liturgy, understood as a blessing (CCC 1077–83).

3. The Liturgical Celebration: *Locus* of Christoformation

Since it is known that the liturgy grows out of salvation history and is the synthesis of it within the Church, and it is therefore the living relationship with the “here and now” present Person of Christ Himself and His work of salvation, participation in it must be proportionate to its greatness. The correct understanding of participation in the liturgy must begin with baptism as the beginning of union with Christ, and it should point to the need for continual transformation of man into the image of Christ (Christoformation), and thus to the need for continually linking Christian life to participation in the liturgical celebration.

Francis observes that our first encounter with the paschal deed of Christ is achieved through baptism, which is not merely an intellectual adherence to His thoughts or the acceptance of some code of behaviour imposed by Him. Baptism, “is a being plunged into His passion, death, resurrection, and ascension” (DD 12). Here once again the theme appears of the liturgy/sacraments forming a complete bond with Christ; they are incorporation into His salvific mystery and His life, and not simply learning of Him on the intellectual level. On this basis, it can be concluded that the foundation for participation in the liturgy is the formation of a manifold bond with Christ, on the corporeal level (sign/symbol), on the intellectual level, but also on the emotional and spiritual level (the whole person). This bond, as union with Christ, reaches its pinnacle in

Eucharistic Communion, which is the expression of full participation in the Eucharist.

A further directive of the pope regarding participation in the liturgy is to be derived from his statement that without this incorporation which is baptism, “there is no possibility of living the fullness of the worship of God. In fact, there is only one act of worship, perfect and pleasing to the Father; namely, the obedience of the Son, the measure of which is his death on the cross. The only possibility of being able to participate in his offering is by becoming ‘sons in the Son’” (*DD* 15). This statement should be applied to any type of liturgy, but it is most applicable to the Eucharist.

What particularly characterizes the earthly life of Jesus is His obedience to the Father’s will, which He Himself calls His food (cf. John 4:34). Obedience is also the main content of His paschal deed and it manifests itself first of all in His death on the cross, when Jesus freely offers His own life (cf. John 10:17–18), but it is also the reason for His exaltation, because through His own blood He entered the sanctuary once for all” (cf. Heb 9:12). Since participation in “His sacrifice consists in becoming sons in the Son,” this means that the second important element of participation in the Eucharist consists in seeking and fulfilling the Father’s will in life. This is the purpose of confronting the participants’ lives with the word of God, which reveals God’s will. In Christian worship, there is no place for empty gestures, aestheticism, or abstract intellectualism, because man can glorify Him only with his life of dedication and obedience to God. And thus, seeking and fulfilling the Father’s will is what the Pope calls “becoming sons.” In this spirit, Benedict XVI said that participation in the Eucharist assumes an attitude of ongoing conversion and directing one’s life towards God (*SCar* 55). This “becoming sons” is to be achieved “in the Son,” that is, in Christ. For on the one hand, there is no Christian worship without union with Him as the Priest of the New Covenant. On the other hand, only He was perfect in obedience to the Father and only through union with Him are we able to fulfil the will of God in our life (Salisbury 2023, 421–22).

From what has been said above, one might conclude that Christian worship is purely spiritual worship, worship in the heart. There

is no doubt that the authenticity of spiritual worship, worship “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24), has absolute priority. It is true that God, in whom “we live, move, and have our being” (Acts 17:28), as a spiritual Being, can only be glorified in the spirit; but man, after all, is a corporeal-spiritual being. Hence, based on the above-mentioned logic of the Incarnation and on human nature itself, it is necessary for spiritual worship to take on a material form, reaching in its expressions to God’s revealing of Himself through creation, His revealing Himself as “the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” (Exod 3:6) in the word addressed to the people of the Old Covenant and finally in the Word made Man. This logic of His Epiphany also shows that God created man and desires to sanctify and save him in community, because we all are invited to live in community with the Triune God.

The liturgy of the Church, carrying out this logic of His Epiphany (corporeal-spiritual and community worship) becomes the antidote to a false spirituality which Francis calls the “poison of spiritual worldliness” (*DD* 17–20). Francis denounces two poisons of this spiritual worldliness, Gnosticism and neo-Pelagianism, which he had mentioned earlier in the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii gaudium* (*EG* 93–97). To the question of how the liturgy becomes an antidote to these poisons, Francis answers, “If Gnosticism intoxicates us with the poison of subjectivism, the liturgical celebration frees us from the prison of a self-referencing nourished by one’s own reasoning and one’s own feeling” (*DD* 19). Then, referring to the signs of Pelagianism, he states, “If neo-Pelagianism intoxicates us with the presumption of a salvation earned through our own efforts, the liturgical celebration purifies us, proclaiming the gratuity of the gift of salvation received in faith. Participating in the Eucharistic sacrifice is not our own achievement, as if because of it we could boast before God or before our brothers and sisters” (*DD* 20). In the teaching of Francis, “the Eucharist leads worshipers more fully into the life of God in a way consistent with all action of God, following the way of the Incarnation, that is, by means of the symbolic language of the body, which extends to things in space and time” (Briola 2023, 320).

The above analysis clearly shows that the liturgical celebration refers to the essence of Christian worship. This must fulfil two conditions, i.e., to be carried out in union with Christ (first condition), and following the example of Christ, that is, based on obeying God's will and constantly making an effort to fulfil it in life, that is, based on an attitude of continual conversion (second condition) (cf. Migut 2023, 245–47). The external aspect of the liturgical celebration, constructing the sacramental event, serves to fulfil these conditions, becoming an important goal and tool of evangelization.

4. Christian Life and Liturgical Formation

The pope devotes the largest section of his letter to the issues of the beauty of the truth of Christian celebration (*DD* 21–26), to liturgical formation (*DD* 27–47) and to the *ars celebrandi* (*DD* 48–60). These questions should form the content of another discussion, because, following the assumption being made, they primarily focus on the nature of the liturgy and its place in Christian life. Pope Francis does not exactly specify or systematize the concept of liturgical formation itself, but from the overall text it can be easily concluded that just as liturgy is an integral part of Christian spirituality and Christian life, liturgical formation is an integral part of Christian formation. There is no true liturgical formation separate from the principles of Christian formation as a whole. On the topic of formation, Francis refers for the most part in his letter to Romano Guardini, who points out that without liturgical formation “ritual and textual reforms won't help much” (*DD* 34).

Francis does not intend to explain all the principles of liturgical formation. The whole of his reflections on this topic, as on the topic of the principles of *ars celebrandi*, refer to Romano Guardini, and especially to his book *Liturgy and Liturgical Formation*. From what the pope has written in *Desiderio desideravi* (*DD* 27–47), referring to Guardini, it is obvious that liturgical formation is provided through pastoral ministry, first of all through catechesis, but it includes the whole of Christian life.

Jan Bentz, who translated the abovementioned book by Guardini, writes, “Guardini's [...] meditations in *Liturgy and Liturgical*

Formation stretch far over liturgical prayer, time and its relation to space, eternity, formation, education, beauty, religion, mysteries, man's relation to himself, to God, and to the community, and the challenges of modern man" (Bentz 2022; cf. Worbs 2007, 47–88). Desiring to participate fully in the liturgy, a person must be able to use symbols (cf. *DD* 44); to do this, the person must be able to harmonize his spirituality with his corporeality but especially to become once again capable of grasping "the symbolic value of the body and of every creature" (*DD* 44). Moreover, "a symbolic 'reading' is not a mental knowledge, not the acquisition of concepts, but rather a living experience" (*DD* 45). Using Guardini's way of speaking, being immersed in symbol presupposes holiness of life (cf. Bentz 2022).

Due to the fact that liturgical formation is part of Christian formation, it is a formation in the human dimension – anthropological, spiritual, and intellectual (cf. John Paul II, *PDV* 43–56). In line with this principle, human formation includes: 1) formation in emotional maturity, thanks to which love becomes the search for the good of the other person; 2) formation in freedom, that is, serving the truth of one's own existence; 3) forming and cultivating interpersonal bonds; 4) learning how to understand symbols, including one's own body (*DD* 44); and 5) care for liturgical gestures and postures as well as liturgical space and music. Some of these elements may seem far from the actual liturgical celebration, but they are the pillars of Christian formation, and if they are missing, man is threatened with "the poison of spiritual worldliness" (*DD* 17–20).

Spiritual formation is based first of all on union with God and the search for Christ as the Person through whom this union is possible. Spiritual formation is at the same time formation in a living faith, without which there is no sort of Christian formation. Formation of faith consists in nourishing oneself with the word of God (the Bible), but also the word of God expressed in liturgical prayer. To be effective, receiving the nourishment of the word of God must take place not only during the celebration of the liturgy, but also outside it. The fullness of our formation, as the pope emphasizes, is becoming like Christ (conformation to Christ), and thus, "it does

not have to do with an abstract mental process, but with becoming Him” (DD 41).

The most original part of Francis’s reflection on liturgical formation is the section devoted to intellectual formation. The first means of intellectual formation is the study of theology, which should be of a liturgical-sapiential nature (DD 37), consisting in applying the guidelines of the Constitution on the Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, which direct that each discipline of theology, in accordance with its own perspective, portray its own internal connection to the liturgy (cf. Seper 2023, 1506).

The above aspects of formation belong to the formation for the liturgy. Francis also writes about formation through liturgy, and here the most important school is the method itself, i.e. the art of celebration (*ars celebrandi*). This art of celebration is not focused on itself; it is not an end in itself but is directed toward Christian life and leads to its transformation.

The first principle given by Francis is, “The *ars celebrandi* cannot be reduced to only a rubrical mechanism, much less should it be thought of as imaginative – sometimes wild – creativity without rules” (DD 48). His second principle is, “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” (DD 37). This second principle shows an appreciation of preaching the word of God (the homily), but also of all the components of the celebration. Evangelization through the celebration of the liturgy, including the proclamation of the Word of God, is based on the personal holiness and witness of the priest who is presiding, but also on the authentic faith of all of the members of the liturgical assembly. In the Letter, Francis emphasizes the special importance of the ordained priest in the celebration of the Eucharist, both in the sacramental and evangelizing dimensions.² This should be seen as a close relationship between liturgical celebration and pastoral care (cf. Buttigieg 2023, 1475).

² This type of teaching is criticized by, for example, Ingrid Fischer. For her it is an example of a “very traditional understanding of priesthood” (cf. Fischer 2023, 243–44).

Silence has a particular significance in the celebration of the liturgy, highlighted by Francis as a symbol of “the presence and action of the Holy Spirit who animates the entire action of the celebration” (DD 52). Silence in and of itself is a powerful tool in liturgical formation.

The most important aspect, however, of liturgical formation is firstly to discover the link between the salvific mission of Christ and the celebration of the liturgy. The second essential aspect of this formation is to link the celebration of the liturgy to Christian life, which is to become the worship of God in Spirit and truth. A good definition of liturgical formation are the words of John Paul II, that this is why the faithful must participate in the Eucharist, that their lives might take on a Eucharistic form (cf. *EdE* 20). Christian life then must have the same paradigm of worship of the Father which is found in the complete salvific mystery of Christ and in the celebration of the liturgy. The words of John Paul II fully correspond with what Pope Francis writes about liturgical formation: “The full extent of our formation is our conformation to Christ [...] it does not have to do with an abstract mental process, but with becoming Him. This is the purpose for which the Spirit is given, whose action is always and only to confect the Body of Christ. It is that way with the Eucharistic bread, and with every one of the baptized called to become always more and more that which was received as a gift in Baptism; namely, being a member of the Body of Christ. Leo the Great writes, ‘Our participation in the Body and Blood of Christ has no other end than to make us become that which we eat’” (DD 41). The above statement can be considered a summary of Francis’s entire teaching on liturgical formation.

5. Conclusion

Although the reason for writing the apostolic letter *Desiderio desideravi* was to reach all the faithful after the publication of the moto proprio *Traditionis custodes*, this document does not focus on discussions with “traditionalists” but shows the liturgy as “the today of salvation history,” i.e., an irreplaceable manner of participating in the work of salvation accomplished by Christ. The way of salvation

leads through the Church, and in it, through the liturgy. In his letter, Francis focuses on authentic participation in the liturgy, corresponding to its importance for Christian life, and on liturgical formation, an important part of which is the art of celebrating the liturgy itself (*ars celebrandi*).

A careful analysis of this document allows to conclude that the theology of the liturgy presented by Francis does not reduce the liturgy to its celebration only. In Francis's understanding, the liturgy includes the work of creation itself and the salvific mission of Christ. Its celebration, as part of the sacramental economy, causes this mystery to be fulfilled in its participants, who live their lives in an ethical way resembling that of Jesus Christ (Christoformation). The premise presented in the introduction to this article, that the liturgical theology of Francis is an expression of the liturgical theology of the Roman school, proves to be correct. The liturgy indeed includes the saving mystery, celebration, and life.

Liturgia według listu apostolskiego papieża Franciszka *Desiderio desideravi*

Abstrakt: List apostolski *Desiderio desideravi* papieża Franciszka wykracza poza debatę między „liturgią trydencką” a liturgią po reformie Soboru Watykańskiego II ze względu na swoją teologiczną, liturgiczną i duchową głębię. Uważna analiza tego dokumentu pozwala stwierdzić, że teologia liturgii przedstawiona przez Franciszka nie sprowadza liturgii wyłącznie do jej celebracji. W rozumieniu Franciszka liturgia obejmuje samo dzieło stworzenia i zbawczą misję Chrystusa. Jej celebracja, jako część ekonomii sakramentalnej, powoduje, że ta tajemnica wypełnia się w jej uczestnikach, którzy przeżywają swe życie w etyczny sposób na wzór Chrystusa (Christoformacja). Wstępne założenie tego artykułu, że teologia liturgiczna Franciszka jest wyrazem teologii liturgicznej szkoły rzymskiej, okazuje się słuszne. Liturgia rzeczywiście obejmuje tajemnicę zbawienia (M), celebrację (A) i życie (V).

Słowa kluczowe: papież Franciszek, *Desiderio desideravi*, Eucharystia, liturgia, formacja liturgiczna, uczestnictwo w liturgii, celebacja liturgiczna

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