

## Introduction

There is nothing more important than the liturgy. Indeed, “the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the font from which all her power flows.”<sup>1</sup> There are many activities, services and works, needs and urgencies, preferences and options, but, at the core of the Church is the sacred liturgy, the source and summit of all ecclesial activity. Truly, “no other action of the Church can equal its efficacy by the same title and to the same degree.”<sup>2</sup>

An awareness of the excellence and centrality of the liturgy should be sufficient reason to strive for an ever-deeper understanding of its meaning and practice. But when disagreements and even confusion are so frequently present in the liturgical life of the Church, both in the academic world and in the daily practice of parishes and churches, the importance of the study of the liturgy is even more keenly perceived.

The liturgical reform of the past decades has not been unanimously received.<sup>3</sup> The widely divergent accounts of the preparatory works for the Second Vatican Council, its debates and documents, and the subsequent reforms make it difficult to grasp the real picture of what has happened at the dusk of the twentieth and the dawn of the twenty-first

<sup>1</sup> *Sacrosanctum Concilium* [Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy], 10 in *The Sixteen Documents of Vatican II* (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 1999), 52.

<sup>2</sup> *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 7.

<sup>3</sup> While the context of this book is directly related to reforms and discussions within the Catholic Church, the results of the research and its applications have relevant consequences for questions on Christian worship in general. O’Donoghue wrote of the effects of the reforms of the Second Vatican Council for non-Catholic worship as a type of liturgical cross-fertilization. See Neil Xavier O’Donoghue, *Liturgical Orientation: The Position of the President at the Eucharist* (Norfolk: Alcuin Club, 2017), 4.

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centuries.<sup>4</sup> Joseph Ratzinger summarized the problems of the post-conciliar reform in a simple way: “The lack of clarity that has prevailed in this area, even during the Council, regarding the relation between the dogmatic and liturgical levels must be regarded as the central problem of the liturgical reform.”<sup>5</sup>

The place of the Cross in the celebration of the Eucharist, both from a dogmatic theological perspective and from a liturgical perspective, is a good example of this lack of clarity. The almost universal change of orientation of the Eucharistic celebration following the Council brought with itself some confusion in regard to the centrality that the Cross occupied for long centuries. Was it possible to reconcile the central presence of the Cross – particularly of the altar Cross – with the celebration *versus populum* [towards the people]?

This question became the seed for this book. It very quickly seemed evident that it was not enough to gather data from theological writings or liturgical customs about this specific matter; rather, it appeared necessary to engage in a study in which the theological and the liturgical levels could enrich each other and offer a balanced picture of the topic. To this end, research in textual primary sources appeared as the privileged route, whereby the facts of the theological and practical development of the

<sup>4</sup> See, among others, Joseph Ratzinger, *Milestones: Memoirs, 1927–1977* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 122–124, 146–149; *Theology of the Liturgy: The Sacramental Foundation of Christian Existence*, ed. Michael J. Miller, vol. XI of *Joseph Ratzinger, Collected Works* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2014), 539–588; Annibale Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy, 1948–1975* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1990); Piero Marini, *A Challenging Reform: Realizing the Vision of the Liturgical Renewal, 1963–1975* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2007); Nicola Giampietro, *The Development of the Liturgical Reform: As Seen by Cardinal Ferdinando Antonelli from 1948 to 1970* (Fort Collins, Colo.: Roman Catholic Books, 2010); Aidan Nichols, *Looking at the Liturgy: A Critical View of Its Contemporary Form* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996); Alcuin Reid, ed., *A Bitter Trial: Evelyn Waugh and John Cardinal Heenan on the Liturgical Changes* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011); Jonathan Robinson, *The Mass and Modernity: Walking to Heaven Backward* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005); Klaus Gamber, *The Reform of the Roman Liturgy: Its Problems and Background* (Fort Collins, Colo.: Roman Catholic Books, 1993); Pierre-Marie Gy, OP, *The Reception of Vatican II Liturgical Reforms in the Life of the Church* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2003); Massimo Faggioli, *True Reform: Liturgy and Ecclesiology in Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2012); Andrea Grillo, *Beyond Pius V: Conflicting Interpretations of the Liturgical Reform* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2013).

<sup>5</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, “The Feast of Faith: Approaches to a Theology of the Liturgy,” in *Collected Works*, XI:301.

liturgy could offer greater and more objective evidence than what are all too often the passionate opinions of so many voices.

This book undertakes an analysis of textual primary sources in order to offer insights in the field of sacramental theology.<sup>6</sup> My purpose is to read the primary sources and try to get the “fresh” intuitions of those early texts, gaining an insight into the contemporary situation. In this sense, my objective is to offer a work focused on theology “preached at church,” rather than “studied at school”;<sup>7</sup> to present an investigation centered on *theologia prima* [primary theology], and so to grasp, among the multitude of texts, the faith, understanding, and practice of the theology and liturgy of early Christianity.<sup>8</sup> The core of this work lies, therefore, in the *attention to what the primary sources say*. And, whereas other studies researching similar topics will focus on a single author or text, my goal could only be achieved by studying an extensive body of writings: patristic texts and Roman liturgical documents from the fourth to the eighth century.

Reading the primary sources convinced me that the richness of the theme would require a broad approach. Thus, the topic being explored is not primarily the altar Cross, but the presence of the Cross in the Eucharist, mainly as an idea, as a gesture, and finally as an object. Understanding the relation between the Cross and the Eucharist sheds light on practical and contemporary problems, for I argue, the Cross is a fundamental hermeneutical key for the understanding of the Eucharist.

#### THE CONTEXT OF THE DISCUSSION

Because of the lack of clarity about our topic and some confusion about the changes that occurred in the liturgical life of the Catholic Church in the past decades, it is essential to approach this investigation in the context of recent discussion and practice.

<sup>6</sup> See Chauvet’s explanation of the object of sacramental theology: “Its object is the church’s celebration itself. It has nothing relevant to say that does not stem from the way the church confers the sacraments.” Louis-Marie Chauvet, *The Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body* (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 2001), 48.

<sup>7</sup> See Cesare Giraudo, “*In Unum Corpus*”: *Trattato mistagogico sull’eucharistia* (Milan: Edizioni San Paolo, 2000), 16–19.

<sup>8</sup> About the distinction between *theologia prima* and *theologia secunda*, see David W. Fagerberg, *Theologia Prima: What Is Liturgical Theology?* 2nd edn. (Chicago and Mundelein, Ill.: Hillebrand Books, 2004), esp. 39–68; see also Robert F. Taft, “Mass without the Consecration? The Historic Agreement on the Eucharist between the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East Promulgated 26 October 2001” *Worship* 77 (2003): 495.

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For some, the reforms implemented after the Second Vatican Council brought about much more than a renewal in continuity, that is, the necessary developments that “adapt to the needs of our times”<sup>9</sup> elements that are subject to change, being careful at the same time to “retain sound tradition.”<sup>10</sup> Certain authors or groups of people have a negative view of the post-conciliar reforms, seeing in them a betrayal of tradition. The group most representative of this tendency is the Society of Saint Pius X, founded by Marcel Lefebvre.<sup>11</sup> Others, for example the liturgists John F. Baldovin and Piero Marini, though from a very different perspective and having a positive approach to the changes, would ultimately agree with the first group in the certainty that “the reformed liturgy does represent a radical shift in Catholic theology and piety.”<sup>12</sup>

Still other authors, while being critical of some of the ways in which the liturgical reform was implemented, have recognized the need for and importance of liturgical renewal. Joseph Ratzinger is one of those prominent voices that will be an important interlocutor for this study. His contributions on liturgy contain relevant reflections that are concerned not so much about the more technical aspects of liturgical studies, but about “anchoring the liturgy in the foundational act of our faith and, thus, also about its place in the whole of our human existence.”<sup>13</sup>

A frequent motif in Ratzinger’s liturgical writings is his concern about “a new view” of liturgical celebrations in which “the basic concepts . . . are creativity, freedom, celebration and community.”<sup>14</sup> For him, this outlook is based on what he terms an “anthropocentric error”: a liturgy “constructed entirely for men,” . . . “concerned with winning people over or keeping them happy and satisfying their demands.”<sup>15</sup> The liturgy would not be first and foremost the action of glorifying God and sanctifying his people, but a human activity, centered in the community, which finds its own ways of celebrating its faith.

<sup>9</sup> *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 62. <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>11</sup> See their publication *The Problem of the Liturgical Reform: A Theological and Liturgical Study* (Kansas City, Mo.: Angelus Press, 2001).

<sup>12</sup> John F. Baldovin, SJ, *Reforming the Liturgy: A Response to the Critics* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2008), 139. See also Piero Marini’s assertion that “unlike the reform after Trent, it [the reform after Vatican II] was all the greater because it also dealt with doctrine.” Marini, *A Challenging Reform*, 46.

<sup>13</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, “On the Inaugural Volume of My Collected Works,” in *Collected Works*, XI:XVI.

<sup>14</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, “On the Structure of the Liturgical Celebration,” in *Collected Works*, XI:319.

<sup>15</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, “Eucharist and Mission,” in *Collected Works*, XI:332.

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Related to this is the understanding of the Eucharist mainly as a communal meal, which soon became widespread among the faithful. Much has been written in the academic world about the “meal character” of the Eucharist.<sup>16</sup> In the context of the twentieth century Liturgical Movement, influential scholars such as Pascher, Guardini, and Schmaus,<sup>17</sup> pointed to the preeminence of the meal as the structural and visible element of the Eucharist. More recently, Edward J. Kilmartin continued this distinction, elaborating on the inner relation of the personal sacrifice of Christ and the outward form of the meal as its sign, as a key to a fair understanding of the Eucharist.<sup>18</sup> From an exegetical and historical perspective, the Protestant scholar Hans Lietzmann saw in the Last Supper a farewell meal and claimed that the Eucharistic sacrifice would have been a subsequent construction of the early community.<sup>19</sup>

Suffice it to say that Ratzinger has been very critical of unilateral presentations of the Eucharist as a meal: “The Eucharist cannot adequately be described by the term ‘meal’”;<sup>20</sup> “to speak of the Eucharist as the community meal is to cheapen it, for its price was the death of Christ.”<sup>21</sup> He expresses apprehension for liturgical congregations that, seeing the Eucharist primarily as a meal, become “a closed circle that is no longer aware of the explosive Trinitarian dynamism that gives the Eucharist its greatness.”<sup>22</sup> For this situation, Ratzinger proposes “as

<sup>16</sup> This is a topic that will be studied more extensively in the third chapter of this work. What follows is only a brief summary that intends to situate the context of this study.

<sup>17</sup> See an excellent summary of these positions and of the development of the topic in Manfred Hauke, “The ‘Basic Structure’ (Grundgestalt) of the Eucharistic Celebration According to Joseph Ratzinger,” in *Benedict XVI and the Roman Missal: Proceedings of the Fourth Fota International Liturgical Conference, 2011*, eds. Janet E. Rutherford and James O’Brien (Dublin and New York: Four Court Press and Scepter Publishers, 2013), 70–82.

<sup>18</sup> See Edward J. Kilmartin, SJ, *The Eucharist in the West: History and Theology* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1998), 199.

<sup>19</sup> See Hans Lietzmann, *Mass and the Lord’s Supper: A Study in the History of the Liturgy* (Leiden: Brill, 1979), 172–187. Lietzmann would follow Jülicher and other Protestant authors in the idea that the Supper does not contain a reference to the redemptive value of the Eucharist but only a reference to the imminent event of Jesus’ death. See about this Ángel García Ibáñez, *La Eucaristía, don y misterio: Tratado histórico-teológico sobre el misterio eucarístico* (Pamplona: Eunsa, 2009), 62.

<sup>20</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, “The Spirit of the Liturgy,” in *Collected Works*, XI:78.

<sup>21</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, “On the Structure of the Liturgical Celebration,” in *Collected Works*, XI:322.

<sup>22</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, “On the Question of the Orientation of the Celebration,” in *Collected Works*, XI:390.

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a priority to reestablish the meaning of the image of the cross,”<sup>23</sup> as a reminder that the apparent contradiction between “meal” and “sacrifice” is resolved when we remember that the paschal mystery is re-enacted at the Eucharist:

Thus *eucharistia* is the gift of *communio* in which the Lord becomes our food; it also signifies the self-offering of Jesus Christ, perfecting his trinitarian Yes to the Father by his consent to the Cross and reconciling us all to the Father in this “sacrifice.” There is no opposition between “meal” and “sacrifice”; they belong inseparably together in the new sacrifice of the Lord.<sup>24</sup>

The Cross, then, appears as a powerful and central element of the celebration of the Eucharist. When Joseph Ratzinger was elected as Successor of Peter, he placed the sacred liturgy as one of the core priorities of his pontificate.<sup>25</sup> One of the distinctive elements of Papal celebrations became the presence of a crucifix at the center of the altar,<sup>26</sup> in clear correspondence with his earlier writings on the topic. Joseph Ratzinger-Pope Benedict XVI said that placing a Cross at the center of the altar was his “recommendation,” and expressed satisfaction with the fact that this custom has been adopted more and more widely in the world.<sup>27</sup> Is this a practice arising from a personal view, or is it an example to be followed wherever the Roman liturgy is celebrated? It is worth noting that Pope Francis has continued with this tradition in his own liturgies.

Some authors have criticized this practice, such as the Catalonian liturgist Pedro Farnés<sup>28</sup> and the American Jesuit John Baldovin.<sup>29</sup> The main objections can be found summarized in Farnés’ critical review of Ratzinger’s *The Spirit of the Liturgy*. Farnés disagrees with Ratzinger about the importance of placing a Cross on the altar from a sacramental-theological perspective: the people are called to contemplate Christ represented in the bread and wine and, most especially, in his minister – the

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., XI:391.

<sup>24</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, “Form and Content of the Eucharistic Celebration,” in *Collected Works*, XI:311.

<sup>25</sup> See about this Anselm J. Gribbin, *Pope Benedict and the Liturgy: Understanding Recent Liturgical Developments* (Herefordshire, England: Gracewing, 2011), VI–VII.

<sup>26</sup> See Guido Marini, *Liturgical Reflections of a Papal Master of Ceremonies* (Pine Beach, NJ: Newman House Press, 2011), 67–69.

<sup>27</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, “On the Inaugural Volume of My Collected Works,” in *Collected Works*, XI:XVII.

<sup>28</sup> Pedro Farnés, “Una obra importante sobre liturgia que debe leerse en su verdadero contexto,” in *Phase XLII*, 247 (2002): 55–76.

<sup>29</sup> See Baldovin, *Reforming the Liturgy*, 80–82; 110–112.

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priest – who is the sacrament of God’s presence.<sup>30</sup> Another critique of the practice of placing a Cross on the altar focuses on the late date in which this practice is said to have been introduced: around the twelfth century.<sup>31</sup> We will come back to this problem in the third chapter, after reviewing the evidence of the primary sources.

## METHODOLOGY

It is important to describe now the methodological approach of this study. For although “the Cross and the Eucharist” is a topic of great importance and antiquity, it has not always been transmitted simply and directly. A text written by St. Basil of Caesarea in the fourth century can help us to illustrate this point. Basil tells us of some practices that Christians have received not in writing but from apostolic tradition:

Concerning the teachings of the Church, whether publicly proclaimed or reserved to members of the household of faith, we have received some from written sources, while others have been given to us secretly, through apostolic tradition. . . . For instance (to take the first and most common example), where is the written teaching that we should sign with the sign of the Cross those who, trusting in the Name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, are to be enrolled as catechumens? Which book teaches us to pray facing the East? Have any saints left for us in writing the words to be used in the invocation over the Eucharistic bread and the cup of blessing? As everyone knows, we are not content in the liturgy simply to recite the words recorded by St. Paul and the Gospels, but we add other words both before and after, words of great importance for this mystery. We have received these words from unwritten teaching. We bless the baptismal water and the oil for chrismation as well as the candidate approaching the font. By what written authority do we do this, if not from secret and mystical tradition? . . . Are not all these things found in unpublished and unwritten teachings, which our fathers guarded in silence, safe from meddling and petty curiosity? They had learned their lesson well; reverence for the mysteries is best encouraged by silence.<sup>32</sup>

Basil, writing about the aspects of tradition received through “unwritten teaching” mentions the gesture of making the sign of the Cross over the catechumens as the “first and most common example” of those important practices – including the anaphora – that are not transmitted by a written

<sup>30</sup> Farnés, “Una obra importante sobre liturgia,” 70–72. Similar ideas are found in John F. Baldovin, SJ, “Idols and Icons: Reflections on the Current State of Liturgical Reform,” *Worship* 84 (2010): 396–397.

<sup>31</sup> Farnés, “Una obra importante sobre liturgia,” 73.

<sup>32</sup> Basil of Caesarea, *On the Holy Spirit* 27, 66 (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1980), 98–99.

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document. The Cross – in all its layers – is an ancient aspect of the spiritual patrimony of the Church, intimately connected with its prayer and sacramental life. Although not everything is written about the mysteries, and so not everything is written about the intimate connection between the Cross and the Eucharist, nonetheless there is valuable and remarkable textual evidence through which it is possible to grasp the constant presence of the Cross in the Eucharistic celebrations, as idea, gesture, and object. At this point I should make two methodological delimitations.

CHRONOLOGICAL DELIMITATION

The first key delimitation is the time period: it opens with the fourth century and runs through the eighth century, a time period of significant development in continuity with the first centuries<sup>33</sup> with respect to the presence of the Cross in the Eucharistic theology and practice of the Church. The fourth century is regarded as the “golden age of patristics,” when great authors will decisively shape future ways of expressing the Christian faith and its worship.<sup>34</sup> During these years, considered the era of the great liturgies,<sup>35</sup> the ancient world witnessed a decisive growth of devotion to the Cross and the birth of its feasts.

The fourth century also saw the development of the liturgical year, which in turn led to the composition of prayers for the different celebrations, and the beginning of a shift from improvised liturgical prayers to the primacy of the written text.<sup>36</sup> This opened a process of liturgical production that leads us to the end of the patristic era,<sup>37</sup> a time in which we find,

<sup>33</sup> On the importance of avoiding the “ideological separation of early Christianity and the classical patristic era,” see Stefan Heid, “The Early Christian Altar – Lessons for Today,” in *Sacred Liturgy: The Source and Summit of the Life and Mission of the Church*, ed. Alcuin Reid (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2014), 111.

<sup>34</sup> Louis Bouyer writes about this: “It was at this time that the eucharist found its classic expression ... the following centuries produced little else but more or less successful variations on the themes which at that time were beginning to be defined and take shape.” Louis Bouyer, *Eucharist: Theology and Spirituality of the Eucharistic Prayer* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), 138.

<sup>35</sup> See A. Hamman and M. Maritano, “Eucharist,” in eds. Angelo Di Berardino et al., *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2014), 1:856.

<sup>36</sup> Marcel Metzger describes the fourth and fifth centuries as a time of abundant documentation found in homilies, catecheses, letters, stories, etc., which allow for a systematic and integral study of the rituals in use. See Marcel Metzger, *History of the Liturgy: The Major Stages* (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1997), 67.

<sup>37</sup> I follow the traditional dating of the patristic period, ending with John Damascene in the East (+ca. 750) and Bede in the West (+735). See about this Andrew Louth, *St. John*



in Rome, the three early sacramentaries with the Roman Canon, and a substantial body of *Ordines Romani* [Roman Orders], which mark a mature concretization of liturgical prayer and practice.<sup>38</sup>

During these centuries we can also find a remarkable parallel between dogmatic and liturgical progress. The seven ecumenical councils, in which the Church produced fundamental documents on the understanding of divine revelation and the subsequent development of dogma, occurred during this same period. Thus, our study could be broadly framed between the first (AD 325) and second (AD 787) councils of Nicea.<sup>39</sup> As the Church slowly matured in her understanding of what had been revealed from the beginning and reached a more developed expression of dogma towards the end of the patristic era, so also liturgical theology and practice bore ripe fruits around this time, the patient product of centuries of growth. It was a period that produced and expressed “the substance of the liturgical texts and institutions” that became the foundation of any later development, as asserted by Jungmann:

The substance of the liturgical texts and institutions, which grew out of the life of the primitive Church, was laid down in fixed forms in the West as in the East towards the end of Christian antiquity. To be sure, the Roman liturgy did once again experience a period of growth as it was adopted in the Frankish kingdom from the eighth century on, but this was only a second layer, which was placed on the old foundation.<sup>40</sup>

*Damascene: Tradition and Originality in Byzantine Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 283.

<sup>38</sup> See also in Martimort’s famous collection how the author organizes the chapters in his study on the Eucharist. The second chapter is about the Eucharist from the fourth until the eighth century, as the time of the creation of formularies and the organization of rites. See Robert Cabié, “The Eucharist,” in *The Church at Prayer*, ed. A. G. Martimort (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1986), II, 41–107.

<sup>39</sup> This period is roughly parallel to what Brown calls “Late Antiquity.” See Peter Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity: AD 150–750* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1989).

<sup>40</sup> Josef A. Jungmann, “Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy,” in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Hebert Vorgrimler (New York: Herder, 1989), 1:1. Metzger similarly affirms: “As far as rituals are concerned, by the eighth century, the essentials had been established, and the innovations of the following centuries could affect only secondary or peripheral aspects.” Metzger, *History of the Liturgy*, 112. From a different perspective, Ramsay MacMullen studies these four centuries as a key time for the transformation from paganism to Christianity. See Ramsay MacMullen, *Christianity & Paganism in the Fourth to Eighth Centuries* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997).

#### LITERARY DELIMITATION

The second key delimitation pertains to the kinds of sources and their treatment. During the foundational period between the fourth and eighth centuries two kinds of primary sources appear as particularly relevant: patristic and liturgical texts. In the first chapter I present a survey and thematic organization of Eastern and Western patristic texts. The second chapter is divided into three sections, which examine the primary liturgical sources of the Roman Church: the three early Roman sacramentaries, the Roman Canon, and the Roman Orders. In this way, after reviewing the rich patrimony of the patristic tradition and studying the pillars of the subsequent liturgical documents, we narrow our research to the specific ideas and practices of the Roman liturgy. The logic of this approach is found in the connection and progressive transition from the theological writings of patristic authors to “official” liturgical prayers (sacramentaries) and practices (*ordines*). The methodological decision to go to Roman documents responds to the unique importance and influence of what was produced in Rome for the Western world.

The living environment of the liturgy serves as the common ground in which texts, written in different contexts, locations, and centuries can offer a voice that helps to track the different ways in which the Cross was present in the celebration of the Mass. The “conversation” between these kinds of texts offers a robust approach that brings together two kinds of voices that were part of the one Tradition of the early Church.

The *attention to what the sources say* has been an essential disposition that guided the search for relevant material. Therefore, and always within the chronological and textual framework already indicated, the writings that are part of this book were selected because of what they say and not primarily because of who wrote them or when they were written. Thus, it became possible to highlight the common theological emphases and liturgical practices in a more “fresh” and “pristine” way, going beyond the clear and acknowledged differences of historical and theological background.<sup>41</sup> Consequently, while respecting and taking into account the nature of each text, and recognizing its author, school, and geographic and cultural origin, I tried to bring into one conversation voices that, being sometimes different, fundamentally share some core ideas and customs.

<sup>41</sup> This statement does not intend to ignore the evident importance of a serious knowledge of the authors and their contexts, as a source for depth and an objective understanding of the texts. This is an effort that has also been present throughout the review of the sources.