



The Spirit of the Liturgy

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger

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Considered by Ratzinger devotees as his greatest work on the Liturgy, this profound and beautifully written treatment of the "great prayer of the Church" will help readers rediscover the Liturgy in all its hidden spiritual wealth and transcendent grandeur as the very center of our Christian life.

Among the many liturgical issues that he covers in this work, Cardinal Ratzinger discusses fundamental misunderstandings of the Second Vatican Council's intentions for liturgical renewal, especially the orientation of prayer at the Eucharistic sacrifice, the placement of the tabernacle, and the posture of kneeling.

Other important topics he discusses include the following: the essence of worship; Jewish roots and new elements of the Christian Liturgy; the historic and cosmic dimensions of the Liturgy; the relationship of the Liturgy to time and space; art, music, and the Liturgy; active participation of all the faithful; gestures, posture, and vestments.

"My purpose here is to assist this renewal of understanding of the Liturgy. Its basic intentions coincide with what Guardini wanted to achieve. The only difference is that I have had to translate what Guardini did at the end of the First World War, in a totally different historical situation, into the context of our present-day questions, hopes, and dangers. Like Guardini, I am not attempting to involve myself with scholarly discussion and research. I am simply offering an aid to the understanding of the faith and to the right way to give the faith its central form of expression in the Liturgy."

- Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, from the preface

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