

# SPIRIT-EMPOWERED LITURGY

THE ROLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN TRADITIONAL  
CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

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## Abstract

Sometimes perceived as dead ritual in contemporary Christian churches, liturgy provides a time-tested means of experiencing the empowerment of the Holy Spirit in corporate worship. When understood within its own historical use, liturgy, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, enables a community of faith to consistently remember and participate in God’s saving acts in history, culminating in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and actively look forward to the eschatological hope of Jesus’ return. Like the banks of a river, liturgy plays an important role to effectively facilitate the consistent and reliable movement of the Holy Spirit in communal worship. This study 1) provides a brief scriptural and historical background of liturgical worship; 2) explores examples of liturgical prayers from Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Anglican traditions that reflect a Spirit-empowered ethos; and 3) suggests unity and mission are two of the primary purposes of Spirit-empowerment in liturgical worship. This study is not by any means exhaustive on the topic of liturgy but functions as a reminder for those familiar with it and an introduction for those who are not.

## Introduction

In Christian churches there is a continually recognized contrast between charismatic contemporary worship and its traditional liturgical counterpart. Those of the charismatic Christian groups typically pride themselves in freedom of expression, extemporaneous prayer, and general spontaneity, attributing these characteristics to the movement of the Holy Spirit, who is not to be suppressed. Such perspectives make traditional liturgical expressions of Christian worship appear not only unnecessary but even counter-productive to authentic worship and connection to God—perhaps calling to mind Jesus’ response to the Samaritan woman that true worshippers worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:23–24). In this way, how could something so old, rigid, and rote as traditional liturgy be described as Spirit-empowered? What makes traditional liturgy Spirit-empowered? Or, as one scholar puts it, “how does the work of the Spirit manifest itself in liturgical prayer?”<sup>1</sup> The goal of this article is to suggest that the Holy Spirit is not only present in liturgical worship, but that the Holy Spirit is the foundational inspiration of the liturgy who empowers the people of God for unity and mission. I will support this claim by 1) providing a brief look at the scriptural and historical background of liturgy being Spirit-empowered; 2) highlighting places of the Holy Spirit’s role in liturgy across Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Anglican traditions; and 3) suggesting two aspects of the Holy Spirit’s empowerment in liturgy. I will also provide examples of special liturgies specifically designed for Holy Spirit empowerment.

In short, structure and order in liturgical worship are not antithetical to the work of the Holy Spirit, but can be complementary and purposeful to it. As Anglican priest Thomas McKenzie puts it, “freedom is important, but so is Spirit-led order.”<sup>2</sup> This notion of “Spirit-led order” may sound paradoxical to those of non-liturgical traditions, but, when we dig a little deeper into the purpose of liturgical worship we find rich and effective ways to expand our individual and corporate prayers for unity and empowerment by the Holy Spirit.

## Scriptural and Historical Background of Liturgical Worship

The word “liturgy” has become a technical term in Christian tradition to refer to a church’s collective act of worship. Liturgy, however, was not invented by the Eastern or Western branches of Christianity in the early centuries CE, but goes back much further to Jewish expressions of

worship. Jesus and the Apostles regularly worshipped in liturgical settings of first-century synagogues and in the Jerusalem temple (cf. Luke 4:16–21; 24:53; Acts 2:46). Liturgical models of worship were also contained in Scripture itself. For example, the book of Psalms has been central to Jewish worship as far back as sacrifices in the first Jerusalem temple (cf. Pss 27:6; 30:1; 54:6; 66:15).<sup>3</sup> Psalms were prescribed to be recited on Sabbaths (Ps 92), for the dedication of the temple (Ps 30), and especially during the three major pilgrimage festivals of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles (Pss 113–118). An example of this is found in the New Testament in accordance with the Passover festival (cf. Matt 26:20; Mark 14:26). This foundational role of the recitation of Psalms in ancient Jewish worship informed later rabbinic and early Christian liturgical traditions.<sup>4</sup> In rabbinic tradition, it was through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that David composed his psalms—perhaps making one of the earliest connections of the Holy Spirit to liturgical worship.<sup>5</sup> In the New Testament, the writer of the book of Revelation records many anthems of heavenly worship that are considered a prototype for ancient Christian liturgy.<sup>6</sup> The most recognizable anthem is the *Sanctus* (“Holy, Holy, Holy”) in Revelation 4:8, which appears in every liturgical tradition and possibly derives from Isaiah’s vision in Isaiah 6:3.

The earliest expressions of Christianity are well known for their liturgical form of worship, many of which remain the model for liturgical traditions today.<sup>7</sup> Christian liturgy is comprised of corporate prayers passed down through the centuries that are drenched in Scripture and culminate in the celebration of the Eucharist.<sup>8</sup> Today, Orthodox, Catholic, and Anglican traditions each reflect these earliest liturgies and affirm the Holy Spirit’s role and empowerment in them. For example, St. Basil’s liturgy (used on occasion by Eastern Orthodox and Anglican Churches) describes the Holy Spirit as “. . . the Spirit of truth, the grace of adoption, the earnest of future inheritance, the first-fruits of eternal blessings, the quickening might, the fount of sanctification, by Whom every reasonable and spiritual creature empowered serveth Thee. . . .”<sup>9</sup> In other words, the Holy Spirit in the liturgy is the one who empowers us to serve God.

From an Eastern Orthodox perspective, the Holy Spirit plays a crucial role in liturgy and is also understood as the cornerstone of tradition itself in the church. In his book *The Orthodox Church*, Timothy Ware, while referencing other Orthodox voices and scriptural support from John 16:13, holds that tradition is “the witness of the Spirit” and “the constant abiding of the Spirit.”<sup>10</sup> Tradition, for Ware, is not only

something to be kept but it is also something to be lived. Living in the great Christian Tradition is not a matter of accepting theological propositions but rather “a personal encounter with Christ in the Holy Spirit” and “a dynamic . . . living experience of the Holy Spirit in the present.”<sup>11</sup> Even when speaking about the church’s ecclesial hierarchy, Ware avers that the church is also charismatic and pentecostal (referencing 1 Thess 5:19–20).<sup>12</sup> More specifically, Ware identifies the church, the body of Christ, as “a continued Pentecost” where there is no contradiction between charismatic expression and hierarchical structure.<sup>13</sup>

From a Roman Catholic perspective, Pope Benedict XVI understands liturgy as the Spirit-filled communal prayer of the church that anticipates the new heavens and the new earth.<sup>14</sup> In Pope Benedict’s words, liturgy is “a prayer moved and guided by the Holy Spirit himself.”<sup>15</sup> Seeing the liturgy of the church first and foremost as a prayer inspired by the Holy Spirit is important for understanding how liturgical worship corresponds to the work of the Holy Spirit. As Raniero Cantalamessa avers, “On every occasion the outpouring of the Spirit is connected to prayer.”<sup>16</sup> For Pope Benedict XVI, liturgy also implies a personal relationship with God where we participate in God’s action in history and in the cosmos.<sup>17</sup> Liturgy is historical in the sense that it strives to correctly and consistently remember the past and actively look toward the future eschatological hope. Liturgy has cosmic implications in the sense that those gathered to worship are joining in with angels around the heavenly throne and anticipating the long-awaited union of heaven and earth.

From an Anglican perspective, Thomas McKenzie holds that it was the Holy Spirit who formed the liturgy over time through the church and because the liturgy itself is Christ-centered, and not personality-driven, it actually gives more room for the Holy Spirit to work.<sup>18</sup> Rather than a dead routine, the liturgy of the church should be seen as a life-giving practice and invitation to experience the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. Frank Wilson has a complementary understanding of the liturgy and sees liturgy as a “point of contact” with God.<sup>19</sup> Gregory Dix provides an in-depth investigation of liturgical traditions that influence the Anglican liturgy and argues that the Holy Spirit, through the liturgical services of Eucharist and confirmation in particular, is the gift of God’s presence one receives to become what they are meant to be within the unity of the mystical body of the Messiah. For Dix, after receiving the Eucharist in the liturgy believers receive the Spirit of adoption by which they cry out “Abba, Father” (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6).<sup>20</sup>

Overall, Christian liturgy is communal prayer inspired by the Holy Spirit that points us back to the teachings of Jesus (John 14:26) and leads us to participate in his sacrificial work while anticipating the eschatological hope of his second coming and establishment of God's kingdom.<sup>21</sup> The importance in liturgy of not only looking back on God's saving acts in history but also of looking forward to God's promised final act of salvation when his kingdom comes on earth as in heaven (cf. Matt 6:10; Rev 21:1–5) brings many scholars to highlight the importance of eschatology in liturgical worship. As Robert Jensen puts it, "Our liturgy is liturgy of the Spirit insofar as the sequence and rhythm of what we do is an eschatological tension."<sup>22</sup> Chris Green agrees with Jensen's statement and takes it a step further by suggesting that without this eschatological tension corporate worship is dead.<sup>23</sup> Green goes on to convincingly argue that the eucharistic meal celebrated in liturgy is essentially eschatological in nature as it is a foretaste of the coming messianic banquet (cf. Luke 22:16, 18; Rev 19:9, 17) and "the sign par excellence of the eschatological kingdom."<sup>24</sup> In a similar line of thought, Patrick Regan suggests that, through the liturgy, the church shows itself to be "the eschatological community in the Spirit."<sup>25</sup> These eschatological perspectives of liturgy line up quite well with the heavenly worship captured in John's Apocalypse (and hinted at elsewhere in the New Testament). Because of this, it is no surprise that traditional Christian liturgy follows suit to tap into this mysterious reality of joining in with heavenly worship on earth.<sup>26</sup> And as Patrick Regan helpfully points out, it is the Holy Spirit who plays a primary role in connecting heaven and earth in liturgical worship.<sup>27</sup> As we will see in the next section, liturgy invites believers to participate, rather than spectate, in an ancient and unfinished drama between heaven and earth. The boundaries between heaven and earth are blurred as worshippers join in with the worship of angels around the throne to remember Jesus' work and anticipate the culmination of God's work through Jesus' return by the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>28</sup>

## **Places of the Holy Spirit's Role in Traditional Liturgies**

Within the three main liturgical traditions of Christianity—Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Anglican—there are numerous places to find the role of the Holy Spirit. Contained in the creeds and the frequent Trinitarian prayers throughout the liturgies, the Holy Spirit also plays an empowering role in a number of other places. In this brief study I will highlight three liturgical occasions that focus on the work of the Holy

Spirit: 1) the celebration of the Eucharist, 2) the annual remembrance of the Day of Pentecost, and 3) services of confirmation/chrisamation.

## The Holy Spirit in the Eucharist

Traditional eucharistic liturgy is divided into two parts: 1) the liturgy of the Word and 2) the liturgy of the Sacrament. The liturgy of the Word contains scripture readings, a homily, the creed, and intercessory prayers. The liturgy of the Sacrament is simply the celebration of the Eucharist, which is the climax of the entire liturgy. This central Sacrament—“Mystery” for Orthodox Christians—of the Eucharist contains three main sections in its central prayers: the thanksgiving, the *anamnesis* (remembrance), and the *epiclesis* (“calling down” of the Holy Spirit).<sup>29</sup> Although the Holy Spirit plays an important role in the thanksgiving and *anamnesis* sections of the liturgy,<sup>30</sup> it is in the *epiclesis* where the role of the Holy Spirit is seen most clearly.

Of all the places where the Holy Spirit is called upon in the liturgy, it is the *epiclesis* where the Holy Spirit’s action is called upon most directly, encapsulating the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the eucharistic liturgy as a whole.<sup>31</sup> The *epiclesis* of St. John Chrysostom’s liturgy, used as the primary liturgy in many Orthodox Churches, reads: “Send down Your Holy Spirit upon us and upon these gifts here set forth: And make this bread the Precious Body of Your Christ, And what is in this cup, the Precious Blood of Your Christ, Changing them by Your Holy Spirit. Amen, Amen, Amen.”<sup>32</sup> Similarly, in St. Basil the Great’s Eucharistic Prayer (also known as Eucharist Prayer D in the Book of Common Prayer), the celebrant prays that the “Holy Spirit may descend upon us, and upon these gifts, sanctifying them and showing them to be holy gifts for your holy people, the bread of life and the cup of salvation, the Body and Blood of your Son Jesus Christ.” In the Liturgy of St. Mark, the *epiclesis* is a bit longer and more detailed:

We pray and beseech Thee, O Good God and Lover of men, to send down from Thy holy height, and appointed habitation, and incircumscribed bosom, the very Paraclete, the Spirit of truth, the Holy, the LORD, the Life-giving Who spake in the Law and by the Prophets and the Apostles Who is everywhere present, and filleth all things. . . . Send down then on us, and on these loaves, and on these cups, Thy Holy Ghost, that He may sanctify and perfect them, as God Almighty. And make this bread the Body.<sup>33</sup>

In the Eucharistic Prayer II of the Roman Catholic tradition, the *epiclesis* reads, “Make holy, therefore, these gifts, we pray, by sending

down your spirit upon them like the dewfall, so that they may become for us the Body and Blood of our lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>34</sup>

Although invoking the Holy Spirit for the consecration and changing of the eucharistic gifts became standard fairly early, one of the oldest eucharistic texts of St. Hippolytus simply points to presence of the Holy Spirit as the primary function of the *epiclesis*.<sup>35</sup> In this sense Weil similarly remarks that the *epiclesis* implies “the Real Presence of the Holy Spirit in the Eucharist.”<sup>36</sup> Not only is the Holy Spirit called down in a special way on the eucharistic gifts at the *epiclesis* in every major liturgical tradition, but the Holy Spirit is also called down upon those present for participation and empowerment in the mystical body of the Messiah.<sup>37</sup> In another eucharistic prayer ascribed to St. Hippolytus, there is a request that God “would grant to all who partake of the holy things . . . the fullness of the Holy Spirit for the confirmation of faith and truth.”<sup>38</sup> Not only does the Holy Spirit consecrate the bread and the wine and make Jesus present, he also is himself present to be experienced fully at the Eucharist.<sup>39</sup>

### **The Holy Spirit in the Annual Remembrance of the Day of Pentecost**

The day of Pentecost is remembered and celebrated every year according to liturgical calendars. Following the general template of the celebration of the Eucharist, the day of Pentecost features specific readings, songs, and prayers that commemorate the pouring out of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 and provides space for receiving empowerment from the Holy Spirit today. Following the life of Jesus, the liturgical calendar of the church also aligns with many of the Jewish feasts of Jesus’ day. In Jewish tradition, Pentecost, or *Shavuot*, indicates fifty days (or seven weeks) after Passover (*Pesah*) and commemorates the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai after the exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt under Moses (cf. Num 28:26–31). It was at this annual feast of *Shavuot* where Jesus’ disciples gathered in Jerusalem in the first few chapters of Acts and went on to receive the Holy Spirit in an unprecedented way as Jesus had promised them they would after he had ascended. The giving of the Holy Spirit on *Shavuot* was authenticated by its correspondence to the giving of the Torah; it was not a replacement but a supplemental eschatological revelation of God (cf. Acts 2:16–21 and Joel 3:1–5). The annual celebration of Pentecost in liturgical churches functions to remember the giving of the Holy Spirit as a historic act of God and to ground Christians in the development of their religious tradition from Second Temple Judaism. Commenting on the benefit of the regular observance of liturgical feasts and fast days in general, Patrick Regan

holds, “In the liturgy of the hours and the cycles of the year, the Spirit brings the time of the world to perfection by making the fullness of time present within it.”<sup>40</sup> It is within this paradigm of placing oneself in history while acknowledging the fluid relationship between past, present, and future that makes liturgical feasts powerful, especially the Day of Pentecost. Celebrating Pentecost liturgically also provides space for those gathered to renew their perspective on the outpouring of God’s Spirit today. As Raneiro Cantelemessa avers when discussing the liturgical remembrance of Pentecost, “What we recount becomes real: the Holy Spirit mysteriously descends again and becomes present. It becomes not just a simple retelling but an event.”<sup>41</sup> In this way, the annual remembrance of the day of Pentecost is more than a symbolic recalling of a certain event in the New Testament; it is a powerful means of entering into the ongoing reality of the Holy Spirit’s outpouring in the present time.

In Orthodox traditions, after various readings from the prophets and recalling the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, there is a prayer for God to subsequently “make us ready for his [the Holy Spirit’s] illumination.”<sup>42</sup> The following hymn is also proclaimed on Pentecost and as part of the Divine Liturgy: “We have seen the true Light, we have received the heavenly Spirit; we have found the true faith, worshipping the undivided Trinity, for the Trinity has saved us.”<sup>43</sup> Additionally, this prayer is prayed at Pentecost and also upon waking, before sleeping, and in preparation for Holy Communion:

O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth Who art everywhere and fillest all things. Treasury of Blessings and Giver of Life: Come and abide in us, and cleanse us from every impurity, and save our souls, O Good One.<sup>44</sup>

In the Roman Catholic tradition, there are several special prayers and chants for the day of Pentecost. Perhaps the most common refrain on Pentecost during Mass is “Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in them the fire of your love.”<sup>45</sup> There is also the medieval Latin sequence: *Veni Sancte Spiritus*.<sup>46</sup> The Mass on Pentecost ends with a solemn blessing themed around the work of the Holy Spirit:

May God, the Father of lights, who was pleased to enlighten the disciples’ minds by the outpouring of the Spirit, the Paraclete, grant you gladness by his blessing and make you always abound with the gifts of the same Spirit. Amen.



May the wondrous flame that appeared above the disciples, powerfully cleanse your hearts from every evil and pervade them with its purifying light. Amen.

And may God, who has been pleased to unite many tongues in the profession of one faith, give you perseverance in that same faith and, by believing, may you journey from hope to clear vision. Amen.

And may the blessing of Almighty God, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, come down on you and remain with you forever.<sup>47</sup>

In the Anglican tradition, the following preface is used not only on the day of Pentecost but also for the other suitable occasions such as sending out a missionary or a church convention:

In fulfillment of his true promise, the Holy Spirit came down [on this day] from heaven, lighting upon the disciples, to teach them and to lead them into all truth; uniting peoples of many tongues in the confession of one faith, and giving to your Church the power to serve you as a royal priesthood, and to preach the Gospel to all nations.<sup>48</sup>

Additionally, the Book of Common Prayer provides this collect prayer “Of the Holy Spirit” in connection to the above preface for Pentecost:

Almighty and most merciful God, grant that by the indwelling of your Holy Spirit we may be enlightened and strengthened for your service; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

This preface and collect recalls the Holy Spirit’s descent to give Jesus’ followers unity and power to serve him.

## **The Holy Spirit in Confirmation/Chrismation**

Apart from the regular celebration of the Eucharist and the annual remembrance of the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit also plays an important role in services of confirmation (Roman Catholic; Anglican) and chrismation (Eastern Orthodox). As a Eucharist celebration focused on the reception of new members, services of confirmation and chrismation (ideally with the presence of a bishop) depend on action of

the Holy Spirit. In the East, chrismation (anointing) occurs immediately after baptism where the priest anoints a person with oil in the sign of the cross on the head, nose, mouth, ears, chest, hands, and feet, saying “the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>49</sup> For the East,

Chrismation is an extension of Pentecost: the same Spirit who descended on the Apostles visibly in tongues of fire now descends on the newly baptized invisibly, but with no less reality and power. Through Chrismation every member of the Church becomes a prophet, and receives a share in the royal priesthood of Christ; all Christians alike, because they are chrismated, are called to act as conscious witnesses to the Truth.<sup>50</sup>

In Roman Catholic and Anglican churches, confirmation is a separate occasion from baptism, yet is still connected to baptism. In the Roman Rite for confirmation, the bishop extends a blessing over the newly confirmed members saying:

May God the Father Almighty bless you, whom he has made his adopted sons and daughters reborn from water and the Holy Spirit, and may he keep you worthy of his fatherly love. *Amen.*

May his only Begotten Son, who promised that the Spirit of truth would abide in his Church, bless you and confirm you by his power in the confession of the true faith. *Amen.*

May the Holy Spirit, who kindles the fire of charity in the hearts of disciples, bless you and lead you blameless and gathered as one into the joy of the Kingdom of God. *Amen.*<sup>51</sup>

Then, over the rest of the people gathered, the following prayer is given: “Confirm, O God, what you have brought about in us, and preserve in the hearts of your faithful the gifts of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>52</sup>

In the Anglican Book of Common Prayer, the bishop lays his hands on those being confirmed saying: “Strengthen, O Lord, your servant *N.* with your Holy Spirit; empower *him* for your service; and sustain *him* all the days of *his* life. *Amen.*” A second prayer option prays for those being confirmed to “daily increase in your Holy Spirit more and more, until *he* comes to your everlasting kingdom. *Amen.*”<sup>53</sup> From these examples of confirmation and chrismation services, it is clear that Spirit-empowerment is central to the liturgical reception of new members of the church.

## Two Purposes of the Holy Spirit's Empowerment in Liturgy

From the places of the Holy Spirit's empowerment in liturgy explored above there are two purposes or aspects of liturgical Spirit empowerment that are seen throughout: unity and mission. The Spirit-empowering focus of unity is seen especially in the celebration of the Eucharist, as Timothy Ware posits, "the Eucharist creates the unity of the Church."<sup>54</sup> In the Liturgy of St. Basil, for example, the priest prays, "That Thou wouldest unite all of us, who are partakers of the One Bread, and of the Chalice, to one another unto the fellowship of one Holy Spirit. . . ."<sup>55</sup> Understanding Pentecost as the reversal of Babel, Chrysostom's liturgy says, "When the Highest came down and confounded the tongues, He divided the nations; when He distributed the tongues of fire, He called all to unity, and with one voice we praise the Holy Ghost."<sup>56</sup> In the Roman Rite, the following prayer is given after Communion on the twenty-seventh Sunday after Pentecost: "though many, we are one bread, one body, for we all partake of the one bread and one chalice" (cf. 1 Cor 10:17).<sup>57</sup> Similarly, a prayer from the Roman Eucharistic prayer III reads: ". . . grant that we, who are nourished by the Body and Blood of your son and filled with his Holy Spirit, may become one body, one spirit in Christ."<sup>58</sup> In the Anglican tradition, Eucharistic Prayer I of the Book of Common Prayer contains the petition that we may be "made one body with him, that he may dwell in us, and we in him," echoing Jesus' final and high priestly prayer in John 17:21–23. The call for unity in liturgy is overwhelmingly clear and corresponds closely to what Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12:13, "For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit" (NRSV).

The second focus of Spirit empowerment in liturgy I want to highlight is mission. In other words, I want to highlight where liturgy emphasizes evangelism and the importance of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. For example, the prayer of the kiss of peace in the Liturgy of St. Mark says, ". . . grant to us Thy peace, and Thy love, and Thy help, and send down upon us the gifts of Thy most Holy Spirit. . . ."<sup>59</sup> In different words, St. Mark's liturgy asks, ". . . now also, LORD, illuminate the eyes of our understanding by the visitation of Thy Holy Spirit."<sup>60</sup> Both of these early liturgies show a clear anticipation of Holy Spirit empowerment for mission. A good example of this is also found in the overall structure of the eucharistic liturgy of the Book of Common Prayer. At the beginning of the liturgy there is a prayer for God to "cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit"

(collect for purity), in the middle of the liturgy for the Holy Spirit to “descend upon us” (*epiclesis*), and at the end of the liturgy that we may “go forth into the world rejoicing in the power of the Spirit.” Each of these prayers is a corporate prayer either said by everyone in unison (collect for purity) or led by a member of the clergy and responded to by those present (*epiclesis* and “going forth in power”). From this routine closing of the liturgy, those present are exhorted to rejoice in Holy Spirit empowerment and take what has been experienced in the service into every person’s world.

Some scholarly perspective is also insightful in this discussion of the Spirit’s role for, and the interrelatedness of, unity and mission in liturgy. Commenting on the *epiclesis* in general, Louis Weil holds that “the *epiclesis* reminds us that communion is not a private act between an individual Christian and God; rather, it is always a corporate act whose purpose is to build up the unity of the Body of Christ.”<sup>61</sup> Weil then pushes against the individualism that tends to emerge around the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and convincingly argues that the fundamental role of the Holy Spirit is to bring unity, which happens in liturgy.<sup>62</sup> In this regard, Rainero Cantalamessa provides a helpful approach to understanding individual spiritual gifts in relation to the corporate body of the Messiah. For Cantalamessa, the gifts of the Spirit, or *charisms*, work in tandem with the sacraments. Drawing from Ephesians 4:4–11 and 1 Corinthians 12:7, Cantalamessa suggests that the relationship between charisms and sacraments is best understood through the two aspects of the church: unity/communion (*koinonia*) and diversity/service (*diakonia*). Sacraments correspond to the gifts that the church shares in common, while charisms correspond to the diversity of gifts through which an individual serves God and his church.<sup>63</sup> Although the individual gifting of the Holy Spirit is essential for one’s own spiritual growth and development, the primary goal of Holy Spirit empowerment is for corporate gifting in order to bring about a unity in the body of the Messiah.

## Other Liturgies That Focus the Work of Holy Spirit

There are also special liturgies that focus on the work of the Holy Spirit depending on the particular tradition. For example, in the Anglican *Book of Occasional Services* there is a dedicated liturgical service called “A Public Service of Healing” that revolves around the anointing of the sick for supernatural healing.<sup>64</sup> Regarding those who lead the service, they initially ask God to “strengthen us to be your instruments of healing in

the world, by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Regarding those being anointed and prayed for are the following prayers: that they “will be strengthened and filled with God’s grace, that you may know the healing power of the Spirit” and that “our loving God give you the inward anointing of the Holy Spirit.”

Another example of a corporate liturgy that focuses specifically on the work of the Holy Spirit is found in a recent two-volume collection of Celtic Daily Prayer and called “Liturgy of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>65</sup> Overall, this liturgy is a liturgy for healing, faith, and spiritual gifts in a corporate setting and focused on a communal experience of the Holy Spirit. When recalling the numerous kinds of supernatural healings accomplished by Jesus and asking for further miracles and spiritual gifts there is the repeated collective refrain: “Help us grow our confidence in Your power.” The liturgy concludes with a song to the Holy Spirit written by the New Zealand poet James K. Baxter.

## Conclusion

From the scriptural and historic background of liturgy, to examples throughout liturgical worship, it is clear that pneumatology plays an important role in traditional corporate worship. As shown in this study, Holy Spirit empowerment has been present in traditional worship from the very beginning and is built into the fabric of the liturgies of traditional churches today. As Patrick Regan rightly claims, “the presence of the Spirit pervades liturgical celebration in its entirety.” This claim is supported by the three places highlighted above of the Holy Spirit’s role in liturgy: regularly celebrating Eucharist, annually commemorating the day of Pentecost, and occasional services of confirmation/chrisamation. Although each major liturgical tradition varies, they all express in one way or another the role and empowerment of the Holy Spirit in corporate worship. Spoken, read, sung, prayed, and proclaimed by the countless faithful who have gone before us, liturgy is a key place for the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the overall source and sustainer of liturgical worship, making Jesus present in the Eucharist, while unifying worshippers and empowering them for mission.

Although sometimes mistaken as incompatible entities, the work of the Holy Spirit goes hand in hand with participation in liturgy. In the words of Ashanin, “Liturgy . . . is a vehicle of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>66</sup> In effect, the Holy Spirit brings the liturgy to life and prevents traditional worship from becoming ineffective and merely symbolic.<sup>67</sup> For Pentecostal

theologian Chris Green, traditional Christian liturgy must be empowered by the Holy Spirit, and if not, it is meaningless.<sup>68</sup> Green recognizes the cohesion of Holy Spirit empowerment with liturgical worship and provides an insightful reflection for those from non-liturgical traditions, Pentecostals in particular:

In spite of what many Pentecostals fear, this insistence on liturgical exactness does not necessarily hamper, much less extinguish, spontaneous, Spirit-impelled activity. Against those Pentecostals who believe liturgical order unnecessary and dangerous, we should insist that the proper use of liturgy rightly orients Pentecostal worship and so powerfully invigorates it. Against those who believe the service needs to be designed to “bring the symbols to life,” we should maintain that the sacraments live already by virtue of God’s word of promise and the Spirit who brings those promises to reality.<sup>69</sup>

Green’s perspective essentially holds together the tension between old and new expressions of Christian worship and suggests that older traditions have much to offer. Although frequent repetition of prescribed prayers can lead some to become desensitized and detached, there is compounding value in the rhythms and routines of liturgical prayer that unites a community of faith together in their worship, especially when one is reminded of the Holy Spirit’s role in liturgy.

The Spirit-empowered content of liturgy is important but so too is the shape of liturgy itself. As Andrew Wilson correctly points out, “Corporate worship is not a series of unrelated practices thrown together without sequence; our liturgy tells a story, and the shape of this story forms our imagination at least as much as the practices do.”<sup>70</sup> Traditional Christian liturgy is Spirit-empowered because it regularly recalls in clarity the power of the Holy Spirit in the past, affirms it in the present, and looks forward to it in the eschatological future. When we recognize the Holy Spirit’s role and empowerment in traditional worship we do not have to trade liturgy for liberty but can retain and explore both together.<sup>71</sup>



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## Notes:

- <sup>1</sup> Louis Weil, “The Holy Spirit: Source of Unity in the Liturgy,” *Anglican Theological Review* 83:3 (2001), 412.
- <sup>2</sup> Thomas McKenzie, *The Anglican Way: A Guidebook* (Nashville: Colony Catherine, 2014), 51.
- <sup>3</sup> Additionally, whole collections of psalms may be linked to worship at the Jerusalem temple. The Asaph psalms (Pss 50; 73–83), for example, may be identified with Asaph because of his connection to David and his role as a temple singer (cf. Neh 7:49; 12:46; 1 Chron 16:6; 2 Chron 29:30). Further support for the singing of psalms at the Jerusalem temple may be found in 2 Chron 29:27–30; Isa 66:20 LXX; Sir 47:8–9; and 11QPsa (11Q5) xxvii.
- <sup>4</sup> For a thorough comparison of the Psalms in early Jewish and Christian tradition, see Eric Werner, *The Sacred Bridge: The Interdependence of Liturgy and Music in Synagogue and Church During the First Millennium* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1959). For studies of the earliest Christian liturgies and their Jewish roots see Louis Bouyer, *Eucharist: Theology and Spirituality of the Eucharistic Prayer* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1989); Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (London: Dacre Press, 1945).
- <sup>5</sup> Midr. Teh. 24:3; 57:4; Mekhilta of Rabbi Yishmael 15:1. Esther M. Menn, “Sweet Singer of Israel: David and the Psalms in Early Judaism,” in *Psalms in Community: Jewish and Christian Textual, Liturgical, and Artistic Traditions*, eds. Harold W. Attridge and Margot E. Fassler (Atlanta: SBL, 2003), 68.
- <sup>6</sup> Charles Ashanin, “Holy Spirit in the Liturgy,” *Encounter* 34:4 (1973), 354–55.
- <sup>7</sup> For an introduction to liturgical sources and families, see J. M. Neale and R. F. Littledale, *The Liturgies of SS. Mark, James, Clement, Chrysostom and Basil, and the Church of Malabar*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. (London: Griffith Farran, 1869), xi–xvii.
- <sup>8</sup> In regard to its exposure to Scripture—which is sometimes a criticism of liturgical traditions—the liturgy St. John Chrysostom contains approximately ninety-eight quotations from the Old Testament and 114 from the New Testament. Paul Evdokimov, *L’Orthodoxie*, Bibliothèque Théologique (Neuchâtel: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1965), 241.
- <sup>9</sup> Neale and Littledale, *The Liturgies of SS. Mark, James, Clement, Chrysostom and Basil, and the Church of Malabar*, 130.
- <sup>10</sup> John 16:13: “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come” (NRSV). Here, Ware finds support from Georges Florovsky and in the similar words of Vladimir Lossky who says, “Tradition is the life of the Holy Spirit in the Church.” Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (London: Penguin, 1964), 207.
- <sup>11</sup> Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 206.
- <sup>12</sup> Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 253.
- <sup>13</sup> Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 246.

- <sup>14</sup> Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), 7, 173.
- <sup>15</sup> Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 7.
- <sup>16</sup> Raniero Cantalamessa and Marsha Daigle-Williamson, *Sober Intoxication of the Spirit* (Cincinnati: Servant Books, 2005), 55.
- <sup>17</sup> Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 101–4.
- <sup>18</sup> McKenzie, *The Anglican Way*, 50.
- <sup>19</sup> Frank E. Wilson, *Faith and Practice* (New York: Morehouse-Barlow, 1939), 107.
- <sup>20</sup> Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, 267.
- <sup>21</sup> “He [the Holy Spirit] calls to mind the entire history of faith and of God, and shows them to be eschatologically fulfilled through the presence of the risen Lord in the midst of the community.” Patrick Regan, “Pneumatological and Eschatological Aspects of Liturgical Celebration,” *Worship* 51:4 (1977), 348.
- <sup>22</sup> Robert W. Jensen, “Liturgy of the Spirit,” *Lutheran Quarterly* 26:2 (1974), 190.
- <sup>23</sup> Chris E. Green, *Toward a Pentecostal Theology of the Lord’s Supper* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2012), 323–24.
- <sup>24</sup> Green, *Toward a Pentecostal Theology of the Lord’s Supper*, 49, 324.
- <sup>25</sup> Regan, “Pneumatological and Eschatological Aspects of Liturgical Celebration,” 333.
- <sup>26</sup> “Worship, for the Orthodox Church, is nothing else than ‘heaven on earth.’ The Holy Liturgy is something that embraces two worlds at once, for both in heaven and on earth the Liturgy is one and the same.” Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 270. “[Christian worship] is the worship of an open heaven . . . to celebrate the Eucharist means to enter into the openness of a glorification of God that embraces both heaven and earth, an openness effected by the Cross and Resurrection.” Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 49.
- <sup>27</sup> “[The Spirit] joins the earthly liturgy of the Church to the heavenly liturgy of Christ.” Regan, “Pneumatological and Eschatological Aspects of Liturgical Celebration,” 348.
- <sup>28</sup> “In the eucharistic worship of the church, the Spirit actualizes the past through remembrance (anamnesis) and anticipates the future (prolepsis) when created things are transfigured. . . .” Simon Chan, *Liturgical Theology: The Church as Worshiping Community* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 37.
- <sup>29</sup> Although each section of the eucharistic prayers is separate and plays a different role for Catholics and Anglicans, all three sections are indivisible and act as a single prayer for Orthodox Christians. Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 287–88. For the full breakdown of the liturgy outside of the eucharistic prayers for the Eastern Orthodox Churches, see the Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 290. The order of elements of the liturgy of the Sacrament ultimately varies depending on the tradition.
- <sup>30</sup> “The Spirit is the one who prompts thanksgiving and memorial at the Eucharist, and who makes what has been gratefully remembered a present reality in the community.” Regan, “Pneumatological and Eschatological Aspects of Liturgical Celebration,” 348.



- <sup>31</sup> Weil, “The Holy Spirit: Source of Unity in the Liturgy,” 413.
- <sup>32</sup> Eastern Orthodox Church, *Service of the Divine and Sacred Liturgy of Our Holy Father John Chrysostom* (London: J. Masters, 1866), 49.
- <sup>33</sup> Neale and Littledale, *The Liturgies of SS. Mark, James, Clement, Chrysostom and Basil, and the Church of Malabar*, 24.
- <sup>34</sup> The Catholic Church, *The Roman Missal: Renewed by Decree of the Most Holy Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican, Promulgated by Authority of Pope Paul VI and Revised at the Direction of Pope John Paul II* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2011), 646.
- <sup>35</sup> Jensen, “Liturgy of the Spirit,” 194–95.
- <sup>36</sup> Weil, “The Holy Spirit: Source of Unity in the Liturgy,” 414.
- <sup>37</sup> Or, as Charles Ashanin puts it, “the Holy Spirit is the Reality of God through which God bears witness to His Son.” Ashanin, “Holy Spirit in the Liturgy,” 357.
- <sup>38</sup> Charles Hefling and Cynthia Shattuck, *The Oxford Guide to The Book of Common Prayer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 465.
- <sup>39</sup> For Pentecostal theologian Chris Green, “The Eucharist-event must be a liturgy of the Spirit. If it is to be all it is meant to be, the Communion rite must be baptized in and filled with the Spirit.” Green, *Toward a Pentecostal Theology of the Lord’s Supper*, 323.
- <sup>40</sup> Regan, “Pneumatological and Eschatological Aspects of Liturgical Celebration,” 349.
- <sup>41</sup> Cantalamessa and Daigle-Williamson, *Sober Intoxication of the Spirit*, 116.
- <sup>42</sup> Eastern Orthodox Church, *Book of Divine Prayers and Services of the Catholic Orthodox Church of Christ* (New York: The Blackshaw Press, 1938), 999.
- <sup>43</sup> Eastern Orthodox Church, *Book of Divine Prayers and Services of the Catholic Orthodox Church of Christ*, 995.
- <sup>44</sup> Eastern Orthodox Church, *Orthodox Daily Prayers* (South Canaan, PA: St. Tikhon’s Seminary Press, 1982), 5–6; idem., *Book of Divine Prayers and Services of the Catholic Orthodox Church of Christ*, 999.
- <sup>45</sup> The Catholic Church, *Catechism of the Catholic Church. Second Edition. Revised in Accordance with the Official Latin Text Promulgated by Pope John Paul II* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 2000), 642.
- <sup>46</sup> The Catholic Church, *The Roman Missal*, 208–9.
- <sup>47</sup> The Catholic Church, *The Roman Missal*, 678–79.
- <sup>48</sup> The Episcopal Church, *The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church* (New York: Church Hymnal Corp, 1979), 247, 255, 380.
- <sup>49</sup> Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 285.
- <sup>50</sup> Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 285.
- <sup>51</sup> The Catholic Church, *The Roman Missal*, 1132.
- <sup>52</sup> The Catholic Church, *The Roman Missal*, 1132.

- <sup>53</sup> The Episcopal Church, *The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church*, 309.
- <sup>54</sup> Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 246.
- <sup>55</sup> Neale and Littledale, *The Liturgies of SS. Mark, James, Clement, Chrysostom and Basil, and the Church of Malabar*, 136–37.
- <sup>56</sup> Neale and Littledale, *The Liturgies of SS. Mark, James, Clement, Chrysostom and Basil, and the Church of Malabar*, 115.
- <sup>57</sup> The Catholic Church, *The Roman Missal*, 487. A version of this prayer is also found in Church of England, *Alternative Services, Second Series: An Order for Holy Communion* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 9.
- <sup>58</sup> The Catholic Church, *The Roman Missal*, 653.
- <sup>59</sup> Neale and Littledale, *The Liturgies of SS. Mark, James, Clement, Chrysostom and Basil, and the Church of Malabar*, 11.
- <sup>60</sup> Neale and Littledale, *The Liturgies of SS. Mark, James, Clement, Chrysostom and Basil, and the Church of Malabar*, 25.
- <sup>61</sup> Weil, “The Holy Spirit: Source of Unity in the Liturgy,” 413.
- <sup>62</sup> “The action of the Spirit in our liturgical prayer is to compel us toward the unity that God wills.” Weil, “The Holy Spirit: Source of Unity in the Liturgy,” 414.
- <sup>63</sup> “The sacraments are gifts given to the Church as a whole to sanctify individuals; charisms are gifts given to individuals to sanctify the whole Church.” Cantalamessa and Daigle-Williamson, *Sober Intoxication of the Spirit*, 58–62.
- <sup>64</sup> Anointing of the sick also happens during the sacrament of Last Rites, given at the time of death.
- <sup>65</sup> The Northumbria Community Trust, *Celtic Daily Prayer Book Two: Farther Up and Farther In* (Glasgow: William Collins, 2015), 1077–82.
- <sup>66</sup> Ashanin, “Holy Spirit in the Liturgy,” 359.
- <sup>67</sup> “The pneumatological aspect of the liturgy, like the Spirit himself, is invisible, intangible, incorporeal, unobjectified; yet all-pervasive. . . . In the Spirit, then, liturgical words and gestures acquire the clarity, transparency and radiance of the Risen One, and are prevented from being merely objects.” Regan, “Pneumatological and Eschatological Aspects of Liturgical Celebration,” 349.
- <sup>68</sup> Green, *Toward a Pentecostal Theology of the Lord’s Supper*, 250.
- <sup>69</sup> Green, *Toward a Pentecostal Theology of the Lord’s Supper*, 251.
- <sup>70</sup> Andrew Wilson, *Spirit and Sacrament: An Invitation to Eucharistic Worship* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019), 84.
- <sup>71</sup> ORU itself represents a good example of this exchange of traditional and contemporary worship. In his 1973 article, Kevin Ranaghan captures a time when ORU experienced a liturgical renewal that was comprised of a deep interest and appreciation in sacramentalism and liturgy. Under the spiritual leadership of Robert Stamps, the campus chaplain from 1968–1981, campus life at ORU held a strong emphasis on Holy Communion, weekly vespers in the dining hall, and daily Eucharist in the prayer tower. There was a liturgical framework that was blended with Pentecostal hymns and a space for praying and singing in tongues. There is also

record of traditional Christian initiation on campus that included a procession around campus with a processional cross, torch bearers, and a thurifer, that was completed by baptism and anointing with oil in the university pool. Many at ORU have sought early church traditions, explored the historical roots of Christian worship, and were able to blend them in an effective way. Kevin M. Ranaghan, “The Liturgical Renewal at Oral Roberts University,” *Studia Liturgica* 9:3 (1973), 122–36.

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