

Book Review

Introduction to Christian Liturgy. By Frank Senn. Minneapolis: Fortress Press 2012. Pages, 244. Paper, \$29.95. ISBN 978-0-8006-9885-0.

Frank Senn identifies this as a "pastoral liturgical handbook," such that the questions he seeks to answer, as well as the style in which he answers them, are directed to "concrete worshiping communities" and those who lead them rather than to liturgical historians and theologians. As a handbook, or better, as a kind of liturgical "catechism" for worshiping communities, Senn structures each chapter with five questions, ranging from "discerning the meaning in liturgy" to "strategies of relating culture to liturgy" to what Christian people should have to "support their participation" in liturgy. As it works its way through this "catechism," the book provides pastoral leaders with enough liturgical background to "guide the assembly in doing its public work well." What is not addressed in the book, or what is not addressed fully, can be found in the brief bibliographies of classic and recent scholarship that conclude each chapter.

The first three chapters provide a general introduction in which Senn explores the meaning of liturgy, an overview of its historical and cultural development, and its principal shape. As he makes clear early in the first chapter, he intentionally focuses on "liturgy" rather than "worship" as a way to focus on the public and communal character of liturgy. His discussion of inculturation primarily summarizes the categories of the Lutheran World Federation's Nairobi Statement and draws on strategies proposed by Anscar Chupungco. His discussion of the principal shape of the liturgy is directed to the development of the Western ecumenical *ordo*. Yet here, as in his discussion of daily prayer in another chapter, an emphasis on comparative, rather than pastoral, liturgics takes the upper hand; Senn gives us comparative outlines of many of the reformation eucharistic liturgies rather than explore the theological character of the *ordo*. Perhaps this only reveals the difficulty of providing in one book a general introduction to liturgy for pastoral leaders and a pastoral handbook for congregations.

The heart of the book, five chapters in all, explores liturgical time and the church year. In these chapters Senn provides clear and concise readings of the development and theological character of the major feasts and seasons. Here, too, he attends to some of the kinds of questions that emerge in congregations — the origin and appropriateness of Christmas trees and pageants, the cultural importance of the feasts of St Lucia and Our Lady of Guadalupe, whether there is a "season" of Epiphany, and the appeal of Tenebrae services. As is true of the book as a whole, his scholarship on the Christian time and church year is current, though there are some notable

absences in the bibliographies for these chapters, for example, Gregory Wolfenden's work on daily prayer and Martin Connell's two volumes on the church year.

The final three chapters take up questions related to life passages, liturgical art, and participation in worship. These chapters, in part because they attempt to address such wide-ranging themes, are the weakest section of the book. The "life passages" chapter includes what for some traditions is the larger part of a sacramental theology: baptism, confession/penance, ordination, marriage, and death. As a "pastoral liturgics," such limited attention to such central practices seems out of balance with his treatment of the church year; this seems especially true with his limited treatment of baptism. The liturgical arts chapter includes questions about music and its selection for worship, the use of bells, liturgical space, and clerical vestments. It is puzzling that he addresses the use of bells but says nothing about the visual arts. The final chapter, though not a conclusion, turns to the questions with which Senn opened the book: how to help concrete worshiping communities more fully participate in liturgical celebrations. He explores questions about bodily experience in worship through the senses, postures, and gestures. He also provides a brief but very practical exploration of how children are, or can be, formed for and in liturgical participation.

Senn closes the book with a chronological outline of major Christian events and liturgical documents and a glossary of liturgical terms, taking us from "ablutions" to "voluntaries." The glossary, like the thematic chapters, closes with a brief bibliography pointing us to further reading in recent dictionaries of liturgy and worship.

There is much to like about this book — its carefulness with recent scholarship, its attention to questions that are more likely to emerge with parish liturgy committees than in a graduate seminar, its concern for practice rather than theory, and its overall accessibility. While comparative liturgics sometimes gets the upper hand, as noted above, the whole demonstrates Senn's concern for and ability to bridge the pastor's and the scholar's study, a bridge too readily abandoned in an age concerned more with getting things done than with what things mean and how they came to be.

*Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary
Evanston, Illinois*

E. Byron Anderson