

taking on such a daunting task and producing such a fascinating series of reflections.

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Practical Sacramental Theology: At the Intersection of Liturgy and Ethics. By Bruce T. Morrill. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2021. viii + 176 pages. \$24.00 (paper).

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If you are looking for a book that illumines a clear path through the sacramental-liturgical challenges of today, seeking to resolve all, you will be disappointed. If, instead, you are seeking to better understand the complexities of problems and challenges confronting sacramental-liturgical studies and praxis—especially at the intersection of liturgy and ethics—you will find this book rewarding. Divided into three parts of uneven length, Morrill embraces the scholarly theological vocation—not merely as an observer, but as a committed ecclesial participant—by providing a record of both theory and practice of the sacramental rites of the church in this volatile period of history. Morrill characterizes this period as marked by an increasingly polarized ecclesial situation, clerical assertions of control, emptying pews, youthful and even middle-aged alienation of the faithful, and the hegemony of market and technologically driven individualism to the detriment of the commonwealth. Within this state of affairs, Morrill provides to the church and to the academy both “perceptive, descriptive work to help articulate what is going on” as well as “analytical work to venture theological judgments about what the church’s ongoing sacramental-liturgical tradition has to offer, as well as how that ritual treasury is being profitably exploited or tragically squandered in practice.”

Part 2, “Sacramental Rites in Performative Perspective,” is an illustration of Morrill at his best. The first two chapters in this section deal with the sacraments of marriage and the Eucharist. In each case, Morrill recounts an event where the commonly held sacramental-liturgical understandings of the author (and, I dare say, most of the target audience of this book) are challenged by the “sense of the faithful.” In the account about marriage, Morrill relates the vehemently held convictions of a “typical” bride (and mother) of what constitutes a suitable and impressive wedding, most of which undermines its public character. In the account about the Eucharist, “ordinary” parishioners—having now been exposed to the gospels through the lectionary

readings as well as private and communal bible study and prayer—are asking questions about eucharistic sharing in light of Jesus’ obvious inclusion of others in his meal-hospitality ministry. The third chapter of this section, devoted to the sacrament of penance, reviews the continued efforts of the hierarchy to insist upon the first rite of reconciliation—individual confession of sins of a penitent and individual absolution by a priest—as the “ordinary way” to celebrate the sacrament, resulting in the majority of Catholics experiencing “conversion,” “reconciliation,” and “forgiveness” outside the “official” sacrament.

Morrill is not content with simply juxtaposing the “official” understanding of these sacraments with the “sense of the faithful.” In each case, he provides analysis or a creative suggestion that “bridges the gap.” His analytical skills are evident in the case of a cohabiting couple’s superstitious reluctance to welcome their guests, lest they lay eyes on each other before the ceremony. Morrill reveals something more is profoundly at play: “a performance of how deeply and how much they sensed was at stake in what they were about to do with and for their relationship, how deeply they desired that their love and partnership not suffer misfortune but, on the contrary, endure and even thrive, how poignantly they knew of both the positive and negative forces—natural and supernatural—their world portended for their marriage.” Similarly, Morrill’s creative skills in using the church’s ritual treasury are evident in his suggestion to take advantage of Ash Wednesday by not celebrating the Eucharist, but by offering penitential services. Indeed, these services include practices that the faithful have desired for decades: “communally hearing the word of God concerning conversion together in liturgical assembly while leaving open personal deliberation and discernment of how to respond.”

In his second to last essay, Morrill meets the challenge of thinking through the relationship between liturgy and ethics. The first part of the essay mines the thought of Don E. Saliers, who opposes efforts in theory and practice to forge an “extrinsic and causal” link between the two; in other words, distorting the liturgy into “an instrument to get things done.” Complementary to Saliers’ intrinsic and conceptual relationship between liturgy and ethics, Morrill turns to Johann Baptist Metz’s virtue of poverty of spirit as a key to narrow the gap between how Christians practice liturgy and how they actually live. This leads Morrill to a deep reflection on the Good Friday liturgy as “a paradigmatic experience of the weekly Lord’s Day liturgy’s capacities for drawing participants into the paschal mystery, thereby gracing them with the messianic virtues symbolically expressed in the proclaimed word, shared sacrament, and the prayers arising from the assembly.”

Underpinning Morrill's essays is a deep appreciation and wide use of sacramental-liturgical forerunners, ritualists, theologians, official church documents, and patristic witnesses. A lengthy, but inexhaustive list of the first group includes Robert Taft, John Baldovin, Paul Bradshaw, David Power, Mary Collins, Lawrence Hoffman, Kevin Irwin, Alexander Schmemmann, Don E. Saliers, Louis-Marie Chauvet, Bernard Cooke, Susan Ross, and Gordon Lathrop. Ritualists include Catherine Bell, Ronald Grimes, Bruce Kapferer, and Don Handelman, whereas theologians involve Karl Rahner, Edward Schillebeeckx, Gustavo Gutiérrez, Monica Hellwig, Phillippe Bordeyne, Jon Sobrino, and Johann Baptist Metz. Through his immersion into this depth of scholarship, and his ability to integrate these voices into his project, Morrill has embraced his scholarly theological vocation and, in doing so, has enriched the church and the academy.

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Catholic Social Teaching: A User's Guide. By William O'Neill, SJ. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2021. xv + 176 pages. \$18.00 (paper).
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Fr. William O'Neill, SJ, offers readers a refreshing entry into the world of Catholic social teaching (CST) in his latest book. He does this in two ways. First, his stated aim in writing the book is modest, as he seeks to demonstrate that Catholic social teaching must be "embodied in a way of life" (xiv). That is, O'Neill contends that understanding what Catholic social teaching entails is like learning a language. When learning a new language, one must learn the rules. At the end of the day, however, rules of grammar vanish into spoken words. For O'Neill, the same can be said about Catholic social teaching. Looking at the tradition from the outside, one may see nothing more than a list of rules to follow. But O'Neill goes on to demonstrate through examples that Catholic social teaching is a living tradition that is meant to be practiced, lived out, "a grammar we learn in our 'struggle for justice, love, and peace'" (xiv). Second, O'Neill tends to the expected task of reviewing the history, sources, and key themes of the tradition in a way that promotes further inquiry by the reader. He accomplishes this by widening the scope of the conversation through his engagement with interlocutors outside the Catholic religious tradition in both his commentary and reflection questions. By the end of part 1, the reader is more than ready to take up the challenge of applying