

# CULT CULTIVATES CULTURE

The Avila Institute

*“I came so that they might have life  
and have it more abundantly.”*

# Cult Cultivates Culture



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“People of faith are committed to serving others in God’s love in healthcare, child welfare, migration and refugee resettlement, education, and more. Religious freedom protects the space in which we can continue to serve. Religious Freedom Week begins June 22, the Feast of Sts. Thomas More & John Fisher. Join Catholics across the country to pray and act for the freedom to serve faithfully and with integrity.”

– USCCB Religious Freedom Week 2018



“This split between the faith which many profess and their daily lives deserves to be counted among the more serious errors of our age.... Therefore, let there be no false opposition between professional and social activities on the one part, and religious life on the other.” — Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, n.43



“‘Eternal life’ is not – as the modern reader might immediately assume – life after death, in contrast to this present life, which is transient and not eternal. ‘Eternal life’ is life itself, real life, which can also be lived in the present age and is no longer challenged by physical death. This is the point: to seize ‘life’ here and now, real life that can no longer be destroyed by anything or anyone....



[A] distinguishing feature of the disciple of Jesus is the fact that he 'lives': beyond the mere fact of existing, he has found and embraced the real life that everyone is seeking. On the basis of such texts, the early Christians called themselves simply 'the living' (*hoi zontes*). They had found what all are seeking – life itself, full and, hence, indestructible life."

– Pope Benedict XVI,  
*Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week*

# Cult Cultivates Culture

“The glory of  
God is the living  
man, but the life  
of man is the  
vision of God.”  
— St. Irenaeus



# Cult Cultivates Culture

The Father “accomplishes the ‘mystery of his will’ by giving his beloved Son and his Holy Spirit for the salvation of the world and for the glory of his name.” The Church’s liturgy therefore manifests “the work of Christ the Lord in redeeming mankind and giving perfect glory to God.”

—Catechism of the Catholic Church, nos.1066-7

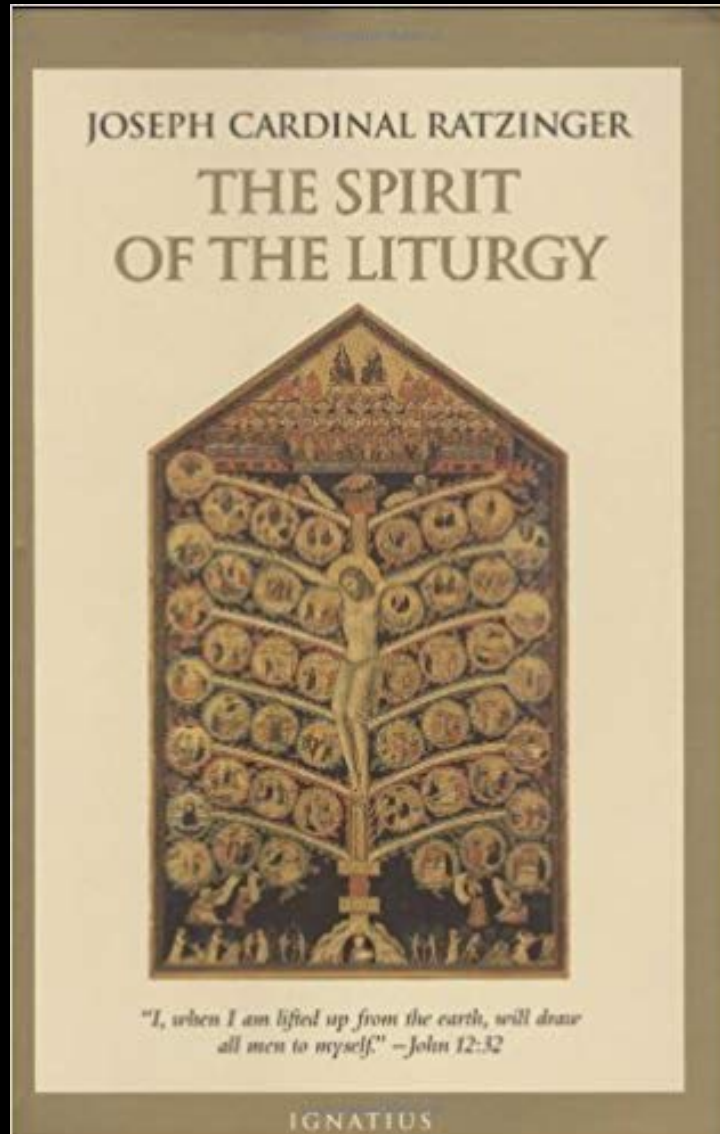


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# Cult Cultivates Culture

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# Part One:

What is “cult”?

# What is “cult”?

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“Cult exists in order to communicate this vision [of looking toward God] in such a way that glory is given to God.”

—Pope Benedict XVI, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 18

1. Cult denotes a relationship to God.
2. This relationship is realized through words and actions.



“Let my people go to serve me in the wilderness.”  
— Exodus 7:16



“Go sacrifice to your God  
within the land.”

– Exodus 8:21

“Just you men go and  
serve the LORD.”

– Exodus 10:11

“Go, serve the LORD.  
Only your flocks and  
herds will be detained.”

– Exodus 10:24

# What is “cult”?

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“In all this, the issue is not the Promised Land: the only goal of the Exodus is shown to be worship [i.e., cult], which can only take place according to God’s measure.”

“[T]he freedom to give right worship to God [i.e., cult], appears, in the encounter with Pharaoh, to be the sole purpose of the Exodus, indeed, its very essence.”

— *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 16, 20



# What is “cult”?

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At Sinai, God “makes known his will to them in the Ten Commandments and, through the mediation of Moses, makes a covenant with them, a covenant concretized in a minutely regulated form of worship. In this way..., Israel learns how to worship God in the way he himself desires. Cult, liturgy in the proper sense, is part of this worship....”

— *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 17

# What is “cult”?

Elements of Israel’s cult: *Word*

“Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone! Therefore, you shall love the LORD, your God, with your whole heart, and with your whole being, and with your whole strength. Take to heart these words which I command you today. Keep repeating them to your children. Recite them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up.”

– Deuteronomy 6:4-7

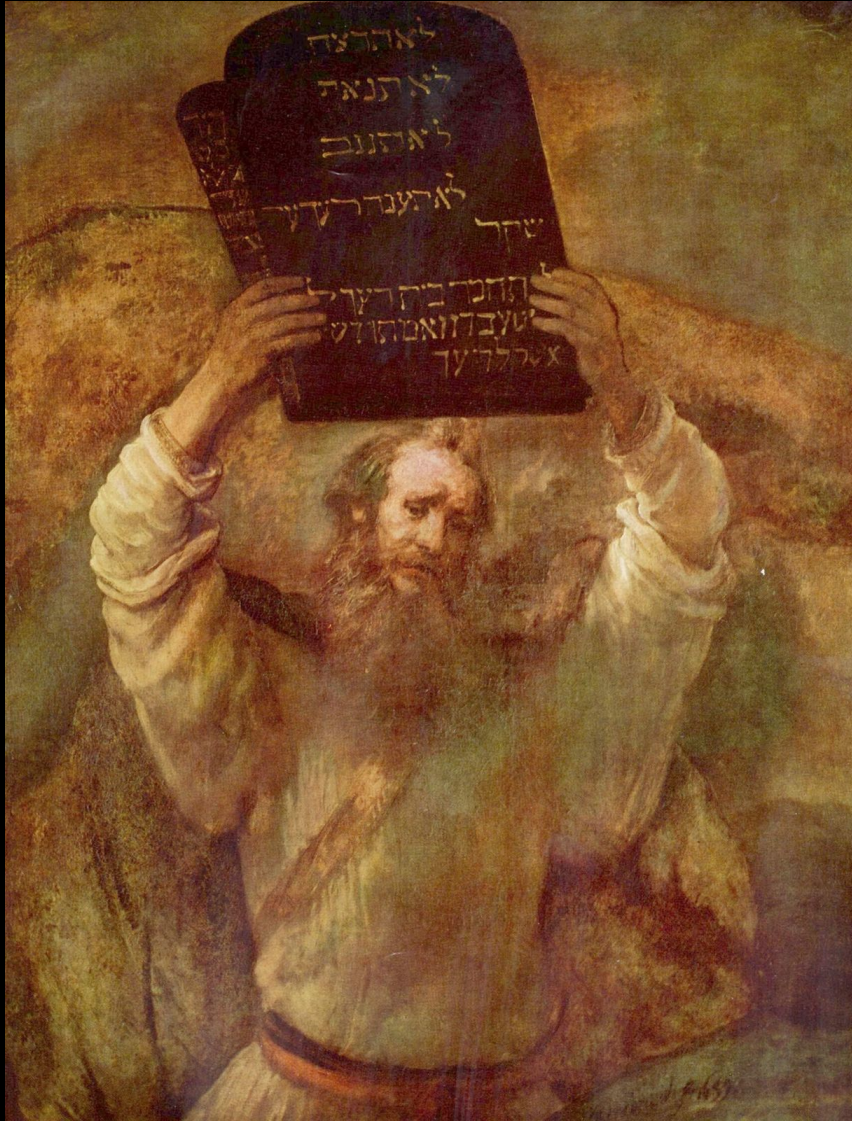
# What is “cult”?

## Elements of Israel’s cult: *Sacrifice*

“This is the oblation which you will offer to the LORD: two unblemished yearling lambs each day as the regular burnt offering, offering one lamb in the morning and the other during the evening twilight, each with a grain offering of one tenth of an ephah of bran flour mixed with a fourth of a hin of oil of crushed olives.... On the sabbath day: two unblemished yearling lambs, with a grain offering of two tenths of an ephah of bran flour mixed with oil, and its libation.”

—Numbers 28:3-9

# What is “cult”?



# What is “cult”?

“The Son, who is by nature relationship and relatedness, reestablishes relationships.”

—Pope Benedict XVI,  
*Sin and Salvation*, 76



# What is “cult”?

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Elements of Christ’s cult: *Word*

“In the beginning was the Word,  
and the Word was with God,  
and the Word was God.”

– Prologue to St. John’s Gospel

# What is “cult”?

Elements of Christ’s cult: *Word*



“He clothed himself in our language, so that he might clothe us in his mode of life. He asked for our form and put this on, and then, as a father with his children, he spoke with our childish state.”

– *St. Ephrem*

# What is “cult”?

## Elements of Christ’s cult: *Sacrifice*



- ▣ “love-transformed mankind”
- ▣ “in its essence simply returning to love and therefore divinization”
- ▣ “growth in love”
- ▣ “transformation into love”
- ▣ “humanity becoming love with Christ”
- ▣ “*sacrifice has nothing to do with destruction*”



# What is “cult”?

Elements of Christian cult: *Word*

“I urge you therefore, brothers by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship [*logike latreia*].”

— Romans 12:1



# What is “cult”?

Elements of Christian cult: *Word*



“The divine words  
grow together with  
the one who reads them.”  
—St. Gregory the Great

# What is “cult”?

Elements of Christian cult: *Sacrifice*

“By the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity.”



# What is “cult”?



“A sacramental celebration is a meeting of God’s children with their Father, in Christ and the Holy Spirit; this meeting takes the form of a dialogue, through words and actions.”  
– Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1153

# Part Two:

What is “culture”?

# What is “culture”?

“Culture everywhere refers to ordered human endeavor made for the purpose of producing better results or realizing as fully as can be the possibilities of development latent in things and not realized by the haphazard methods of nature.”



# What is “culture”?

“Culture in reference to man should then mean the application of human endeavor and of reason to the natural abilities of man for the development of the best that is in him.”

– Dom Virgil Michel  
“Christian Culture,” 1936



# What is “culture”?

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Culture is the outcome of the “conceiving and enacting the values of a group.”

Culture is “the continuous and cohesive life-style by which a particular group conceives of and enacts what its values mean.”

– Aidan Kavanagh,  
“The Role of Ritual in Personal Development”



# What is “culture”?

Concepts

Ideas

Values

History

Persons

Stories

+

Enacting

Acting

Doing

Ritualizing

=

Culture

e.g., 4<sup>th</sup> of July in American Culture

# What is “culture”?

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Culture

e.g., Avila Institute

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=

Culture

e.g., “Culture of zapping”

# What is “culture”?

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“[C]ontemporary life offers immense possibilities for action and distraction, and the world presents all of them as valid and good. All of us, but especially the young, are immersed in a culture of zapping. We can navigate simultaneously on two or more screens and interact at the same time with two or three virtual scenarios.”

—Pope Francis, *Gaudete et Exsultate*, 167

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=

Culture

e.g., Church

# Part Three:

How does cult “cultivate” culture?



# Cult “cultivates” culture

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1. Cult – right relationship with God – necessarily entails right relationships with the world.

“On Sinai the people receive not only instructions about worship [i.e., cult], but also an all-embracing rule of law and life.”

–Pope Benedict XVI,  
*The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 18

# Cult “cultivates” culture

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1. Cult – right relationship with God – necessarily entails right relationships with the world.

“Worship, that is, the right kind of cult, of relationship with God, is essential for the right kind of human existence in the world. It is so precisely because it reaches beyond everyday life. Worship gives us a share in heaven’s mode of existence, in the world of God, and allows light to fall from that divine world into ours.”

– *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 21

# Cult “cultivates” culture

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2. Cult forms an individual’s thinking and acting, his “logicizing” and sacrificing in the world.

“Becoming contemporary with the Pasch of Christ in the liturgy of the Church is also, in fact, an anthropological reality. The celebration is...meant to be indeed a *logike latreia*, the ‘logicizing’ of my existence, my interior contemporaneity with the self-giving of Christ.”

— *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 58

# Cult “cultivates” culture

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2. Cult forms an individual’s thinking and acting, his “logicizing” and sacrificing in the world.

“True, the Sacrifice of the Logos is accepted already and forever. But we must still pray for it to become *our* sacrifice, that we ourselves, as we said, may be transformed into the Logos, conformed to the Logos, and so be made the true Body of Christ.”

— *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 173

# Cult “cultivates” culture

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2. Cult forms an individual’s thinking and acting, his “logicizing” and sacrificing in the world.

Sacrifice is “the union of man and creation with God.... That is why St. Augustine could say that the true ‘sacrifice’ is the *civitas Dei*, that is, love-transformed mankind, the divinization of creation and the surrender of all things to God: God all in all. That is the purpose of the world. That is the essence of sacrifice and worship.”

— *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 28

# Cult “cultivates” culture

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3. The City of God and the City of Man are meant to “inculturate.”

“Provisions shall also be made, when revising the liturgical books, for legitimate variations and adaptations to different groups, regions, and peoples, especially in mission lands, provided that the substantial unity of the Roman rite is preserved.”

— Vatican II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 38

# Cult “cultivates” culture

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3. The City of God and the City of Man are meant to “inculturate.”

“Inculturation signifies ‘an intimate transformation of the authentic cultural values by their integration into Christianity and the implantation of Christianity into different human cultures.’”

– *Varietates Legitimae*, 4

# Cult “cultivates” culture

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3. The City of God and the City of Man are meant to “inculturate.”

“The term inculturation is a better expression to designate a double movement: ‘By inculturation, the Church makes the Gospel incarnate in different cultures and at the same time introduces peoples, together with their cultures, into her own community.’ ... This double movement in the work of inculturation thus expresses one of the component elements of the mystery of the incarnation.”

— *Varietates Legitimae*, 4



# Cult “cultivates” culture

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1. Cult – right relationship with God – necessarily entails right relationships with the world.
2. Cult forms an individual’s thinking and acting, his “logicizing” and sacrificing in the world.
3. The City of God and the City of Man are meant to “inculturate.”

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