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# “In Communion with God”: The Inculturation of the Christian Liturgical Theology of Giulio Aleni in His *Explication of the Mass (Misa Jiyi)*

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**Abstract:** Liturgical practice and its theological interpretation are not only very important to the Chinese inculturation of Catholicism in particular and Christianity in general but also of great significance in the establishment of an indigenized Christian faith and system of life. This paper will analyze the methodological approaches and historical inspirations for the inculturation of Christian liturgical theology through Giulio Aleni’s (1582–1649) *Explication of the Mass (Misa Jiyi, 弥撒祭义)*, the first book to utilize Chinese cultural resources to systematically interpret the Mass (Eucharist). Continuing the general Jesuit accommodation initiated by Matteo Ricci, Aleni established an indigenized liturgical system of theology through intercultural learning, borrowing, and creative construction. Three of his contributions especially stand out. First, Aleni explained the significance of the Mass in terms of the Chinese philosophical–ethical concepts of “repaying the roots” (*baoben, 报本*) and “giving thanks” (*gan’en, 感恩*). Second, he elaborated on communion with the Trinitarian God in the Mass through Jesus Christ by drawing on the ancient Chinese teachings of repaying (*chou, 酬*), commemoration (*shi, 示*), and hope (*wang, 望*), which Aleni related to “giving thanks to the Father,” “commemorating Jesus,” and “invoking the Holy Spirit.” Finally, he provided a deep spiritual explanation of the Mass, using the traditional Confucian concepts of “self-restraint” (*keji, 克己*), “self-reflection” (*fanji, 反己*), and “spiritual meditation” (*chouyi, 抽绎*) to help believers understand the activities of repentance, commemoration, and prayer in the Mass. Overall, Aleni emphasized that the essence of the Mass was to achieve “communion with the heart of heavenly Lord” (*xihe tianzhuzhixin, 翕合天主之心*), which, as a pivot of faith, could be extended into daily life through its spiritual practice. Aleni, therefore, established a comprehensive system of “liturgy-spirituality-life” for Chinese Christians by indigenizing Christian liturgical theology through intercultural learning. His creative synthesis yielded a dynamic balance between Christian and Chinese traditions, absorbing Confucian resources to imaginatively enrich and expand the Christian tradition, while encouraging the creative transformation of the Christian tradition into the Chinese cultural community.



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## 1. Introduction

Liturgical inculturation plays an important role in the spread and development of Christianity in China. According to the Catholic tradition, “every liturgical celebration, because it is an action of Christ the priest and of His Body which is the Church, is a sacred action surpassing all others; no other action of the Church can equal its efficacy by the same title and to the same degree” (Pope Paul VI 1963, p. 7). On the one hand, liturgy is the salvation of God through which humans are saved and sanctified; on the other hand, it is the public celebration of God’s people, in which humans praise, offer sacrifice to, and glorify God. Through the liturgy, divine grace is symbolized and realized by visible things; thus, it

is of special importance for building up the Church, spreading the faith, and nurturing believers. A very important area of inculturation, therefore, encompasses the liturgical explication and practice of local churches. In fact, liturgical inculturation should be the central task undertaken by the local believing community (Chia 2022, p. 80). Few scholars, however, have examined the reception and interpretation of the Catholic liturgy—especially its core, the Eucharist (also called the Holy Communion or Mass)—within the historical and cultural context of China<sup>1</sup> (Law 1985; Law 1999, pp. 255–64; Li 2019, pp. 22–39; Seah 2017, pp. 86–120; Yang 2022).

Since the late-sixteenth-century arrival of Matteo Ricci (1552–1610) and Michel Ruggieri (1543–1607) in the Guangdong city of Zhaoqing (肇庆), Catholic missionaries have been explaining and interpreting the Catholic liturgy through Chinese language and culture. Although many works did so prior to Giulio Aleni, especially with respect to baptism, repentance, and the Eucharist<sup>2</sup> (Ricci and Ruggieri 1584, 1585; Vagnoni 1615; Pantoja 1617; Rocha 1619), it was not until Aleni that a systematic introduction to Christian liturgy engaged in deep intercultural dialogue with Chinese resources.

Otherwise known as P. Julius Aleni, Ai Rulue 艾儒略, and Siji (思及, courtesy name), Giulio Aleni (1582–1649) was a second-generation Italian Jesuit missionary who won for himself the title “Xilai Kongzi” (西来孔子, Confucius from the West). Aleni departed for China in 1613, arriving in the Fujian province in 1625 (where he remained until his death), working primarily in the cities Fuzhou, Xinghua, and Quanzhou (Pan 2013, p. 60). About 25 of his writings have been handed down, five books of which deal with Christian liturgy in the Chinese language<sup>3</sup> (Ye 2012; Zhang 2014). Among these works, the two-volume *Explication of the Mass (Sacrifici Missae explicatio, 弥撒祭义)*<sup>4</sup> (Legge 1882, pp. 210–15), also known as *Explication of Divine Service (Zhaoshi Jiayi, 昭事祭义)*, remains the first theological work in Chinese that systematically expounds the Eucharist with distinctive intercultural characteristics.

In the spirit of intercultural theology, Aleni first explained Catholic liturgy with concepts from the Chinese classics, interpreting the Mass as an offering of humankind to the “God of heaven and earth,” “the great Father of heaven, earth, humans, and all things,” an offering that “repays the roots” (*baoben*, 报本) and “gives thanks” (*gan'en*, 感恩). At the same time, however, Aleni adhered to the basic principles of Christian liturgical theology by underscoring the singularity of the Eucharist as a sacrifice. With Christology as the core of the Mass and thanksgiving as its focus, Aleni emphasized that believers should commemorate and thank God for his birth and salvation in the Mass through prayer, repentance, and meditation, thereby communing with God. Finally, Aleni stressed that the Mass is a spiritual offering that believers should extend into their daily lives through contemplation of and communion with God, using the Mass as a pivot to cultivate virtue and establish a “liturgy-spirituality-ethics” life system.

Aleni’s liturgical theology is strongly inculturated, drawing on Chinese classics such as *Liji (The Book of Rites, 礼记)* and other cultural resources to explain Catholic liturgy, also elaborating the spiritual dimension of liturgy from the perspective of spiritual–moral cultivation in the Confucian tradition, in order to establish a holistic life system based on liturgy. For Aleni’s localized liturgical theology, Catholicism is a way of life centered around liturgy. His *Explication of the Mass* constitutes a pioneering work in the inculturation of Catholic liturgical theology, providing not only a significant example of the liturgical theology and practice of Chinese Catholicism today but also an important reference for the localization of Catholicism worldwide.

## 2. Divine Service (Zhaoshi), Repaying the Roots (Baoben), Giving Thanks (Gan'en): Expressions of the Mass with the Chinese Classics

*Explication of the Mass* is also named *Explication of Divine Service (Zhaoshi 昭事)*, with the word *zhaoshi* (昭事) meaning to serve and worship diligently and openly and implying sacrifice. Before “*misa*” (弥撒) became the definitive word for Christian liturgy, *zhaoshi* was used interchangeably with “Mass” by Ming- and Qing-Dynasty Catholics. For exam-

ple, *The Order of Mass (Misa Jingdian, 弥撒经典)*, which was translated by Ludovic Bugli (*Li leisi, 利类思*), is also called *The Classics of Zhaoshi (Zhaoshi Jingdian, 昭事经典)*<sup>5</sup> (Law 1985; Law 1999, pp. 255–64). This is consistent with Matteo Ricci's strategy of "Jesuit accommodation," which drew on indigenous cultural resources from the Chinese classics and applied them to Catholic theory and practice<sup>6</sup> (Mungello 1988, pp. 1–9). In *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven (Tianzhu Shiyi, 天主实义)*, Ricci referred to the divine name in the Christian faith, Deus or God, as *Shangdi (上帝)* from the ancient Chinese classics, maintaining, "Our Christian God is what the Chinese classics call *Shangdi*" (Zhou 2017, p. 243). Because the Chinese classic *Shang Shu (Classics of Books, 尚书)* implored readers, "Be careful to serve and worship *Shangdi* diligently" (*zhaoshi shangdi, 昭事上帝*) (Legge [1865] 1983), early European missionaries and Chinese Christians understood *zhaoshi* as the proper attitude of serving and worshiping God. According to Yang Tingyun (杨廷筠), "To admire God is equivalent to serving *Shangdi* diligently and openly (*zhaoshi*) in our Confucianism" (Yang [1614] 2013, p. 9).

This use of the word *zhaoshi* for the liturgical nature of the Mass is in line with the general religious emotions of humankind towards the transcendent. The word "liturgy" in Greek, *leitourgia*, means service for and on behalf of people; it is, therefore, consonant with *zhaoshi*'s meaning of "serving diligently." And since the word "liturgy" was officially used by the Latin Church in the 16th century to refer exclusively to the Mass, the interchangeable use of "Mass" and "liturgy" by the missionaries is consistent with wider applications of these terms at this time. Thus, under the influence of Jesuit accommodation, local Chinese cultural resources of "serving *Shangdi* diligently" (*zhaoshi Shangdi, 昭事上帝*) were invoked to express, understand, and interpret Christian liturgy. This offers us a general context for understanding Giulio Aleni's localization of liturgical theology.

The Chinese word "*misa*" (弥撒) is a phonetic transliteration of "Mass," the Latin *Missa*, which is found in the imperative "*Ite missa est*"—"Go! It is the dismissal." Thus "Mass" originally referred to the "dismissal," the last part of the Eucharist. During the 4th to 8th centuries, however, "Mass" began to signify the entire Eucharist. Thus, the essential meaning of "Mass" is the Lord's Supper or Passover Supper, the last supper of Jesus before he was betrayed. Although the word "*misa*" does not literally mean "offering," it represents the sin offering of Jesus to the Father. Catholic tradition emphasizes that "the Eucharist is a true and special offering"<sup>7</sup> (Denzinger and Schönmetzer 2013, p. 651), that "Our Lord and God, in death, offered himself once for all to the Father to perform eternal salvation for them" and to "establish a new Passover"<sup>8</sup> (Denzinger and Schönmetzer 2013, p. 653). On "the night of his offering," Jesus gave a "visible offering" (as human nature demands) to the Church; thus, the Mass is "a reenactment of that offering made on the bloody cross, the commemoration of which is left until the end of the world"<sup>9</sup> (Denzinger and Schönmetzer 2013, p. 652). Theologically speaking, the Mass is an offering to the Father through the Son and the Holy Spirit. It is, at the same time, a holy offering, one of bread and wine that symbolizes the reconciliation of humans and God.

At the very beginning of his *Explication of the Mass*, Aleni used the word "offering" (*xian, 献*) to explain the sacrificial nature of the Mass<sup>10</sup> (Tang 2018, p. 2024):

The great liturgy of offering sacrifices to the True Lord of heaven and earth is called the Mass in the western language, which should be translated as an offering (*xian, 献*) in the Chinese language. The Priest officiates at the liturgy and offers to God on behalf of all people. Those learners of Dao (*xuedao zhiren, 学道之人*, i.e., Christians) should be clean in their mind and pure in heart and soul, very devout, and dedicated to God with one heart and mind. Thus God gives humans their blessings<sup>11</sup>. (Aleni [1629] 2014, p. 397)

In interpreting the Mass as "offering," Aleni stressed, on the one hand, the vicarship of the priest who celebrates the Mass by "offering to God on behalf of all people" (代众献于天主), emphasizing, on the other hand, that the Mass is an interaction between humans and God, in which humans become "very devout and dedicated to God with one

heart and one mind,” with God in turn “giving humans their blessings” due to their piety. By using the word “offering,” this process of “offering-blessing” reflects the close relationship between God and humans in the liturgy.

Aleni next used two philosophical concepts from traditional Chinese culture—“repaying the roots”<sup>12</sup> (Aleni [1629] 2014, p. 383) and “giving thanks”<sup>13</sup> (Aleni [1629] 2014, p. 386)—to explain the meaning of the Mass. In Chinese philosophy, the first concept, “repaying the roots,” means to return to the masters of both the household and the state so as not to forget the roots from which humans come<sup>14</sup> (Wang 2016, p. 308). “Root”, therefore, has two meanings: master and origin. In traditional Chinese culture, sacrificial ceremonies enjoyed priority above all rituals because they emphasized remembering the origin and repaying the roots, thereby reflecting the moral foundation of traditional patriarchal society—respecting ancestors and showing filial piety to parents.

The second concept, “giving thanks” (*gan'en*, 感恩), means to be touched by wholehearted love. In its original meaning, Aleni explained, “*Gan* (感) means to touch the heart, with *xin* (心) as the radical part and *xian* (咸) as the phonetic part” (Tang 2018, p. 2203); “*En* (恩) equals to *hui* (grace, 惠), with *xin* (心) as the radical part and *yin* (因) as the phonetic part”; and “*Hui* (惠) means benevolence, with *xin* (心) as the radical part and *zhuan* (奘) as the phonetic part” (Tang 2018, p. 809). Since *zhuan* (奘) is another form of wholehearted (*zhuan*, 专) (Tang 2018, p. 644), it is easily composed with *en* (恩), meaning benevolent and wholehearted love (Tang 2018, p. 2157). With this cultural inspiration, Aleni emphasized that giving thanks is not just about being touched; it is also an action of returning favors. If a person receives a favor but does not give thanks or is grateful but forgets or cannot repay, then that person is a sinner. According to Aleni, the feeling of thanksgiving must be put into action by attending Mass. Only by doing so can humans constantly see the benevolence of the Father without forgetfulness or laziness. For him, this way of giving thanks constitutes a true natural virtue of humankind, the root of all human virtues in daily life.

With respect to the external performance of the ceremony, Aleni used the Chinese word *xian* (献, offering) to indicate the sacrificial nature of both the Mass and Chinese sacrifice. In explaining the spirit of Christian celebration, he likened it to Confucianism’s moral principles of “repaying the roots” and “showing filial piety to parents,” both of which are present in Chinese sacrificial ceremonies. Thus, Aleni illustrated the dynamic equivalence of the Mass and Chinese sacrifice, enabling Chinese believers to develop a deeper understanding of the former and to accept it more easily and internally. He emphasized that the thanksgiving inspired by the Mass is the root of virtue in daily life, thereby laying the groundwork for later interpretations of the significance of spiritual practice in Mass.

### 3. A Chinese Narrative of the Trinitarian and Christological Nature of the Mass

After explaining the Mass as “repaying the roots” and “giving thanks,” Aleni turned to the Trinity and Christology—the core of the Christian faith—to construct an inculturated Christian liturgical theology. He stressed the Trinitarian presence in the Mass, seeing it as an offering to the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit. He also associated the different persons of the Trinity with the different objects of thanksgiving in the Mass, implying the presence of the Trinity in the Mass. During Mass, Christians thank the Father who “created us” (生成我等), the Son who “showed signs of his passion” (示受难之迹), and the Holy Spirit who “strengthened me” (加我力量)<sup>15</sup> (Aleni [1629] 2014, p. 385). The three functions of the Mass—*chou* (酬, repaying), *shi* (示, commemoration), and *wang* (望, hope)—correspond to giving thanks to the Father, commemorating Jesus, and crying out to the Holy Spirit. Aleni also used different types of Chinese sacrifices, such as *qi* (祈, praying for blessings) and *bao* (报, returning favors), to explain the “prayer,” “thanksgiving,” and “offering” of the Mass<sup>16</sup> (Aleni [1629] 2014, p. 402), thus making it easier for believers to understand the nature of the Mass in the context of Chinese culture.

Since the Council of Trent had emphasized that the Mass was a sacred offering—that Jesus “offered his body and blood to the Father in the form of bread and wine”<sup>17</sup> (Denzinger and Schönmetzer 2013, p. 651)—Aleni accordingly maintained that the Eucharist,

as the sacrifice of the Mass that represented the body and blood of Jesus in the bread and wine<sup>18</sup> (Aleni [1629] 2014, p. 399), was the “supreme liturgy” and “was alone established by God himself when he came down on the earth”<sup>19</sup> (Aleni [1629] 2014, p. 401). The Eucharist was “the source of life and death” and “the entirety of all praise and greatness”; thus, its value included and surpassed all tangible beautiful things.

Aleni also detailed the Christological foundation of the Mass to his Chinese audience, showing how the Paschal of Jesus Christ interweaves the divine and human with respect to the salvation mystery of the communion between God and humans. The Mass reveals the salvation mystery of the Trinity, commemorating the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, which is the greatest mystery in the Christian faith. Jesus received the honor of the king through bodily suffering and resurrection, as Aleni states: “he holds power in the flesh” (*rousheng woquan*, 肉身握权). By atoning for the sins of all nations, Jesus was honored to “sit at the right hand of the Father” and “to determine the rewards and punishments of all the nations”<sup>20</sup> (Aleni [1629] 2014, pp. 462–63). Jesus revealed both the nature of God (love and almighty) through his incarnation and the nature of humans (vulnerability) by “suffering in the flesh” on the cross, establishing through this sacrifice a new, permanent covenant and delivering the hope of salvation for all nations. Jesus revealed the sublimity of God’s love both through the vulnerability of humans and the mystery of God’s salvation, giving humankind the hope of salvation through God’s love. The crucifixion of Jesus is, therefore, the unity of sacrifice and salvation, death, and resurrection.

In Aleni’s view, the commemoration of Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection allows believers to experience the mystery of the entire history of salvation from creation to end, encountering the “profound meaning of the Trinity” in order to “attain genuine knowledge” (了此真知), “experience authentic salvation” (体此真德), and “One who attends Mass can be called truly blessed” (与此弥撒者是谓真福). In this way, the integrated Christian framework of knowing–experiencing–living is formed by meditating on the mystery of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus as God’s salvation while attending Mass. This lays the foundation for spiritual and moral growth in the lives of Christians.

Although Aleni used the Chinese cultural practices of “offering,” “repaying the roots,” and “giving thanks” to show the consistency between the Mass and Chinese sacrifice, he also highlighted the differences between the Mass and Chinese sacrifice so that Chinese Christians could appreciate the distinctiveness of the Mass. First, the Mass is a “public worship” for the faith community, rather than a private “solitary practice”<sup>21</sup> (Aleni [1629] 2014, p. 388). Second, the Mass is also an ecclesial event, a “liturgy in the church” celebrated by the priest. And, since the people who attend the Mass are “sharing one space with God,” it is not only an earthly liturgy but also a heavenly liturgy that is sacred<sup>22</sup> (Aleni [1629] 2014, p. 404). Third, Aleni stressed that believers should build a “living church in their hearts,” a place of worship in the invisible space of the heart, by means of the three Christian virtues—faith as foundation, hope as mark, and love as roof—with the four cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance serving as four walls<sup>23</sup> (Aleni [1629] 2014, p. 409). Believers, therefore, must not only attend Mass regularly but also keep alive the “church of the heart” (心中之活堂), revering God wholeheartedly and serving God respectfully, so that “the preciousness of a heart is like a church” (堂之贵焉必矣)<sup>24</sup> (Aleni [1629] 2014, p. 410).

Aleni strongly held that the Mass is a liturgical act and that thanksgiving to the Father and Jesus must be expressed through the visible participation of the entire person: “we should repay the one who created our soul with our inner respect, as well as repay the one who created our body with our outward respect”<sup>25</sup> (Aleni [1629] 2014, pp. 388–89). Using traditional Confucian virtues of filial piety and loyalty to the emperor, Aleni explained both that the “filial love of an instant” (一念之爱) towards parents should be expanded and completed externally in the Christian faith towards God by serving Him sincerely, and that the “reverence of an instant” (一念之敬) towards the emperor should be expanded and completed externally in the Christian faith towards God by resisting invasion, the threat of the Devil, from outside. This indicates that the external acts of the liturgical service

are the necessary means for people to express their inner feelings and to cultivate their religious emotions. In particular, Aleni stressed that since the spirituality of humans is given by God, Mass is a spiritual offering through which humans can pray to God with their spirituality, thereby communicating continuously with God in an unspeakable manner. By means of this offering, believers “make their hearts the godly altar of the Mass” (成一心中神台), carefully following the rites when celebrating Mass so that they can enter the heavenly kingdom, even though they are still present at an earthly altar.

In sum, Aleni referred to Chinese cultural tradition by using the concept of “repaying and returning to our origin” to interpret the Mass as an offering of “giving thanks” and “repaying the roots,” thereby helping Chinese believers to better understand the significance of the Mass. Nevertheless, he adhered to traditional Christian principles, highlighting the Trinitarian and Christological nature of the Mass, the public and ecclesial nature of the Mass, and the transcendental dimension of the liturgy. He stressed the inner spiritual formation of believers, in Confucian terms, like “single-mindedness” (*zhuan yi*, 专一) and “sincerity with reverence” (*chengjing*, 诚敬), so that the Christian liturgical activities could attain a profound Chinese philosophical significance. Through this work of inculturation, Aleni enriched and deepened the self-understanding of the Christian faith through deep learning from Chinese cultural resources.

#### 4. Liturgical Spirituality: The Spiritual Dimension of the Mass

Expounding further on the sacrificial significance of the Mass, Aleni emphasized that its offering is spiritual. Through it, believers establish a spiritual bond with God in the sacrifice, integrating spiritual experiences, such as thanksgiving, commemoration, prayer, repentance, self-restraint, and communion, into the activities of the Mass. Drawing on the Confucian method of spiritual cultivation to “examine” (*shencun*, 审存) and “interpret meditatively” (*chouyi*, 抽绎) the meaning of the Mass, Aleni elaborated Christian spiritual formation with the resources of Confucian heart–mind cultivation<sup>26</sup> (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy). He maintained that believers should contemplate Jesus’ mystery of Paschal, appreciate the grace of God, and sincerely repent throughout the Mass, all in order to “be in communion with the heart of God” (*xihe tianzhu zhixin*, 翕合天主之心). In line with the Jesuit spiritual tradition, Aleni introduced Chinese heart–mind cultivation into liturgical theology<sup>27</sup> (Ganss 1992, p. 8), creating a distinctive Chinese liturgical spirituality.

##### 4.1. To Encounter God Day by Day (*Riri Shenhe*, 日日神合)

For Christians, the foundation of spirituality is Christology—how the individual connects to the birth, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and return of Jesus Christ. Aleni held that the Mass is the microcosm of the life of Jesus, the salvation of the Trinity<sup>28</sup> (Aleni [1629] 2014, p. 461). Giving special emphasis to the pivotal role of Jesus in the history of salvation, Aleni asserted that Jesus is the foundation of the Mass and the pivot of salvation history. Aleni, therefore, laid the foundation for a spirituality of the Mass with the life of Jesus at its center.

In the spirit of the Council of Trent’s teaching that the Mass should be celebrated every day, Aleni compared the Eucharist both to “daily bread” and to medicine “to cure diseases of my soul,” advocating that believers should “encounter God day by day” by “being in one body with Jesus”<sup>29</sup> (Aleni [1629] 2014, p. 405). To achieve a dedicated attentive state of “no break or interval, no roughness or fineness, no self or others, no inside or outside” (无间无息, 无粗无精, 无我无人, 无内无外)<sup>30</sup> (Aleni [1629] 2014, p. 406), Aleni stressed that the Mass should center on the remembrance of the mystery of Jesus’ incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection; thus, the liturgical instruments, furnishings, and vestments should all focus on commemorating the works of Jesus. In this way, the Mass could offer a personal encounter between believers and Jesus.

According to Aleni, there must be icons in the Mass to inspire people to draw closer to God. The purpose of the Jesuits’ visit to China, as Aleni said, was “to proclaim the grace of Jesus’ life”<sup>31</sup> (Aleni [1629] 2014, p. 387). Here, Aleni placed special emphasis

on the difference between “setting icons” in the Mass and the Chinese sacrificial practice encapsulated in Confucius’ statement that “when offering sacrifices to ancestors, it is as if they are really in front of us; when offering sacrifices to the gods, it is as if the gods are really in front of us” (祭如在，祭神如神在)<sup>32</sup> (Legge [1893] 1991, p. 159). For Aleni, this demonstrated Confucius’s belief in the real presence of the deities in the sacrifices and, therefore, the spiritual piety and reverence of humans during the sacrifices. As Neo-Confucians explained, the deities present in the sacrifices enjoy offerings through invisible *qi* (气, vital energy), which establishes real communication between humans and the deities, achieving oneness in their inner being (Li 2018, pp. 463, 468). In response to questions from Chinese believers about image in the Mass—for example: “It seems sufficient for my heart with sincerity to look up at the heaven and give thanks to God with prudence. Why must I paint God with an image?”<sup>33</sup> (Aleni [1629] 2014, p. 387)—Aleni maintained that the Mass must include an image of Jesus since its essence is to give thanks for the birth, crucifixion, and salvation of Jesus. Thus, it is necessary to “have an icon to inspire people to be closer and show respect to God.” Aleni also pointed out that since Jesus offered himself as a sacrifice to the Father, we must have His icon in Mass to commemorate the great goodness of Jesus. Aleni, therefore, declared, “it is strictly prohibited that there is no image of our Lord in the Mass” (所以不容不设吾主之像也).

Furthermore, Aleni said that the Mass is the encounter, connection, and communion between God and humans. It is precisely the “rare opportunity” of the Mass that allows believers to “have the privilege of seeing God”<sup>34</sup> (Aleni [1629] 2014, p. 532). In this sense, attending Mass is a process that is “in the favor of the Lord” and “of incomparable merit”<sup>35</sup> (Aleni [1629] 2014, p. 532). Because of the real presence of Jesus in the Mass—“God himself has come to me” and “God himself has come down”—“all our requests will be granted, and we will be happier than anyone else in the world”<sup>36</sup> (Aleni [1629] 2014, pp. 402–4). Thus, by attending Mass, believers receive favors and blessings that are rarely found in this world.

#### 4.2. *The Symbolic Meeting, Subtle Meeting, and Spiritual Meeting*

Aleni held that Christians in the Mass realize an intimate relationship with the Lord through thanksgiving in three ways. Firstly, since the Mass is a microcosm of Jesus’ life, believers should fully understand all aspects of it, meditating on the salvific works of Jesus during each part. The second half of Aleni’s *Explication of the Mass as a Sacrifice*, therefore, divides the Mass into three parts—“preparation liturgy” (将祭), “formal liturgy” (正祭), and “withdrawal liturgy” (撤祭)—with a total of 33 sections that correspond to the 33 years of Jesus’ life, thereby showing the close relationship between the Mass and Jesus<sup>37</sup> (Aleni [1629] 2014, p. 431).

On the one hand, Aleni asked believers to fully understand the meaning of the Mass, meditating on the entire service to infuse it with the mysterious grace of Jesus Christ, the Lord (通知其义，随节忝想，一一吻合玄旨). On the other hand, Aleni held that if one were not able to grasp the overall meaning of the Mass, one should meditate on the meaning of a single section of it (随取一端，常作一观). Thus, Aleni’s content included both a meditation on the entirety of Jesus’s life and spiritual exercises for each individual section of the Mass.

Secondly, Aleni stressed that believers should “be in communion with God” through the “three meetings” in the Mass: the “symbolic meeting” (象会), the “subtle meeting” (默会), and the “spiritual meeting” (神会). Overall, this encouraged believers to meditate on the great goodness of Jesus’ salvation through the words, objects, and images of the Mass, fully immersing themselves in its atmosphere and integrating their spirits with God.

The “symbolic meeting” connects liturgical objects with Jesus and his crucifixion and resurrection by means of their similarity of shape or meaning<sup>38</sup> (Aleni [1629] 2014, p. 426). In the interpretation of the instruments used in the Mass and the clothing worn by the priests<sup>39</sup> (Aleni [1629] 2014, pp. 411–12), Aleni made ample use of symbols, adopting the allegorical interpretation commonly used in the Middle Ages, for which the Mass constituted a reenactment of the life of Jesus (Cheslyn et al. 1992, p. 64). There are many objects

used in Mass that can be interpreted in terms of the symbolic meaning of Jesus' crucifixion or the person of Jesus himself, such as the altar, the cross, the tablecloth, the veil, the candles, and more. For example, in explaining the vestments of the priests in the Mass, Aleni held that each was linked to the commemoration of Christ and his crucifixion. Thus, by meditating on the symbolic meaning of the paraphernalia, furnishings, and vestments of the Mass, believers could meet Jesus while attending Mass. Believers could also seek the "five virtues" by meditating on the "five injuries" suffered by Jesus during his crucifixion<sup>40</sup> (Aleni [1629] 2014, pp. 513–14). In this way, the "symbolic meeting" connected the crucifixion of Jesus to the suffering of the believer, making faith a vivid and direct picture rather than an abstract doctrine.

For the "subtle (or tacit) meeting," Aleni employed fragrance as a metaphor for faith. Christian teaching is like fragrant incense, which people delight in smelling and which influences people unconsciously. When believers attend Mass, they are imbued with the great goodness of Jesus, just like fragrance, and when they cultivate virtues, they emit pleasing fragrances. Since the Mass, therefore, exerts an imperceptible influence, "people should take the scenes of the Mass inwardly to unite with it subtly and tacitly" (此景人当默会)<sup>41</sup> (Aleni [1629] 2014, pp. 490–91).

The "spiritual meeting," finally, concerns the communion of the spirits of believers with God in prayer. For example, Aleni held that if believers met God earnestly through the petition of *The Our Father*, their spirits would be in communion with God when they prayed to him. Aleni stressed that when reading the sacred scriptures, one should concentrate one's mind—"knowing its meaning while chanting every single sentence, and its significance every single word"—as if one were really "seeing God above," making "earnest petition to Him face to face." By doing so, one would be "in communion" with God, eliminating the "separation between the holy and the mortal" and achieving spiritual unity with God<sup>42</sup> (Aleni [1629] 2014, pp. 516–17).

In his elaboration of the liturgical Mass as an important occasion to perform spiritual exercises, Aleni followed the Jesuit tradition of enacting Christian meditation during liturgical celebration<sup>43</sup> (Chupungco 2012), while drawing on the Chinese Confucian language of moral-life cultivation as a cultural resource for his Chinese audience. Thus, Aleni's spiritual terminology included both Christian meditation and Confucian cultivation. Situated in both traditions, his inculturation was not an external strategy of convenience or persuasion but an internal way of thinking and practicing. Through a dynamic equivalence between Confucian and Christian spirituality, his inculturated theology creatively synthesized Christian liturgical-spiritual theology and Confucian life cultivation.

#### 4.3. *The Equivalence between the Liturgical-Spiritual Exercise and the Moral-Life Cultivation*

In addition to encouraging believers to contemplate the Mass, Aleni urged believers to be dedicated and single-minded to God during the Mass through their continuous thanksgiving, repentance, and self-restraint.

The practice of repentance, also known as confession, reconciles humans to God through Christ, urging humankind to view themselves in the light of the gospel and to deepen their relationship with God. As a routine component of the Mass, repentance usually begins at the entrance rite. After greeting the congregation, the priest leads them in the recitation of the Confiscator, accompanied by three thumps on the chest to express repentance. The Catholic tradition also stresses the confession of sins by believers to the priest before the Mass. Aleni highlighted the need for salvation from original sin through repentance, as well as the need to focus on thanksgiving in everything from repentance to self-restraint, putting spirituality into moral practice in one's daily life and thereby cultivating virtue.

For starters, Aleni held that repentance is a prerequisite for obtaining the favor and salvation of God. The original sin and basic crimes for which humankind repents are deeply rooted in and inseparable from human nature, just like salt in water and oil in flour. Believers must, therefore, sincerely repent and mend their ways to attend Mass<sup>44</sup> (Aleni [1629] 2014, pp. 474–75).



Secondly, Aleni believed that repentance involves continuous self-examination, especially when receiving the Eucharist, as one must first repent of one's own sins, clear away distractions, and seek reconciliation with the Lord. The "actual Communion" (实领) and "spiritual Communion" (神领) of the Eucharist are commended, while "vain Communion" (徒领) is opposed<sup>45</sup> (Aleni [1629] 2014, pp. 526–27). "Actual Communion" is when believers receive the Eucharist in the Mass after sincere repentance, obtaining its real favor and efficacy. "Spiritual Communion," in contrast, is when believers receive the Eucharist spiritually with an earnest heart, meditating on and thanking God for his favor at any time, regardless of space or form. Through "spiritual Communion," believers can obtain the effects of the Eucharist, even if they have not physically received it, provided they have sincerely repented. "Vain Communion," finally, is when believers receive the Eucharist without sincerely repenting; this offends God and brings disaster. Aleni, therefore, maintained that the reception of the Eucharist should be based on sincere repentance: "It is better to be well prepared and receive it spiritually than to be inadequately prepared and receive it actually"<sup>46</sup> (Aleni [1629] 2014, p. 527). Rather than honoring God superficially, believers should seek oneness with God through constant, sincere repentance and communication, thereby obtaining the real effects of the Eucharist.

Adhering to the principle of theological inculturation, Aleni also linked the practice of repentance to the traditional Chinese practice of virtue cultivation, especially Confucian self-examination (*fanguan zhuji*, 反观诸己) and self-restraint (*keji*, 克己), the former from Mencius, the latter from Confucius himself. Both engage in moral and virtuous introspection of one's own behavior, which Aleni called "finding one's own fault" and "reflecting on oneself and showing honor to others."

Self-examination is, firstly, to reflect on one's sins, asking the Lord to forgive them, to bestow more grace, and to increase one's strength<sup>47</sup> (Aleni [1629] 2014, pp. 476–78). Sin is forgiven due to the gratitude and repentance of the sinner. Sincerity of heart and reverence for God (*fanji jingxin*, 反己敬信)<sup>48</sup> (Aleni [1629] 2014, p. 476) are to thank God for his great goodness out of a deep understanding of God's salvation<sup>49</sup> (Aleni [1629] 2014, pp. 472–73). The purpose of both is to give thanks to God and ask for his grace. Thus, Aleni transforms these terms from their original Confucian meanings to the context of Christian spiritual cultivation, especially liturgical celebration.

Although self-restraint involved eliminating one's own bad desires in Confucianism, it was used by Aleni for Christian spirituality and morality. On the one hand, Aleni pointed out that self-restraint, just like repentance, is the means by which the recipients of the sacrament gain the favor of God and strengthen their ability to overcome bad desires, "being in communion with the heart of God"<sup>50</sup> (Aleni [1629] 2014, p. 497). On the other hand, self-restraint is the capability to endure unbearable things for the Lord, taking up "my own cross"<sup>51</sup> (Aleni [1629] 2014, p. 508). Thus, Aleni also transformed self-restraint from a key practice of Confucian cultivation to one of Christian practice, an integral part of Christian spirituality.

Aleni pointed out, finally, that the ultimate goal of spirituality in the Mass is to be "in communion with the heart of God" (*xihe tianzhu zhixin*, 翕合天主之心)<sup>52</sup> (Aleni [1629] 2014, p. 531). "To be in communion with God is the most important thing in the Mass"<sup>53</sup> (Aleni [1629] 2014, p. 432), as it brings a peaceful mind and stronger faith to believers. To reach such a spiritual goal of being in communion with God, Aleni stressed that believers should take the Mass as the pivot and put into practice its spirituality in their daily cultivation and life. "At the Mass, meditate on and interpret the essence of the liturgical actions" (与弥撒时, 抽绎所行之事义). "In the Mass, listen respectfully to the main points of what have been preached" (与弥撒后, 恭听所讲之要道). "After the Mass, examine and keep the essence of what you have gained" (与弥撒往, 审存所得之精要)<sup>54</sup> (Aleni [1629] 2014, p. 544). With Mass as the pivot, believers should meditate on the meaning of everything that occurs before, during, and afterwards, especially focusing on the birth and salvation of Christ. After attending Mass, believers should listen carefully to the sermon of the day,

reflecting on their spiritual experience in the Mass. In this way, believers will be able to take the Mass as a guide to their faith and life and to establish an integrated system of “liturgy-spirituality-ethics.”

### 5. Conclusions: Aleni’s Liturgical Inculturation and Its Significance

Through intercultural dialogue, Aleni established a localized, liturgical theology within a Chinese cultural context. His goals were not only for Catholic liturgy to be understood and accepted by means of traditional Chinese culture but also for Catholic liturgical theology to be creatively transformed by incorporating Chinese cultural resources into a dynamic and integrated belief system. The liturgical theology established by Aleni in his *Explication of the Mass* is, therefore, very instructive for Catholicism in particular and Christianity in general within a present-day Chinese cultural context.

By adhering to the Jesuit accommodation policy during the Ming and Qing Dynasties, Aleni interpreted the meaning of the Mass such that the Chinese and Western liturgical traditions could attain mutual understanding of gratitude to “ancestors” and thanksgiving to God based on “serving *Shangdi* diligently and openly.” In his explanation of the sacrificial significance of the Mass, Aleni pointed out that the core of the Mass is the birth, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus. He emphasized that believers should meet Jesus in the Mass in three ways: the “symbolic meeting” (*xianghui*, 象会), the “subtle/tacit meeting” (*mohui*, 默会), and the “spiritual meeting” (*shenhui*, 神会). In each part of the Mass, they should inwardly understand God’s grace, confess their sins, and receive the Eucharist, both spiritually and bodily. Grounded in the core interpretation of the Mass in the Christian tradition, Aleni expounded Christian spiritual practices of the Mass in dialogue with the Confucian moral-spiritual tradition by relating the Mass deeply to the life practices of believers.

Drawing on the Chinese philosophical concept of *xinxingxue* (心性学, the learning of the heart-mind and human nature), Aleni expanded the theological significance of the Mass by integrating spirituality within it, widening the Chinese expression of Christian liturgy by drawing on Chinese (mainly Confucian) philosophy to underscore the role of the Mass in life cultivation. Aleni maintained that attending Mass improves self-cultivation day by day, and that the practice of liturgy brings inward understanding of its doctrine. The Mass is, therefore, not only an external liturgy but also a continuous internalization of doctrine, one that contributes to the cultivation of life and morality. In this way, the liturgy expands from the action of the body to the understanding of the heart and mind, then back to a strengthened bodily worship. The liturgy, therefore, involves a process of “body-mind-body” cultivation through its practice in daily self-cultivation and its greater effect on life, thereby becoming an integrated system of “liturgy-spirituality-ethics” with Mass as the pivot. This system takes Christian faith as its core, and repentance, self-restraint, and spiritual meditation, combined with daily activities, such as reading scripture and performing liturgy, as its practical content. Thus, the faith of believers is replete with fresh life practice, constantly returning to the moment of meeting Christ.

Aleni provided a general methodology for the inculturation of Catholic liturgical theology. Christianity should be based on its own tradition yet go deep into the Chinese cultural tradition, forging a creative synthesis while matching a dynamic equivalence between Christian and Chinese traditions. For Aleni, as for us today, the moral and spiritual cultivation ideas and practices contained in Chinese culture should become an important resource for Christianity in building its theology and liturgy. In a deep dialogue with the fundamental ideas and practices of Chinese culture, an inculturated Chinese Christianity in both outer expression and inner spirit can be formed.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The pioneering work about this is Law (1985), which reviews events and arguments pertaining to the Chinese translation of the Roman Canon. For its Chinese summary, see Law (1999, pp. 255–64). Also, see Li (2019, pp. 22–39), which analyzes the origin of liturgical disputes and debates among Christian missionaries about whether the Mass and China’s “sacrificial rituals” were equivalent. Although Li points out that the core issues concerned whether the latter were religious and conflicted with Catholic monotheism, he does not consider whether the Mass itself can be theologically regarded as a “sacrifice.” Also, Audrey Seah presented a picture of liturgical inculturation in Lodovico Buglio’s Translation of the Roman Missal and argued that Buglio had taken an approach of cultural accommodation in his work by introducing Christian liturgy with Chinese cultural terms, and it helped to build a foundation for an indigenized Chinese Church, both theologically and practically. See Seah (2017, pp. 86–120). For a recent study of Catholic liturgy in China, see Yang (2022). Unfortunately, a theological exploration of these Chinese liturgical works is still wanting.
- <sup>2</sup> For example, Ricci and Ruggieri (1584, 1585); Vagnoni (1615). Pantoja (1617), Rocha (1619), and Ye (2014).
- <sup>3</sup> These include Dizui Zhenggui 涤罪正规 [The Regulation of Penance], 1627, Misa Jiyi 弥撒祭义 [Explication of the Mass], 1629, and Shengti Yaoli 圣体要理 [The Principles of the Eucharist], 1644, as well as two pamphlets (the dates of publication for which are unknown): Misa Jiyi Lue 弥撒祭义略 [The Outline of Explication of the Mass], and Dizui Zhenggui Lue 涤罪正规略 [The Outline of The Regulation of Penance]. See Ye (2012). The original material of Misa Jiyi 弥撒祭义) is based on the Fuzhou Jingjiao Church edition from the second year of the Chongzhen era (1629 CE), which is included in the compilation by Zhang (2014, ser. I, vol. XXXII).
- <sup>4</sup> The Chinese name of De Missae Sacrificio explicatio, Jiyi 祭义 Meaning of the Sacrifice, shows Aleni’s implicit inculturation strategy of learning from Chinese culture. Jiyi is a special chapter in the Confucian scripture Liji (礼记, Book of Rites), which is the foundational liturgical text for Confucianism. See “Chapter XXI,” in Legge (1882, pp. 210–35).
- <sup>5</sup> Law (1985). For its Chinese summary, see Law (1999, pp. 255–64).
- <sup>6</sup> D. E. Mungello coined the terms “accommodative” and “Jesuit accommodation” to describe the strategy employed by Jesuits. As explained by Mungello, “accommodation” refers to the adaptation of Christianity to the cultural atmosphere of China. The Jesuits aimed to gain acceptance from Chinese literati by combining Christianity with Confucianism. See Mungello (1988, pp. 1–9).
- <sup>7</sup> Council of Trent, On the Doctrine and Codex of the Mass, no. 1738, Denzinger and Schönmetzer (2013, p. 651).
- <sup>8</sup> Council of Trent, On the Doctrine and Codex of the Mass, no. 1741, Denzinger and Schönmetzer (2013, p. 653).
- <sup>9</sup> Council of Trent, On the Doctrine and Codex of the Mass, no. 1740, Denzinger and Schönmetzer (2013, p. 652).
- <sup>10</sup> According to the first Chinese dictionary edited by Xu Shen (许慎, 58–147), “xian (献) refers to the name of the dog used for sacrificial offerings in ancestral temples. When a dog becomes fat, it is used for sacrificial offerings.” The dog radical (犬) is used alongside characters related to offerings. Although the character for “offering” (献) originally referred to the fat dog used in temple sacrifice, it was extended to mean “sacrifice” more generally. See Tang (2018, p. 2024).
- <sup>11</sup> Here, Aleni takes the term “Dao” as the truth of Catholic teaching and therefore calls believers “the learners of Dao.” See Aleni ([1629] 2014, p. 397).
- <sup>12</sup> “The ritual of the Mass has a profound and extensive meaning.... Its essence lies in thanksgiving and not forgetting, which is a great way of repaying kindness. In essence, the greatest sin in this world is heartlessness. What is heartlessness? It is to receive grace without gratitude. Even if one is grateful, it often quickly fades away. Even if one cannot forget, it is all too common to fail to repay. This is what is known in this world as being unfaithful, lacking righteousness, and being ignorant of human orders.” (弥撒之礼, 其义广博渊微.....要在于感恩不忘, 大报本也。大抵人世之罪, 莫大于无情。无情者何? 受恩而不知感。即知感矣, 又倏忽易忘。即不能忘, 又漫然无报。此世所名背德, 负义, 无人理者。) See “Preface by the Author,” Aleni ([1629] 2014, p. 383).
- <sup>13</sup> “Once one experiences strict and solemn service, and impressed by its grandiose, so that one can constantly keep these in mind, otherwise their hearts will become lazy or forgetful, not knowing to be thankful, not repaying kindness, and their genuine emotions will not be touched. When genuine emotions cannot be touched, all the virtuous actions will be powerless and rootless.” (自非有严昭事, 慎摄威仪, 使人时常寓目, 则人心怠惰易忘, 不知感恩, 不知报恩, 真情不能触发。真情不能触发, 则日用德行无根。) See “Preface by the Author,” Aleni ([1629] 2014, p. 386).
- <sup>14</sup> See the chapter “Jiao Te Sheng” 郊特牲 “Sacrifices to the Heaven with Specific Animals in the Suburbs” in Liji, 礼记 [The Book of Rites]: “The earth supports all things, and the heavens display signs. Taking wealth from the earth and following the laws of the heavens, we therefore respect the heavens and treasure the earth, teaching the people to repay kindness. The head of a household offers sacrifices at the clan altar, and the ruler of a country offers them at the state altar, demonstrating their roots.... This is how they repay their roots and return to the beginning.” (地载万物, 天垂象, 取财于地, 取法于天, 是以尊天而亲地也, 故教民美报焉。家主中霤而国主社, 示本也.....所以报本返始也。) Wang (2016, p. 308).
- <sup>15</sup> “Preface by the Author,” Aleni ([1629] 2014, p. 385).

- 16 Aleni elaborates the equivalence between the Chinese terms “sacrifice” and “Mass” in chapter II of the *Misa Jiayi*: “Indeed, sacrificial rites can be for prayer, and the Mass is also a form of prayer. They can be for giving thanks, and the Mass is also an expression of thanksgiving. They can be for offering, and the Mass is also an act of offering. The Mass has the ability to bring together and encompassing all kinds of sacrifice within itself.” (盖祭或为祈祷，弥撒亦祈祷；或为谢恩，弥撒亦谢恩；或为奉献，弥撒亦奉献。能合能分，一以盖万。) See Aleni ([1629] 2014, p. 402).
- 17 Council of Trent, On the Doctrine and Codex of the Mass, no. 1740, Denzinger and Schönmetzer (2013, p. 651).
- 18 Aleni, “Chapter II,” “Therefore, in order to teach people how to worship and seek the will of the Lord, to receive His grace and blessings, this supreme liturgy was instituted to make humans in communion with the heart of God. The reason why the wine and bread are used is that it would be His sacred Body and Blood, as a symbol for all the creatures in the world.” (故垂训世人，何以奉祭，求当天主之意，获其宠祐，因立定此最上之礼，能翕天主之心者。但用酒麵二色，为其圣体宝血，以当世间万品。) See Aleni ([1629] 2014, p. 399).
- 19 Aleni, “Chapter II,”: “Indeed, within the Eucharist when the Mass is celebrated, the body of Christ is present. It is alone established by God when he came down on the earth.” (况弥撒之礼其中圣体寓焉，独为天主亲降在世所立者)。See Aleni ([1629] 2014, p. 401).
- 20 Aleni, “General Introduction to the Second Volume,” “Since our Lord suffered in the flesh, He wields power in the flesh. He redeemed all people and established rewards and punishments for all. He took on human nature to reveal the nature of God, valuing human nature with the fullness of divine nature. This is the essence of the mystery of the Trinity. Those who understand this possess all of true knowledge, those who experience this possess all of true virtues, and those who participate in this Mass possess all of true blessings. In this single moment of the Eucharist, all the endless truth of our Heavenly Lord is included.” (盖吾主既以肉身受难，即以肉身而握权。既为万民赎罪，即定万民赏罚。既取人之性而显天主之性，即全天主之性以尊人之性。总之三位一体，三体一位之妙义。了此者是谓真知。体此者是谓真德，与此弥撒者是谓真福。顷刻之际，举天主无始无终之理，包括无遗。) See Aleni ([1629] 2014, pp. 462–63).
- 21 Aleni, “Chapter II,” “Home is a place for solitary cultivation, a private space. The Church is a place where people worship, a public space. The public one is superior to the private one. Moreover, in the liturgies celebrated within the Church, the priest consecrates the Holy Eucharist and the heavenly angels rejoice and protect it. How blessed if a human is within such a setting?” (家者，独修之处，私也。堂者，众仰之地，公也。私不如公。且堂中之礼，撒责耳铎德举扬圣体，天神且乐于拥卫，人得置身其中，何幸如之) See Aleni ([1629] 2014, p. 388).
- 22 Aleni, “Chapter II,”: “In the celebration of the Mass, God Himself descends within it, and the heavenly gods often descend and surround it.” (弥撒之礼，天主亲降临格，而上天诸神多降左右。) See Aleni ([1629] 2014, p. 404).
- 23 Aleni, “Chapter IV,” “St. Paul said, ‘Not only are the temples made by craftsmen the places for offerings, but all of us who receive the teachings would become a living temple as the dwelling place for the Holy Spirit.’ How then can we establish this inner temple of the heart? It must take faith as foundation, being marked by hope, and being covered by love.... The four cardinal virtues of wisdom, righteousness, courage, and temperance would serve as protective barriers on four sides, safeguarding the integrity and perfection of all virtues within ourselves.” 保禄圣人有云：‘不惟工匠所造为供献之堂，凡我等奉教人心者，皆可共成一活堂，为斯比利多三多所居。’夫何以立此心中之堂乎？必也以信为址，以望为标，以爱为盖。.....以智义勇节四枢德，为四面之藩，以保护完固周身之诸德也。) See Aleni ([1629] 2014, p. 409).
- 24 Aleni, “Chapter IV,”: “Humans must first prepare the inner temple of the heart, and then the physical temple would not be empty. Vice versa, one must often contemplate the images in the physical temple, so that the inner temple of the heart would be established with what was seen. In the inner temple, there should not be two lords, while the physical temple should not be taken lightly for other uses. Thus, the value of the physical church must be respected.” (人必心中之堂已备，而后堂不虚设。又必常瞻礼堂之法像，而心中之堂，触目而成。此堂之内，不可有二用；此堂之外，不可轻为用。则堂之贵焉必矣。) See Aleni ([1629] 2014, p. 410).
- 25 Aleni, following a common genre, imagined a conversation with a local believer about the importance of bodily worship in his “Preface by the Author” This conversation, initiated by the local believer, begins as follows: “Respect from the inward heart is of utmost importance, and then followed by outward actions. As long as one’s heart feels gratitude, even a single thought can reach to the heavenly beings. Why then should we be constrained by rules like bodily kneeling and bowing?” Aleni then responds: “Yes, and yet not quite so. Heaven created humans with both spiritual and physical parts. The spiritual part is close to the heavenly gods, who are of purely spiritual forms that transcend physical worlds. However, the physical body is the form of human existence. If humans do not work with the body, then humans would no more be human. Human spirits would benefit when they worship with their inner spirits, and human bodies would benefit too when they worship with their external bodies.” (客曰：“心敬为上，身次之。人患不知恩报恩耳。苟心知感，一念所到，便格重玄。奚以起伏跪拜之拘拘为？”曰：“是，又不然。天主生人，有灵性，有肉躯。灵性近天神，天神有纯神之体，故纯神对越，不拘之以形。而肉躯则人所运用，有而不运用，是自失其为人也。既用灵性之内敬，以酬畀我灵性者，亦须用肉躯之外敬，以酬畀我肉躯者。) See Aleni ([1629] 2014, pp. 388–89).
- 26 As Jana Rošker nicely captured, “in classical Chinese philosophy the meaning of the Chinese word *xin* 心, which literally refers to the physical heart, is not limited to its common connotations. Unlike Western definitions, the Chinese metaphorical understanding of this notion not only denotes this organ as the center of emotions, but also as the center of perception, understanding, intuition and even rational thought. As ancient Chinese believed that the heart was the center of human cognition, the notion of

xin is most commonly translated as ‘heart-mind’ in philosophical discourses. This understanding was determined by the absence of the contrast between cognitive (representative ideas, reasoning, beliefs) and affective (sensation, feelings, desires, emotions) states.” Also note that the word xin is often combined with xing 性, nature (both metaphysical and human), which is located in the heart. Thus, the cultivation of life seeks the union of xin (heart) and xing (nature), the discourse and practice of which is called “xinxingxue” (learning of heart and human nature). Available online in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, the entry “Epistemology in Chinese Philosophy”. Available at <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/chinese-epistemology/> (accessed on 14 February 2023).

27 “Since 1616 all Jesuit priests have repeated the Exercises through thirty days during their final year of spiritual training called the ‘tertianship.’ From Ignatius’ day until now virtually all Jesuit priests have carried on the apostolate of the Exercises in various forms and adaptations.” See Ganss (1992, p. 8).

28 “General Introduction to the Second volume”: “My Lord, during His thirty-three years on Earth, His life can be summarized in the thirty-three steps of Mass (吾主降世三十三年, 生平略一弥撒足以括之)”. See Aleni ([1629] 2014, p. 461).

29 Aleni, “Chapter III,”: “We must strive to unite ourselves with the divine God through daily prayer, as if becoming one with Him. Following this sacrament of Eucharist, we receive the body of Jesus, and in turn, Jesus becomes one with us. As Saint Augustine said, ‘Those who desire to receive the Holy Eucharist should become one body with Jesus.’ Furthermore, we need the grace of God every day, which is why we should attend Mass daily to receive His grace, just like daily bread. As Augustine said, ‘If this is my daily bread, how can I delay for several days to receive it?’ (我等务须日日祈与天主神合, 犹如一体。循此圣礼以体耶稣而蒙耶稣亦体我焉。亚吾斯丁曰: ‘欲领圣体者, 该与耶稣神相体也。’又我等日日需天主恩, 所以日日当奉弥撒以沾其恩, 即所谓日用粮者。亚吾斯丁曰: ‘若是我日用粮, 我何能间数日而后领乎。’)” See Aleni ([1629] 2014, p. 405).

30 Aleni, “Chapter III,” See Aleni ([1629] 2014, p. 406).

31 In his “Preface by the Author,” Aleni proclaims, “the missionaries come a very far distance from the West to proclaim the grace of Jesus’ birth (旅人九万里远来, 多为阐明此事). See Aleni ([1629] 2014, p. 387).

32 “Chapter XII,” in Book III, Legge ([1893] 1991, p. 159).

33 For the legitimacy of using images in the Mass, Aleni argued, “Before our Lord was born, there was no image to depict. However, after his birth, in order to proclaim his teachings and sacrifice for the redemption of sins to all generations, this grace is even more profound than any other. Therefore, if we desire everyone to know the grace of his birth, we should clearly depict his image and place it above, so as to inspire people’s reverence.” (当初吾主未降生前, 原是无像可绘。既降生后, 为万世立表垂教、受难赎罪, 此恩比他诸恩更为深重。故欲人人遍知降生之恩, 则当明绘其像, 设像于上, 正以启人亲敬之心。) See “Preface by the Author,” Aleni ([1629] 2014, p. 387).

34 “On The Withdrawal Liturgy.” See Aleni ([1629] 2014, p. 532).

35 “On The Withdrawal Liturgy,” See Aleni ([1629] 2014, p. 532).

36 “Chapter III,” Aleni ([1629] 2014, p. 402–4).

37 The 33 steps of Mass in Aleni’s *Misa Jiye* are not present in Li Leisi 利类思 (Lodovico Buglio)’s, 1670 Chinese translation of *Misa Jingdian*, 弥撒经典 [*The Roman Missal*], which was a faithful translation of the Roman Missal established by the Council of Trent in 1570. Whereas the latter provides a more comprehensive introduction to the different aspects of the Mass, Aleni introduces the Mass with “33 steps,” each corresponding to one of the 33 years of Jesus’ life, emphasizing its spiritual significance. This reveals Aleni’s inculturated liturgical theology of “serving God solemnly,” integrating elements of Confucian spiritual-moral cultivation into Christian spirituality. As Aleni put it, “It is to gradually deepen one’s understanding of the principles of spiritual exercises, and it would lead to a spiritual penetration into all aspects of human heart, and then to practice them more stably and full of reasonable sense.” (循此日积日进, 义理沁心, 通达其理, 行之有常, 自觉有味。) See “Chapter VII,” Aleni ([1629] 2014, p. 431).

38 See “Chapter VI,” Aleni ([1629] 2014, p. 426).

39 Here is an example is his spiritual interpretation of the altar in the church: “The altar represents the hill of Calvary where our Lord suffered. The crucifix symbolizes the cross that our Lord bore for the salvation of the world. The stone represents the body of our Lord. The three layers of pure white cloth represent the immaculate body of our Lord. The colorful embroidery on the altar curtain represents the various virtues of our Lord. The hanging veil signifies that people, wearing our Lord daily without realizing it, are separated by a veil. Only with sincere and devoted hearts can one have a glimpse of His presence. The use of yellow wax candles symbolizes the pure and purifying nature of the body.... Furthermore, candles have a wax body, a wick, and a flame, which are united as one. Consider this: is it not similar to our Lord’s incarnation, in which He housed the souls of whole humanity within His physical body? He merges the divine nature with human nature, shining brightly. These three aspects form the threefold unity of our Lord Jesus, illuminating all generations.” (以台为加禄略吾主受难之山; 十字架是吾主所负以救世; 而石则吾主之身体也。三层洁白之布, 则指吾主最洁之圣躯。彩绣台帷之设, 吾主种种至德之全也。帐幔之悬, 谓人日日戴吾主而不知, 如隔一帐。使诚心专奉, 便可覩(音漆)面现前矣。烛用黄蜡, 取其纯洁之体纯洁之用也。.....又烛有蜡体, 有绵心, 有火光, 三者成一。试思之, 岂非吾主降生之肉躯, 藏人之灵魂于其体中。又以天主之性, 合人之性, 而加以光莹。三者成吾主耶稣三体一位, 以照万世乎。) See “Chapter IV,” Aleni ([1629] 2014, pp. 411–12).

40 Here is how Aleni described the concrete procedure of spiritual practices in attending the Mass: “First, I bow to the wound on Jesus’ right hand, seeking the virtue of courage, to belittle worldly blessings without becoming arrogant. Next, I bow to

the wound on Jesus' left hand, seeking the virtue of patience, to overcome worldly adversities without losing hope. Then, I bow to the wound on Jesus' left foot, seeking the virtue of prudence, to avoid all evil and prevent falling into hell. Next, I bow to the wound on Jesus' right foot, seeking the virtue of diligence, to strive for all goodness and ascend to heaven. Finally, I bow to the wound on the chest, seeking the virtue of love, to love God with all my being and to love others as myself." (首拜右手之伤, 求刚勇之德, 以轻世福, 不致倨傲。次拜左手之伤, 求忍耐之德, 以胜世祸, 不致失望。次拜左足之伤, 求谨慎之德, 以避诸恶, 免堕地狱。次拜右足之伤, 求忻(同欣)勤之德, 以趋诸善, 得升天堂。终拜胸旁之伤, 求仁爱之德, 以爱天主万有之伤, 与夫爱人如己。) See "Formal Liturgy", Aleni ([1629] 2014, pp. 513–14).

41 To attend the Mass is, for Aleni, a way of virtue cultivation: "Why do we offer incense three times during the service? It is because offering incense symbolizes reverence for the Scripture, and three times represents the worship of the Holy Trinity. It also signifies the beautiful and fragrant essence of the holy teachings, which brings joy upon hearing it. Furthermore, it represents the individuals who live by the teachings, who should possess the fragrance of virtues. Just as fragrance cannot be hidden when present, one's virtues should be evident wherever they go. As St. Paul claimed, 'We are the beautiful fragrance of Jesus.' After receiving the Mass, we should be enriched with the fragrance of grace, both inwardly with sincere hearts and outwardly with respectable manners that attract others, just as the pleasant smell of incense is appealing to people (何以奉香于经三次? 盖奉香者, 尊重其经; 三次者, 奉圣三一主也。又指万美圣教, 犹如奇香馥郁, 闻之欢喜。又指奉教之人, 当有美德之香。夫香之为物, 有而必露, 不能掩藏。学人之德, 亦当积中随处即显, 圣宝录有云: '吾辈为耶稣美香也。' 又指奉弥撒后, 皆沾德馨而归, 内则诚心未息, 外则端范犹存, 如染香气者令人可爱也。此景人当默会, 不可错过。)" See "Preparation Liturgy", Aleni ([1629] 2014, pp. 490–91).

42 As Aleni maintained, "Although people may recite the prayers, their lips utter the words while their hearts do not accompany them, or they recite without knowing their meaning. Even if they were to read millions of volumes, what benefit would it bring? It would only be noise to the ears. Therefore, the priest must set himself as an example, reciting clearly and loudly, understanding the meaning behind each sentence and each word, as if they truly know that God is above and strive earnestly to encounter Him. This allows their hearts and spirits to be in communion with God, unaware of the distinction between the sacred and the profane (人虽念圣经, 而惟口是出, 心实不与之俱, 且日诵而不知其义。纵百万卷何益? 只为聒耳。所以铎德将己立为标准, 朗朗诵之, 诵一句有一意在, 诵一字有一义在, 真知天主教在上, 而覲面切求者, 令人皆心神融洽于其中, 而不知圣凡之相隔也。)" See "Formal Liturgy", Aleni ([1629] 2014, pp. 516–17).

43 A recent example is Chupungco (2012).

44 According to Aleni, "Adam and Eve, the original parents, received countless graces from God both in their inner and outer beings. However, due to their failure to abide by one of God's easiest commands, they incurred God's punishment. Adam was expelled from the land of blessings, and as a result, all his descendants for countless generations have been tainted with original sin, burdened of punishments without end. Like salt in water, its flavor remains constant; like oil in the flour, its greasiness persists. The two, sin and punishment, are inseparable. It is only through God's mercy and our genuine repentance that we can be freed from this bondage. Therefore, as participating in the Mass, we should reflect upon the sin of the original ancestor that was most ugly and harmful. We should also contemplate our own sins throughout our lives, feeling great shame and embarrassment. At this moment, we should sincerely repent, silently recite the prayers of absolution along with the celebrants and seek God's forgiveness. God grants us the opportunity to repair and uproot the roots of sin for that moment. It is our fear that if there is sin within us, we dare not approach the great sacrifice carelessly, but rather after repenting of our sins, with a determination to change our hearts, then we can present ourselves blameless before God in the act of sacrifice." (人则原祖亚当厄禄, 受天主身神内外无数之恩, 止以容易一事不能守命, 遂为天主所罚。逐之福地之外, 致后千万世子孙, 皆染原罪, 被累不绝。如水中之盐, 咸味常存; 面中之油, 腻质常在。两相和合, 永不脱离。须仗天主仁慈承我痛悔心真, 方可拔解。与弥撒者至此, 当追想邪魔原祖之罪, 最丑最害。又自想一生之罪, 甚赧甚惭。务于此时真切愧悔, 随辅弥撒者默诵解罪经, 求天主赦宥。赐我一时可以修补, 立破罪根。盖恐有罪在身, 大祭不敢漫进, 先悔其罪, 定心迁改, 求无瑕疵, 方敢与祭见天主也。) See "Preparation Liturgy" (将祭), in Aleni ([1629] 2014, pp. 474–75).

45 As Aleni holds, "For those who actually receive the Eucharist, they not only outwardly receive the sacrament but inwardly truly receive its grace.... After clearing our hearts for a long time and earnestly desiring it, we may reverently receive it. Those who receive the Eucharist spiritually, even though they did not receive it physically, still desire to receive it in their hearts.... The result of Eucharist depends on what is in one's heart. If one sincerely repents of sins and fully performs the necessary works, it is as if they have truly received it. As for those receiving it without true conversion, although they may perform the external ritual, they will not receive its true effect internally.... It is better to receive the burning coal to scorch the mouth than to receive the Eucharist without due caution." (实领者, 外受其礼, 内实受其恩.....心中扫除已久, 切慕已切, 方恭敬领之.....神领者, 既已不敢徒领, 又未能实领, 而心中愿领.....其效之多寡, 视其心中之所有者。若已诚心解罪, 全行其功, 如将实领.....徒领者, 虽外行其礼, 不得内受其效.....与其领圣体, 宁领炭火以烧口。) See "Formal Liturgy", Aleni ([1629] 2014, pp. 526–27).

46 "Formal Liturgy", Aleni ([1629] 2014, p. 527).

47 According to Aleni, "With the Mass approaching, one should examine upon one's own sins and seek forgiveness from the Holy Trinity. That is, one should seek the omnipotence of the Father to grant us strength to make up for our weakness; seek the omniscience of the Son to grant us enlightenment to make up for our ignorance; seek the goodness of the Spirit to grant us a genuine and earnest heart to make up for our lethargy." (与弥撒者至此, 当反观诸己, 想其罪过种种, 而求赦于圣三。又求罢德肋之全能,

- 赐我力量，以补柔弱；求费略之全知，赐我明觉，以补昏昧；求斯彼利多三多之全善，赐我真正切问之心，以补我偏拗懈惰。) See “Preparation Liturgy” (将祭), in Aleni ([1629] 2014, pp. 476–78).
- 48 Aleni writes, “We should make self-examination upon ourselves, then we could deeply understand the profound meaning of God’s incarnation.... Even though I am currently in this earthly world, if I am willing to sincerely repent and wholeheartedly worship our Lord, he will surely have mercy and deliver me.” (当反诸己，知天主降生之意原为深重。.....我今虽在尘世，若肯诚心悔罪，一意钦崇，必为吾主所哀矜而拔救也。) See “Preparation Liturgy”, in Aleni ([1629] 2014, p. 476).
- 49 Aleni recommended that believers develop a deep reverence in the Mass: “When approaching the Mass, one should reflect on one’s own faith and reverence. Humans should be grateful to the Almighty for preparing such a vast world for us to enjoy. How should I devote myself to serving my gracious Lord?” (与弥撒者至此，当反己敬信。感谢大主为我等预备如此大世界，另其享用。我当何等发心事奉吾之大恩主耶。) See “Preparation Liturgy”, in Aleni ([1629] 2014, pp. 472–73).
- 50 According to Aleni, attending the Eucharist strengthens one’s faith: “Those who believe in our religion share in one heart and one spirit. Every time ones receives the Eucharist, they can be empowered by the divine power of God to strengthen their heart. If they have pure hearts, restrain themselves, and develop an upright will without arrogance and laziness, then they can be in communion with the heart of our Heavenly Lord.” (诸初奉教者，共一心一神也。每领圣礼，即能有天主之神力以坚其心。果是胸中洁净，克己正志，无傲无怠，时时与天主之心翕合。) See “Preparation Liturgy,” in Aleni ([1629] 2014, p. 497).
- 51 Using the metaphor of the cross in the spiritual exercise of self-restraint, Aleni writes, “For our Lord has said, ‘Whoever desires to be my disciple must bear their own cross daily and follow me.’ This is because the difficulties we encounter each day that require patience for the sake of the Lord and the acts of self-restraint. They are our cross we have to bear every day.” (盖吾主有云，凡欲为我之徒者，必当日日自负十字架以从我可也。盖指吾辈每日所遇难忍之事，肯为主而忍耐，及每日所行克己之功，皆为我之十字架也。) See “Preparation Liturgy,” in Aleni ([1629] 2014, p. 508).
- 52 See “Withdrawal Liturgy,” in Aleni ([1629] 2014, p. 531).
- 53 See “Blessings from the Participation of the Mass,” in Aleni ([1629] 2014, p. 432).
- 54 See “Withdrawal Liturgy,” in Aleni ([1629] 2014, p. 544).

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