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# Revisiting 'Active Participation' in Orthodox Ecclesial Life: Insights from John Chrysostom



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## Abstract

*Contemporary Orthodox discourse frequently explores lay participation in liturgical activities, such as congregational singing, public reading, and assisting at the sanctuary. Scholars have observed a correlation between this phenomenon and the directives of Vatican II on “active participation,” which not only influenced Roman Catholic theology but also shaped Orthodox perspectives on liturgy, notably advocated by theological figures like Protopresbyter Alexander Schmemmann and Archbishop Paul of Finland. One may also ask whether the emphasis on active participation has found particular resonance in cultures influenced by the individualism of early 16th-century Protestant interpretations of the priesthood of all believers or subsequent iterations thereof. Rather than scrutinising these modern or medieval undercurrents beneath contemporary debates, this study redirects attention to the sources, aiming to delineate the essence of active participation as exemplified by a prominent congregational homilist of the Patristic era, John Chrysostom.*

*The central inquiry concerns the nature of ecclesiastical participation that Chrysostom envisioned for his Christian audiences. A systematic examination of his congregational homilies reveals that Chrysostom outlines minimal expectations regarding the public roles of his audience within the liturgical synaxis. Instead, he emphasises the importance of frequent attendance at liturgical services, earnest reception of ecclesiastical instruction, participation in the Eucharist, and focused prayer, alongside the cultivation of piety, the continuous pursuit of spiritual growth, Christian witness, and material generosity.*

**Keywords:** active participation, Orthodox, Roman Catholic, patristic, Alexander Schmemmann, Archbishop Paul, John Chrysostom

## Introduction

Contemporary Orthodox discourse frequently explores lay participation in liturgical activities, such as congregational singing, public reading, and assisting at the sanctuary. Some scholars have observed a correlation between this phenomenon and the directives of the Second Vatican council on ‘active participation,’<sup>1</sup> which not only influenced Roman Catholic theology but also impacted Orthodox perspectives on liturgical life.<sup>2</sup> One might also ask whether the emphasis on lay participation in ecclesial activities has found particular resonance in cultures influenced by the individualism of early 16<sup>th</sup>-century Protestant interpretations of the priesthood of all believers, or its subsequent iterations.<sup>3</sup>

Rather than scrutinizing these modern or medieval undercurrents of contemporary debates or engaging with the fundamental discussion on the relationship between laity and ecclesiastical hierarchy,<sup>4</sup> this article redirects attention further *ad fontes*. Its aim is to delineate the essence of ‘active participation’ in ecclesial life, as exemplified by a prominent congregational homilist

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1 See e.g. Larin 2013.

2 See also Bishop Damaskinos’s contribution in the present volume.

3 See especially Martin Luther’s 1523 letter *De instituendis ministris Ecclesiae*. In the first part of this work, the Wittenberg scholar famously outlines his view of the priesthood of all believers (WA 12:178–189), and subsequently argues that this view forms the basis for ordained ministry (WA 12:189–194). A detailed discussion of later Protestant interpretations of Luther’s views on ministry and laity lies beyond the scope of this study. It is sufficient to note that while the early German Pietists adhered to Luther’s basic model, many of their successors appear to have disregarded the theme of the latter part of his epistle – the significance of ordained ministry – thereby focusing primarily on the “priestly” activity of all believers. See references in Wallmann 1990. For a similar tendency in contemporary evangelical thought, see Warren (1995, ch. 19), who links “[t]he designation ‘active member’ with what he terms “Every-Member Ministry.” For a more balanced interpretation of Luther’s understanding of the relationship between the priesthood of all believers and ordained ministry, see Aarts 1972, 227–245.

4 For recent interpretations of late antique relationships between clergy and laity, see Frank 2023, 8–13; Torjesen 2008. The Orthodox position on this relationship is interpreted by Evdokimov (1959, 165–166) as follows: “[L]a conception orthodoxe se situe hors de l’égalitarisme anti-hiérarchique de même qu’elle se situe hors de la coupure cléricale de l’unique Corps en deux, et que l’accent est fortement placé sur la participation sacerdotale de tous, mais au moyen de deux modes, de deux sacerdoce. Chacun est établi dans son sacerdoce par Dieu et c’est cette origine divine qui place les deux dans l’économie sacramentelle, les enlève du monde, de la sociologie, mais les situe en tant que ministère charismatique dans le monde et pour le monde.” For a more nuanced exposition of the Orthodox understanding of the ecclesiastical roles of laity and the historical backgrounds thereof, see Afanassieff 1975, 35–121. On the vocation and mission of laity in pre- and post-Vatican II Roman Catholic ecclesiology, see Castellucci 2012, 557–584.

of the Patristic era, John Chrysostom (c. 345–407). Naturally, it would be a gargantuan task to produce a comprehensive comparison of approaches to liturgical participation spanning 16 centuries. Nevertheless, an excursion to early Christian sources can help us view modern approaches within a broader historical context. Similarly, given the constraints of a single article, which preclude an exhaustive analysis of Chrysostom’s entire corpus, this study will focus on two key series of his congregational homilies that are central to our theme: the homilies on Genesis and the homilies on the Statues.<sup>5</sup>

To fully appreciate the evidence presented by these late fourth-century sources, it is helpful to begin by providing an overview of the relevant perspectives articulated in modern times. Brief discussions will first address 20<sup>th</sup>-century Roman Catholic statements on active participation, followed by an analysis of corresponding views from contemporary Orthodox authors. Subsequently, the focus will shift to Chrysostom’s perspectives on the active roles of his lay hearers. Finally, concluding reflections will be offered based on the findings.

## Roman Catholic Views of Active Participation

As is well known, the 20<sup>th</sup>-century emphasis on a more active role for the laity in ecclesial life both coincided with and was influenced by the “revival of scholarly interest in the sacred liturgy” that began in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>6</sup> The concept of ‘active participation’ itself originates with *Tra le sollecitudini*, the 1903 *motu proprio* of Pope Pius X.<sup>7</sup> Relevant evidence of subsequent Roman

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5 Another study should be devoted to the relevant material found in Chrysostom’s twelve extant catechetical homilies, see Eine “Katechese” (aus dem Jahr 387), Reiner Kaczynski (ed.), *Catecheses Baptismales: griechisch, deutsch = Taufkatechesen I*, Fontes Christiani 6/1, Freiburg (im Breisgau) et al.: Herder, 1992; Auguste Piédagnel & Louis Doutreleau (ed.), *Trois catéchèses baptismales*, Sources chrétiennes 366, Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1990; Antoine Wenger (ed.), *Huit catéchèses baptismales inédites*, Sources chrétiennes 50, Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1957. Suffice it to state that for the catechist, active ecclesial participation primarily entails 1) renunciation of one’s former lifestyle, 2) repentance, 3) steadfast confession of faith, 4) internal adherence to ecclesiastical dogma, and 5) earnest engagement in the rites of initiation. Through these voluntary acts, adherents are expected to attain full membership of the Church.

6 MD 4–5, 7–8.

7 TLS, *praef.*: “Essendo, infatti, Nostro vivissimo desiderio che il vero spirito cristiano rifiorisca per ogni modo e si mantenga nei fedeli tutti, è necessario provvedere prima di ogni altra cosa alla santità e dignità del tempo, dove appunto i fedeli si radunano per attingere tale spirito dalla sua

Catholic applications on this concept can be found in *Mediator Dei*, the 1947 papal encyclical by Pius XII, and, famously, in the documents of the Second Vatican Council, particularly *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the 1963 constitution on the sacred liturgy, and *Lumen Gentium*, the 1964 dogmatic constitution on the church. A detailed discussion of the ideas found in these documents is unnecessary here.<sup>8</sup> For the present purposes, it will suffice to make the following four observations.

*First*, in Roman Catholic understanding, active participation is manifested through frequent participation in liturgical services, particularly in the eucharist. According to the preconciliar *Mediator Dei*, “the Christian community is in duty bound to participate in the liturgical rites according to their station.”<sup>9</sup> The motivation for this approach is clearly focused on the reception of divine gifts, which believers are encouraged to accept “freely and with spontaneity.” Simultaneously, “this active and individual participation” is described as “necessary.”<sup>10</sup> The *Code of Canon Law* employs similar, if not identical, language: “On Sundays and other holy days of obligation, the faithful are obliged to participate in the Mass.”<sup>11</sup>

*Secondly*, the Roman Catholic view of active participation entails “the unanimous participation of the assembly [in liturgical action] at the designated moments,”<sup>12</sup> particularly the vocal participation of the laity in corporate

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prima ed indispensabile fonte, che è *la partecipazione attiva* ai sacrosanti misteri e alla preghiera pubblica e solenne della Chiesa.” Emphasis added. Cf. Pius XI’s 1928 Apostolic Constitution *Divini Cultus Sanctitatem*, where the author stresses that laity should be “non tamquam extranei vel muti spectatores,” but rather active participants in corporate hymnody, see DCS IX.

<sup>8</sup> Rather than providing a systematic exposition of active participation, these conciliar documents depict their understanding of the concept through several adjectives. Stuflesser (2015, 150–151) lists the following: “*debita, communitatis propria, interna and externa, vera, genuina, congrua, sciens and conscia, perfecta, efficax and fructuosa, actiosa, viva, plena and pia.*” For further discussion on related characterisations of active participation, see Cuva 2002, 184–191. A historical review of the concept of active participation from Pius X to Vatican II is provided by De Clerck 2004. For insights into the backgrounds of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and postconciliar analyses, see Levering 2017, 50–80.

<sup>9</sup> MD 5.

<sup>10</sup> MD 77–78, 119. Similar views are echoed in LG IV, 42. See also SC 10, 55.

<sup>11</sup> CIC, can. 1247; CCC 2180. For further discussion on the necessity of active participation, see Cuva 2002, 180–184.

<sup>12</sup> CCC 1157. Nearly four decades after *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, some Roman Catholic scholars considered lay participation in corporate hymnody as a given. See e.g. Baroffio (2002, 57) who, after posing the question “Chi canta nella liturgia?” states: “Tutti cantano, è ovvio, nella misura in cui hanno un minimo di capacità vocale e di formazione corale. [...] Il patrimonio tradizionale è ricco di tali musiche che per secoli hanno veicolato un’esperienza di fede e che anche oggi potrebbero incidere nella vita di una comunità. L’imperdire in modo assoluto che ciò si realizzi, è un’azione che alla fine sottrae alla Chiesa in preghiera un bene su cui essa vanta diritti.”

prayer and hymnody. Through such activities, as Pius XII notes, the liturgy can become “even in an external way a sacred act in which all who are present may share.”<sup>13</sup> The ultimate goal is to help the faithful avoid remaining “as if they were outsiders and mute onlookers” and instead enable them to “take a more active part in divine worship.”<sup>14</sup> This participation is expected to “foster and promote the people’s piety and intimate union with Christ and His visible minister.”<sup>15</sup> Alongside the views laid out in *Mediator Dei*,<sup>16</sup> *Sacrosanctum Concilium* encourages lay participation in “acclamations, responses, psalms, antiphons, and songs.”<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, it emphasizes that “whenever the sacred action is to be celebrated with song, the whole body of the faithful may be able to contribute that active participation which is rightly theirs.”<sup>18</sup>

The *third* mode of active participation pertains to assistance at the altar. However, in comparison to the previous two themes, this aspect is mentioned more briefly, appearing in only two paragraphs of *Mediator Dei*. These passages advocate careful selection of “good and upright young boys from all classes of citizens who will come generously and spontaneously to serve at the altar with careful zeal and exactness.” With appropriate training and encouragement, these acolytes can then be nurtured as potential candidates for the priesthood. The text links these practices to the idea that congregants should take “such an active part in the liturgy that it becomes a truly sacred action of due worship to the eternal Lord in which the priest, chiefly responsible for the souls of his parish, and the ordinary faithful are united together.”<sup>19</sup>

*Fourthly*, the concept of active participation is associated not only with the external activities mentioned above but also with one’s inner disposition. In the Roman Catholic documents examined here, these two aspects of ‘activity’ are inextricably intertwined:

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13 *MD* 105.

14 *MD* 192.

15 *MD* 106.

16 See also *MD* 90, 145, 191, 194.

17 *SC* 30.

18 *SC* 114. See also *SC* 33, 121.

19 *MD* 199–200. Cf. Blasetti (2021, 145–152), who advocates for the revivification of lay participation in church service (“servizi”) rather than a narrow focus on ecclesiastical roles (“ruoli”). Regrettably, the author provides little discussion on the practical implications of this view. For further exploration of contemporary Roman Catholic perspectives on laypeople in “pastoral service,” see Kasper 2021, 212–213. Additionally, Küng (1969, 377–379), in his monumental work *Die Kirche*, one of the earliest examinations on post-Vatican II Roman Catholic ecclesiology, offers a more radical interpretation of “the priesthood of all believers” than the Council and the abovementioned authors, explicitly endorsing “lay preaching” and “lay theology.”

The worship rendered by the Church to God must be, in its entirety, interior as well as exterior. It is exterior because the nature of man as a composite of body and soul requires it to be so. [...] But the chief element of divine worship must be interior. For we must always live in Christ and give ourselves to Him completely, so that in Him, with Him and through Him the heavenly Father may be duly glorified. The sacred liturgy requires, however, that both of these elements be intimately linked with each another [*sic*].<sup>20</sup>

Indeed, for the author of *Mediator Dei*, “God cannot be honored worthily unless the mind and heart turn to Him in quest of the perfect life.”<sup>21</sup> Instead of elaborating further on this topic,<sup>22</sup> it suffices to quote a key passage from *Sacrosanctum Concilium*:

But in order that the liturgy may be able to produce its full effects, it is necessary that the faithful come to it with proper dispositions, that their minds should be attuned to their voices, and that they should cooperate with divine grace lest they receive it in vain. Pastors of souls must therefore realize that, when the liturgy is celebrated, something more is required than the mere observation of the laws governing valid and licit celebration; it is their duty also to ensure that the faithful take part fully aware of what they are doing, actively engaged in the rite, and enriched by its effects.<sup>23</sup>

All things considered, the classic definition provided in the oft-cited *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 14 can be regarded as a summary of Roman Catholic views on active participation.

Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that fully conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy. [...] In the restoration and promotion of the sacred liturgy, this full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before all else; for it is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit; and therefore pastors of souls must zealously strive to achieve it, by means of the necessary instruction, in all their pastoral work.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> *MD* 23–24.

<sup>21</sup> *MD* 26.

<sup>22</sup> See also *MD* 31, 80, 111, 116, 143, 152.

<sup>23</sup> *SC* 11.

<sup>24</sup> *SC* 14. Emphases added.

## Modern Orthodox Approaches to ‘Active Participation’

During the 20<sup>th</sup>-century liturgical revival, interest in active lay participation intensified not only within the Roman Catholic world but also in the Orthodox Church. The topic was addressed at the Moscow Council of 1917–1918<sup>25</sup> and subsequently explored by Orthodox scholars such as Protopresbyter Alexander Schmemmann (1921–1983) and his close acquaintance, Archbishop Paul of Finland (1914–1988).<sup>26</sup> Although neither Schmemmann nor Paul produced a comprehensive study specifically on active participation, both criticised what they perceived as a decline in ecclesial life, characterised by the rise of clericalism and the diminishing role of the laity.<sup>27</sup> To counteract these trends, they advocated various forms of lay participation in their writings published both concurrently with and after Vatican II. These works gained international attention and, particularly in Paul’s case, exerted significant influence on Finnish Orthodoxy.<sup>28</sup> Two decades before the Vatican II call for active lay participation, Schmemmann wrote:

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25 Discussion: Destivelle 2015, 132–134.

26 Another notable 20<sup>th</sup>-century Orthodox author who discussed active lay participation is Afanassieff, who writes (1958, 259): “In the liturgy the laity are not passive—for those whom God has appointed to the ministry of the royal priesthood cannot be passive. On the contrary, they participate actively; the liturgical acts are performed by the head of the Church with the con-celebration of the laity.”

27 On clericalism, see Schmemmann 2000, 303, 311, 328, 330; Archbishop Paul, *UIP* 39–40, 86. Schmemmann is notably critical of what he perceives as a decay [*sic*], which is particularly evident in the loss of lay participation in the Eucharist, see e.g. Schmemmann 1972, 5–7; 2000, 327–328. Similarly, Paul laments what he views as a sixth-century decline in congregational participation in liturgical prayers, which he believes was common in the early church, and the subsequent rise of “silent” prayers by the clergy, see *MU* 46–47; in English, see *TFWH* 48. These concerns have also been expressed by other scholars. For instance, Afanassieff (1958, 256, 259) argues that the primordial church “(being one body) always acted as a whole,” whereas in the post-Constantinian era “the organisation of the Church no longer gave any room to the people’s ministry of witness and today it has become practically impossible.” More recently, a similar “decay theory” has been endorsed by Chan 1998, 148.

28 Metso (2015, 456–457) has noted that, while Archbishop Paul did not clearly reveal his early influences, he was aware of late 19<sup>th</sup>-century Russian liturgical scholarship as well as the post-Second World War liturgical movement. For instance, in a 1970s statement, the archbishop refers to Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and Anglican scholars from the 1920s–1940s. Later, in his 1986 work on the Eucharist, *Uskon pidot (UIP)*; trans. *The Feast of Faith: An Invitation to the Love Feast of the Kingdom of God*, Paul mentions Orthodox liturgical theologians Emilianos Timiadis, Boris Sove, and Nicos Patrinoas as his influences, along with Schmemmann and Afanassieff.

We think of worship as a specifically clerical sphere of activity. The priest celebrates, the laity attend. One is active, the other passive. It is another error and a serious one at that. The Christian term for worship is *leitourgia* which means precisely a corporate, common, all embracing action in which all those who are present are active participants. All prayers in the Orthodox Church are always written in terms of the plural we. We offer, we pray, we thank, we adore, we enter, we ascend, we receive. The layman is in a very direct way the co-celebrant of the priest, the latter offering to God the prayers of the Church, representing all people, speaking on their behalf.<sup>29</sup>

Later, Schmemmann lamented what he perceived as a consequence of the sidelining of the corporate perspective into the liturgy:

[T]he individual believer, entering the church, does not feel he is a participant and celebrant of worship, does not know that in this act of worship he, along with the other who together with him are constituting the Church, is called to express the Church as new life and to be transformed again into a member of the Church.<sup>30</sup>

To remedy the “liturgical crisis”<sup>31</sup> evident in these developments, both Schmemmann and Archbishop Paul labored to help churchgoers regain a thorough understanding of the liturgy and a more profound sense of themselves as members of the ecclesial body.<sup>32</sup> To this end, they discouraged conducting services with the royal doors and curtains closed, as well as the silent recitation of the Eucharistic prayers.<sup>33</sup> Simultaneously, they actively encouraged congregational singing.<sup>34</sup> In his 1978 encyclical on Orthodox doctrine, Paul pontificated:

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29 Schmemmann 1953, 9–10. Emphases original.

30 Schmemmann 1986, 30.

31 Schmemmann 1986, 28.

32 Intriguingly, in his writings from the 1940s and 1950s, Paul approaches the significance of the Eucharist from a markedly individualistic perspective. The communal and ecclesiological aspects begin to receive greater emphasis in his statements from the 1960s. See discussion in Metso 2015.

33 See e.g. Schmemmann 2000, 240; Archbishop Paul, *MU* 46–47, 56; in English, see *TFWH* 48–49, 55. In his 1975 journal, Schmemmann (2000, 90) recounts a positive experience of attending an Orthodox service in Kuopio, Finland: “A festive and austere Liturgy that reflects Bishop Paul’s discipline. All ‘mystical’ prayers read aloud: everything is meaningful and thought through. A beautiful service.” 34 *MU* 31, 58–59; *UP* 40, 63–64; in English, see *TFWH* 33, 57; *TFOF* 54–55, 81.

The people standing in the church are not passive followers of the service but are co-servants with the officiating priest or bishop, and they must be able to follow the course of the Liturgy and participate in its prayers. Only in this way can the liturgy be real liturgy – common worship – and the Church an ecclesia – the people of God assembled for the Eucharist.<sup>35</sup>

Another manifestation of the ‘activeness’ of participation, as advocated by these Orthodox clergymen, is reflected in the frequency of participation in the Eucharist. For instance, Paul repeatedly encouraged weekly attendance. He wrote:

[During the New Testament era, t]he Christians used to meet regularly on the first day of the week to “break bread,” or to celebrate the Eucharist. This day was called the Lord’s Day because it was the day of Christ’s resurrection. On this day, namely Sunday, we too have a Liturgy in all our congregations, and nothing should prevent us from partaking as an entire family in the Liturgy of the Lord’s Day and the sacrament of redemption.<sup>36</sup>

Evidently, the chief aim of such emphases was not ecclesial activism *per se*,<sup>37</sup> but rather a deeper lay engagement in the liturgy and a consequent transformation in the lives of congregants, rather than merely becoming “‘customers’ of the clerics.”<sup>38</sup>

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35 MU 48. The English is the author’s revision of the Nykänen & Williams translation, see *TFWH* 49. For further evidence of Paul’s views on the communal nature of the Eucharistic liturgy, see the sources listed by Metso 2015, 458–460.

36 MU 41–42. The English is the author’s revision of the Nykänen & Williams translation, see *TFWH* 43. See also MU 44; *UIP* 109; in English, see *TFWH* 46; *TFOF* 101. For further sources and discussion, see Metso 2015, 461–462.

37 For all his efforts to promote active lay participation in the liturgy, Schmemann (2000, 312–313) in fact discouraged “[t]he temptation of activism in the Church.” He writes: “Nowadays, especially in the U.S., the Church is perceived as an enterprise, an activity. The priest constantly harasses people to do something for the Church. And their activism is measured in quantitative criteria: how many meetings, how much money, how much ‘doing.’ I’m not sure it is all necessary. What is dangerous is not the activity itself, but the reduction of the Church, the identification of this activity with life in the Church. The idea of the Church, the sacramental principle of its life, lies in taking us away from activity (‘let us put aside all earthly cares’), in making us commune with a new life, eternity, the Kingdom. And the idea of the Church, the principle of its life, also demands that we would bring *into* the world this experience of a new life so that we would purify this world, illumine it with the non-worldliness of the experience of the Church. Quite often the opposite happens: we bring activism into the Church, the fuss of this world, and submit the Church, poison its life with this incessant fuss. What happens is not that life becomes Church, but the Church becomes worldly.”

38 Schmemann 2000, 328.

Clearly, not all modern Orthodox thinkers have approached lay participation in ecclesial life in the manners described above.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, decades after the statements of Schmemmann and Archbishop Paul, this topic continues to be a subject of discussion within Orthodox circles. For instance, at the turn of the millennium, Paul Meyendorff lamented the apparent unawareness of many Orthodox churchgoers of their priestly role, which he attributed to the practice of silent Eucharistic prayers and the lack of congregational singing, rendering the laity as little more than “passive spectators.” Meyendorff raised the valid concern that “because the laity are not engaged in the liturgy, it has little transformational effect on their lives.” To address this issue, he suggested promoting frequent communion, the audible recitation of the “secret prayers,” overcoming clericalism, and incorporating the laity more directly into the liturgy by, for example, allowing certain parts of the service to be sung congregationally.<sup>40</sup> More recently, it has been proposed that enabling the laity to engage more fully in performative—i.e., visible and/or audible—activities would deepen their engagement in the liturgy and, consequently, foster transformation in their lives.<sup>41</sup>

While a detailed analysis of the underlying reasons for these discussions is beyond the scope of this study, one might wonder whether the promotion of active participation in the recent decades is related to, or even a contributing factor in, the contemporary phenomenon of claiming one’s “rights” to be active in the congregation. At any rate, the development of both phenomena appears to have been simultaneous. Indeed, as early as 1953, Schmemmann observed that both Orthodox “priests and laymen alike” were claiming that their rights were being denied and that their responsibilities and possibilities of action were being limited.<sup>42</sup> Although Schmemmann later criticised the tendency to view ecclesiastical roles from the perspective of “rights,”<sup>43</sup> Sacrosanctum Concilium did indeed identify active participation as the congregants’ “right and obligation by reason of their baptism,”<sup>44</sup> or that “which is rightly theirs.”<sup>45</sup>

Another association evoked by contemporary discussion on active participation concerns the relationship between the extent of one’s activity in

39 Cf. e.g. Cleopa of Sihăstria, *DVV* 166–210; *VS* 145–154; Florovsky 2020, 335–345.

40 Meyendorff 2003, 147–148. See also Fr Chrysostom Nassiss’ contribution in the present volume.

41 See e.g. Regule 2018, 38.

42 Schmemmann 1953, 3–4.

43 Schmemmann 2000, 131, 271.

44 SC 14.

45 SC 114.

ecclesiastical roles and the degree of one's Christianity. This tendency was addressed in the mid-1990s by the then-cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, who observed:

Nowadays the opinion surfaces occasionally even in ecclesiastical circles that a man is more Christian the more he is involved in Church activities. We have a kind of ecclesiastical occupational therapy; a committee, or at any rate some sort of activity in the Church, is sought for everyone. People – according to this way of thinking – must constantly be busy about the Church, they must always be talking about the Church, or doing something to or in her. But a mirror that reflects only itself is no longer a mirror; a window that no longer lets us see the wide open spaces outside, but gets in the way of the view, has lost its reason for being.<sup>46</sup>

In several cases, interpreting “active” participation in the manner discussed above seems to have led to the practical consequence of doing as much as possible in church.<sup>47</sup> Instead of delving into detailed examples, however, we will now turn to our main theme: How would John Chrysostom have approached this subject?

## **Exhortations to ‘Active Participation’ in Chrysostom**

Needless to say, as a late antique author, Chrysostom cannot be expected to employ the modern concept of ‘active participation’ when discussing ecclesial life.<sup>48</sup> Nonetheless, the idea itself is prevalent in the sources examined herein. For Chrysostom, “[t]he church service was not supposed to be a passive experience”<sup>49</sup> – a view that clearly presupposes some sort of activity on the part of the congregants. What, then, was the nature of this activity?

In Chrysostom's homilies on Genesis and Statues, relevant evidence re-

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<sup>46</sup> Ratzinger 1996, 145.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Lamberts 2004, 10.

<sup>48</sup> Moreover, in Chrysostom, as in most ecclesiastical authors of his era, such references are hardly intended to form a systematic exposition of their theme. Therefore, relevant information must be gleaned both from positive statements encouraging correct ecclesial behavior and from denunciations of the misbehavior of the hearers. Cf. Sheerin 2008, 718. The literature on Chrysostomian views of the nature of, and the processes enabling, ecclesial and liturgical participation is too vast to list here. See e.g. Frank 2023; Huovinen 2022; Maxwell 2006; De Roten 2005; Knupp 1995.

<sup>49</sup> Maxwell 2006, 90.

garding what might be described as ‘active participation’ can be categorized into four groups. *First*, the homilist encourages his lay audiences to participate frequently in the services. In this context, Chrysostom, unlike modern Roman Catholic documents, seldom uses terminology of obligation. Nonetheless, for him, frequent participation is crucial, as it is in church that Christians can receive the treasures of Scriptural instruction, which not only nourish them but also prepare them for Christian witness.<sup>50</sup> Indeed, Chrysostom likens the church to a school, where the congregation is summoned daily, like children, to receive salutary teaching.<sup>51</sup> He further emphasises this point by employing medical imagery, a motif frequently used by him.

Do you see how it is possible to find in Scripture a remedy appropriate to every trouble afflicting the human race and go off healed, to dispel every depression that life causes and not be brought low by any circumstance befalling us? For this reason I beseech you to make your way here frequently, and attend carefully to the reading of the Holy Scriptures [...].<sup>52</sup>

Chrysostom encourages frequent attendance despite his hearers’ bodily weakness, urging them “not to deprive themselves of this spiritual instruction but rather to show greater zeal for it.”<sup>53</sup> Conversely, he considers it desirable to attend church even if one is unable to observe the preparatory fast.<sup>54</sup> For Chrysostom, the chief goal of ecclesial attendance is spiritual transformation. Therefore, if congregants return home from church unchanged, with none of their defects corrected, their attendance will have been in vain.<sup>55</sup>

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50 Chrysostom, *In Gen. hom.* 4.10; 5.1. In this sense, it may be an overstatement that for Chrysostom, “[r]egular church attendance [...] was not completely necessary, [...] since people who did not attend church were still considered part of the religious community.” So Maxwell 2006, 135.

51 *In Gen. hom.* 11.3.

52 *In Gen. hom.* 29.2: Ἴδετε πῶς δυνατόν ἐκάστης συμφορᾶς τῆς συνεχούσης τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην φύσιν κατάλληλον ἐντεύθεν φάρμακον λαβόντα ἀπελθεῖν, καὶ πᾶσαν ἀπόσασθαι ἀθυμίαν βιωτικὴν, καὶ ὑπὸ μηδενὸς συστέλλεσθαι τῶν συμπιπτόντων; Διὰ τοῦτο παρακαλῶ καὶ συνεχῶς ἐνταῦθα βαδίζειν, καὶ μετὰ ἀκριβείας προσέχειν τῇ τῶν θείων Γραφῶν ἀναγνώσει, [...]. The English translation by Hill, see FOTC 82:201. For variations on the same theme, see e.g. *In Gen. hom.* 31.2; 32.1; *In Ioh. hom.* 2.5; *In 2 Cor. hom.* 15.5. For further discussion on the use of medical imagery in Chrysostom and other late fourth-century Patristic authors, see Huovinen 2020. Cf. Basil of Caesarea, who encourages daily or at least frequent participation in the Eucharist, see *Ep.* 93.

53 Chrysostom, *In Gen. hom.* 10.1. The English translation by Hill, see FOTC 74:128–129.

54 *De stat.* 10.1.

55 *De stat.* 5.7; *In Gen. hom.* 11.3.

*Secondly*, Chrysostom places considerable emphasis on the proper disposition for receiving the Christian kerygma. He would hardly stress this theme so significantly if he did not feel that the receptiveness of his audiences was in some way impaired. What, then, impeded the hearers' ability to receive his message? First of all, Chrysostom acknowledges the distracting effects of the turmoil following the overthrow of the statues of Emperor Theodosius in Antioch in 387.<sup>56</sup> The homilist seeks to console his listeners who have endured these events and redirect their focus to the word of God.

But afford me your attention! Lend me your ears awhile! Shake off this despondency! Let us return to our former custom; and as we have been used always to meet here with gladness, so let us also do now, casting all upon God. And this will contribute towards our actual deliverance from calamity. For should the Lord see that His words are listened to carefully; and that our love of divine wisdom stands the trial of the difficulty of these times, He will quickly take us up again, and will make out of the present tempest a calm and happy change.<sup>57</sup>

Nevertheless, it is not only the political situation that may hinder believers' attention to the Gospel. Chrysostom is also aware of the potentially distracting effects of his hearers' secular vocations.

Apply your attention to the utmost, I beseech you, put aside all worldly thoughts, and let us study these words with precision so that nothing may escape us but rather we should proceed to their deepest meaning and be able to light upon the treasure concealed in these brief phrases.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>56</sup> For the dating of *De stat.*, see Kelly 1995, 72.

<sup>57</sup> *De stat.* 2.3: 'Ἄλλ' ἐπίδοτέ μοι τὴν ψυχὴν τὴν ὑμετέραν, ἐπίδοτέ μοι τὴν ἀκοὴν μικρόν· ἀποτινάξαθε τὴν ἀθυμίαν· ἐπὶ τὸ πρότερον ἔθος ἐπανεέλθωμεν, καὶ ὥσπερ εἴωθαμεν αἰετ' εὐθυμίας ἐνταῦθα παραγίνεσθαι, οὕτω καὶ νῦν ποιῶμεν, τὸ πᾶν ἐπὶ τὸν Θεὸν ῥίψαντες. Τοῦτο καὶ πρὸς αὐτὴν ἡμῖν τῆς συμφορᾶς συμβαλεῖται τὴν λύσιν. Ἄν γὰρ ἴδῃ μετὰ ἀκριβείας ἀκροαμένους τῶν αὐτοῦ λόγων, καὶ τὴν φιλοσοφίαν ἡμῖν οὐκ ἐλεγχομένην τῇ τοῦ καιροῦ δυσκολίᾳ, ταχέως ἀντιλήψεται, καὶ ποιήσει τὴν γαλήνην καὶ μεταβολὴν ἀγαθὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ παρόντος χειμῶνος. The English translation by Stephens, see NPNF 9:346.

<sup>58</sup> *In Gen. hom.* 20.2: Συντείναντέ μοι τὴν διάνοιαν, παρακαλῶ, καὶ πάντα τὸν βιωτικὸν λογισμὸν ἀπωσάμενοι, μετὰ ἀκριβείας τὰ εἰρημένα διερευνησώμεθα, ἵνα μηδὲν ἡμᾶς λαθεῖν δυνηθῇ, ἀλλ' ὅσον ἡμῖν οἶόν τε πρὸς τὸ βάθος αὐτὸ καθέντες ἑαυτοὺς, θηρᾶσαι δυνηθῶμεν τὸν ἐγκεκρυμμένον θησαυρὸν τοῖς βραχέσι τούτοις ῥήμασιν. The English translation by Hill, see FOTC 82:38–39. See also *In Gen. hom.* 24.1.

For Chrysostom, focusing on worldly thoughts and concerns obscures one's mental "vision," so to speak, making the discovery of spiritual treasures impossible.<sup>59</sup> He explains:

Hence I beseech you, now above all times let us dispel all worldly thoughts, keep the eye of our mind clear and alert, and in this fashion attend here; let no one come to church cluttered up with worldly concerns if the purpose is to gain the due reward of our effort and thus go off home.<sup>60</sup>

On the other hand, dispelling earthly concerns and approaching the ecclesiastical kerygma with attentiveness facilitates the reception of divine grace.

[W]henver the Spirit sees an ardent desire and a watchful mind, he freely grants it abundant grace. So step aside from your daily preoccupations and from things that threaten to suffocate your thinking like weeds, and let us give free rein to spiritual desires so that we may gain great advantage from this consideration and receive much benefit; then we can go home.<sup>61</sup>

Ultimately, it is not merely his hearers' focus on earthly concerns but rather their general indifference and inattentiveness to spiritual matters that Chrysostom seeks to address. He views the human soul as prone to sluggishness,<sup>62</sup> which leads many in his audience to waste time in unprofitable conversation and to pay scant attention to his preaching.<sup>63</sup> Therefore, Chrysostom is

59 For further discussion on the notion of spiritual vision in Chrysostom, see Huovinen 2025, *forthcoming*.

60 *In Gen. hom.* 30.1: Διὰ τοῦτο παρακαλῶ, νῦν μᾶλλον, εἰ καί ποτε ἄλλοτε, πάντα λογισμὸν βιωτικὸν ἀπωσάμενοι, καὶ τὸ τῆς διανοίας ὄμμα καθαρὸν καὶ διεγερμένον ἔχοντες, οὕτως ἐνταῦθα παραγενώμεθα, καὶ μηδεὶς εἰσῶν εἰς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν βιωτικὰς ἐπισορεύσῃω φροντίδας, ἵνα ἀξίαν τῶν πόνων τὴν ἀμοιβὴν λαβῶν, οὕτως οἴκαδε ἐπανέλθῃ. The English translation by Hill, see FOTC 82:221–222.

61 *In Gen. hom.* 3.1: Ὅταν γὰρ ἴδῃ ἡ τοῦ Πνεύματος χάρις πόθον ζέοντα, καὶ διεγερμένην διάνοιαν, πλουσίαν τὴν παρ' ἑαυτῆς δωρεῖται χάριν. Ἀποστήσαντες τοῖνον ἑαυτοὺς πάντων τῶν βιωτικῶν, καὶ τὰς φροντίδας τὰς ἀκανθῶν δίκην συμπνίγειν δυναμένας, τὸν ἡμέτερον λογισμὸν ἐκτέμνοντες, ὅλην ἑαυτῶν τὴν διάνοιαν μεταστήσωμεν εἰς τὴν τῶν πνευματικῶν ἐπιθυμίαν, ἵνα πολλὴν ἐντεῦθεν δεξάμενοι τὴν ὠφέλειαν, καὶ κερδάναντες τι μέγα καὶ γενναῖον, οὕτως ἐξέλθωμεν. The English translation by Hill, see FOTC 74:40.

62 *In Gen. hom.* 4.6: Δεῖται γὰρ ἡμῶν ἡ ψυχὴ ἄθυμος οὕσα συνεχούς τῆς ὑπομνήσεως.

63 *In Gen. hom.* 29.2. In Maxwell's (2006, 134) interpretation, Chrysostom "feared that the social attraction of belonging to the body of the church would become dominant at the religious services. He warned them to focus on spiritual learning rather than the latest news from their neighbors."

prepared to persist in preaching similar themes to lead his audience “to a better state of mind, drawing them from their frenzied stupor which avarice brought upon them by dulling their intellect.”<sup>64</sup> Accordingly, he repeatedly exhorts Christians to overcome their slothfulness:

So attend carefully, I beseech you: let everyone give an alert attention, I ask you, no one sluggish, no one drowsy; let no one be distracted in thinking of outside concerns, or bring here the worries of daily life and stay wrapt in them. Instead, consider the dignity of this spiritual gathering and the fact that we are listening to God speaking to us through the tongue of the inspired authors.<sup>65</sup>

Alertness is essential, as it is not merely the homilist or his purportedly trivial tales that the audience is about to hear,<sup>66</sup> but the heavenly King Himself. If it is customary for citizens to remain silent during the reading of imperial letters, Christians should “stand in fear and trembling” during the ecclesiastical delivery of divine words and “maintain utter silence,” clearing their minds of confusion to fully grasp the message.<sup>67</sup> They should receive the salutary message with great enthusiasm,<sup>68</sup> zealously seeking, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, the treasure hidden in the Scriptural words.<sup>69</sup> Chrysostom underscores the urgency of attentiveness to spiritual matters by suggesting that time for such engagement is running out – an implicit reference to the fleeting nature of earthly life.<sup>70</sup>

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Such a view appears to be echoed in the recent argument that fourth-century Greek Patristic authors – including Chrysostom – “lay the chief emphasis on the theological aspect of membership that is based upon participation in the mysteries of the church, and further manifested in the members’ adherence to ecclesiastical dogma as well as a renewed way of life. They pay considerably less attention to the sociological aspects of membership such as the rights or duties of members, or the interpersonal dynamics of ecclesial communion.” See Huovinen 2022, 60.

64 *In Gen. hom.* 3.6. The English translation by Hill, see FOTC 74:50.

65 *In Gen. hom.* 15.1: Προσέχετε οὖν, παρακαλῶ, μετὰ ἀκριβείας· μηδεὶς νωθῆς, μηδεὶς ὑπνηλός, πάντες διεγρηγομένην μοι τὴν διάνοιαν παρέχετε μηδεὶς ἔξω ἠεμβέσθω τὸν λογισμόν, μηδὲ φροντίδας βιωτικὰς ἐπισυρόμενος ἐνταῦθα στηκέτω, ἀλλ’ ἐννοῶν τῆς πνευματικῆς ταύτης συνόδου τὸ ἀξίωμα, καὶ ὅτι διὰ τῆς τῶν προφητῶν γλώττης τοῦ Θεοῦ πρὸς ἡμᾶς διαλεγόμενον ἀκούομεν· The English translation by Hill, see FOTC 74:195. See also *In Gen. hom.* 8.1.

66 Cf. *In Gen. hom.* 3.6: Καὶ οἶδα, ὅτι πολλοὶ οὐ μόνον οὐ προσίενται τὰ παρ’ ἡμῶν λεγόμενα, ἀλλὰ καὶ ὡς λήρῶν τινα καὶ μῦθον ἀκούοντες, οὐ προσέχουσι τοῖς ἡμετέροις λόγοις.

67 *In Gen. hom.* 14.2.

68 *In Gen. hom.* 1.1. See also 2.5; 16.1.

69 *In Gen. hom.* 21.1. Chrysostom’s view in this passage is strikingly reminiscent of Origen’s Scriptural interpretation. A similar approach recurs frequently in the homilies of the Antiochene, see e.g. *In Gen. hom.* 32.1; *De stat.* 1.1.

70 *In Gen. hom.* 11.3.

*Thirdly*, a similar approach is taken toward prayer. In his exposition of Psalm 4, Chrysostom contrasts his audiences' attitudes in the presence of a person of worldly renown with their attitude towards God Himself.

I mean, if someone has an association with a remarkable person and gains much benefit from the interchange, much more is this the case in conversing incessantly with God. We are, however, not as aware as we should be of the benefit of prayer, for the reason that we neither apply ourselves to it with assiduity nor have recourse to it in accord with God's laws. Instead, when on the point of conversing with some people of a class above us, we ensure our appearance and gait and attire are as they should be, and dialogue with them in this fashion. In approaching God, by contrast, we yawn, scratch ourselves, look this way and that, pay little attention, loll on the ground, do the shopping. If on the contrary we were to approach him with due reverence and prepare ourselves to converse with him as God, then we would know, even before receiving what we asked, how much benefit we gain.<sup>71</sup>

While these expectations may seem demanding, the homilist does not require more from his hearers than they are capable of. Rather, to have their prayers heard, Christians need only "a sober attitude, with no obstacle to being close to God."<sup>72</sup>

Up to this point, we have examined Chrysostom's attempts to engage his hearers internally. In this regard, his view of 'active participation' does indeed resemble the Vatican II emphasis on conscious (*conscia*) participation,

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71 Chrysostom, *Exp. in ps.* 4.2: Εἰ γὰρ ἀνθρώπῳ τις συγγινόμενος θαυμαστῶ, πολλὰ καρπούται ἐκ τῆς συνουσίας, πολλῶ μᾶλλον ὁ Θεῶ διηνεκῶς ὀμιλῶν. Ἄλλ' οὐκ ἴσμεν τῆς εὐχῆς τὸ κέρδος ὡς χρῆ, ἐπειδὴ μὴδὲ προσέχομεν αὐτῇ μετὰ ἀκριβείας, μὴδὲ χρώμεθα κατὰ τοὺς τοῦ Θεοῦ νόμους. Ἀλλ' ἀνθρώποις μὲν μέλλοντες διαλέγεσθαι τισι τῶν ὑπὲρ ἡμᾶς, καὶ σχῆμα, καὶ βάδισμα, καὶ στολὴν, καὶ πάντα ῥυθμίσαντες εἰς τὸ δέον, οὕτω διαλεγόμεθα· Θεῶ δὲ προσιόντες χασμώμεθα, κνώμεθα, περιστροφόμεθα, βαθυμοῦμεν· τῶν γονάτων χαμαὶ κειμένων, ἐπὶ τῆς ἀγορᾶς πλανώμεθα. Εἰ δὲ μετὰ τῆς προσηκούσης εὐλαβείας, καὶ ὡς Θεῶ διαλέξεσθαι μέλλοντες, οὕτω προσήειμεν, τότε ἂν ἔγνωμεν, καὶ πρὸ τοῦ λαβεῖν ἄπρο ηἰτοῦμεν, ἡλίκον κέρδος καρπούμεθα. The English translation by Hill, see COTP 1:47. Corresponding symptoms of inattentiveness are depicted in *De stat.* 9.1. Probably less than two decades later, Paulinus of Nola expressed similar sentiments, *Ep.* 32.19: "Quid igitur miseri nunc quiescimus oscitantes et quasi non conducti mercennarii in tumultuoso huius saeculi foro vacua manu stamus [...]." In ACW 36:152, Walsh translates: "Why, then, do we poor souls remain idle and yawning? Why do we stand inactive in the noisy forum of this world as though we were not hired labourers?"

72 *Exp. in ps.* 4.2: Ἐνταῦθα δὲ οὐδενὸς δέεται, ἀλλὰ γνώμης μόνης νηφούσης, καὶ οὐδὲν τὸ κωλύον εἶναι ἐγγὺς τοῦ Θεοῦ. The English translation by Hill, see COTP 1:48.

which pertains to “the effect on the deepest layers of the psyche, of the heart, an effect that expresses itself, out of an inner necessity, through taking part in prayer and song.”<sup>73</sup> However, since the conciliar view of active participation includes both internal and external aspects,<sup>74</sup> another question arises: Did Chrysostom have anything to say about the outward or practical activities in which the laity might have engaged within church?

To address this question – *fourthly* – Chrysostom does occasionally allude to ecclesiastical music-making. As one might expect from a fourth-century homilist, he provides limited detail on the specific organisation of singing in his church.<sup>75</sup> Nonetheless, he seems to anticipate not only authorized singers but also his lay hearers to participate in corporate hymnody. For instance, Chrysostom describes the church as a place where psalms are sung, and “all alike join in praising our God.”<sup>76</sup> More explicitly, he refers to a Psalm passage, noting that his congregation has “all this day sung together” these words.<sup>77</sup> Unfortunately, the sources offer scant information of the practical implications of these views or their possible relation to the mid-fourth-century canonical statement of the Laodicean Synod, which restricted lay participation in hymnody.<sup>78</sup>

## Concluding Reflections

If one were to ask Chrysostom to summarise his understanding on what we have termed ‘active participation,’ how might he respond? It is conceivable that he would encapsulate his views in a passage from his tenth homily on Genesis, where he discusses Lenten fasting:

*The sober listener, even after dining, would be in a suitable condition for this spiritual gathering, just as by the same token the slothful and dilatory person*

<sup>73</sup> Stuflesser 2015, 154.

<sup>74</sup> Stuflesser 2015, 156.

<sup>75</sup> For a similar approach in Cyril of Jerusalem as well as further references to Chrysostom, see Huovinen 2023, 9–10.

<sup>76</sup> *De stat.* 15.1: νυνὶ δὲ πάντες ἐκεῖθεν εἰς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν κατέφυγον, καὶ τὸν ἡμέτερον ἅπαντες ἐνυμνοῦσι Θεόν. The English translation by Stephens, see NPNF 9:439.

<sup>77</sup> *De stat.* 17.1: Εἰς καιρὸν ὑπεψήλαμεν ἅπαντες κοινῇ τήμερον· Εὐλογητός Κύριος ὁ Θεὸς τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ, ὁ ποιῶν θαυμάσια μόνος. Cf. Ps 72:18 LXX.

<sup>78</sup> *Laod* 15.

even on an empty stomach would get no benefit from it. I'm not making this point to undermine the importance of fasting – God forbid: on the contrary, I'm all in favor of it. Instead, my intention is to teach you *to take a part in spiritual matters* with alert mind, not just follow along out of habit. The shameful thing, you see, is not *attendance at this spiritual teaching* after partaking of food, but attendance with an attitude of sloth, addiction to passion, and failure to control the movements of the flesh.<sup>79</sup>

In this passage, three points are noteworthy. Chrysostom emphasises:

1. Attendance at ecclesiastical synaxes;
2. Listening attentively with a sober mind;
3. Active participation in spiritual matters with an alert mind.

Regarding these themes, Chrysostom's approach appears largely consonant with some 20<sup>th</sup>-century Roman Catholic statements on 'active participation' as well as contemporary Orthodox views. However, there are also notable differences.

As noted above, Chrysostom presupposes some degree of lay participation in corporate psalmody but provides no detailed descriptions of this praxis. He also seems to offer few explicit encouragements for joining in corporate chanting.<sup>80</sup> Indeed, in his approach to congregational singing he demonstrates more hesitation than his modern Roman Catholic or Orthodox successors.

Furthermore, the Chrysostomian sources examined herein provide little evidence to support modern Orthodox views – either for or against – on whether the liturgy should be conducted with open or closed doors, or

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79 *In Gen. hom.* 10.1: Ὁ νήφων ἀκροατῆς, κὰν ἠρισθηκῶς ἢ, ἄξιος ἂν εἴη τοῦ συλλόγου τούτου τοῦ πνευματικοῦ, ὥσπερ οὖν ὁ ῥάθυμος καὶ ἀναπεπτωκῶς, κὰν ἄσιτος διαμείνη, οὐδεμίαν ἐντεῦθεν δέξεται τὴν ὠφέλειαν. Καὶ ταῦτα λέγω οὐ τὸν τόνον τῆς νηστείας ἐκλύων, μὴ γένοιτο, ἀλλὰ καὶ σφόδρα ἔπαινων καὶ ἀπου δεχόμενος τοὺς νηστεύοντας· ἀλλὰ βουλόμενος διδάξαι ὑμᾶς, λογισμῶ τινι νήφοντι μετιέναι τὰ πνευματικά, καὶ μὴ συνθηεῖα κατακολουθεῖν. Οὐ γὰρ τὸν μεταλαβόντα τροφῆς αἰσχροῦν παραλαβεῖν τῆ πνευματικῆ ταύτῃ διδασκαλίᾳ, ἀλλὰ τὸ ῥαθυμοῦση διανοίᾳ, καὶ τὸ ὑπὸ τῶν παθῶν πολιορκεῖσθαι, καὶ μὴ καταστέλλειν τὰ τῆς σαρκὸς σκιρτήματα. The Hill translation (FOTC 74:127–128) revised by the present author. Emphases added.

80 At any rate, the occasional exhortations to singing, praise, and Scripture reading found in his catechetical homilies appear more directed *against* worldly discourse than *towards* promoting lay participation in public liturgical activities. In this regard, Chrysostom is not unique among Greek-speaking Christian homilists of his time.

whether Eucharistic prayers should be recited audibly or silently. The apparent reason for this is that, in Chrysostom's day, both the eucharistic prayers and the iconostasis (with its doors) had yet to be developed in their modern form. Moreover, the topic of the congregants' involvement in executive roles in other liturgical activities is also unaddressed in the sources. For instance, one is hard-pressed to find a passage where Chrysostom mentions the laity – whether male or female – assisting at the sanctuary or participating in the public recitation of prayers or other liturgical texts. In this regard, his approach aligns with that of many other Christian authors of late antiquity.

In summary, Chrysostom's emphasis on what has been termed 'active participation' is scarcely motivated by a desire to address the distinction between ecclesiastical hierarchy and laity by promoting individual congregants' "rights" to activity. His focus is not intended as a solution to what has recently been characterized as "a real need felt by the laity to *do something* during liturgy"<sup>81</sup> – particularly if "something" refers to outward actions. While Chrysostom does indeed aim to encourage his hearers to "do something," this is not through busying themselves in church-related activities but by turning their focus inwards.<sup>82</sup> The homilist seeks to counteract his hearers' tendency to concentrate solely on secular "activities" and their lack of interest in the vitality of their spiritual life. His understanding of 'active participation' is primarily concerned with an unceasing and earnest inner focus on and reception of Scriptural instruction, along with a holistic devotion to diligent prayer.<sup>83</sup>

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81 Larin 2013, 86. In his description of the Vatican II view, Stuflesser (2015, 157) seems to agree: "'Active' participation does not mean that every participant in the liturgy must constantly undertake something extraordinary or engage in some external actions. Doing things for the sake of keeping busy is not what the Council had in mind here [...]. A 'movement of externalization' whose criterion is 'everybody should have something to do', cannot base itself on the spirit or letters of the Council. Accordingly, we must once again clarify that the word 'participation' does not refer to mere external activity during the celebration. Mindless actionism is not the same as spiritual and fruitful participation." Similarly, Ratzinger (2000, 147) laments superficial interpretations that view active participation as little more than engagement in outward activities.

82 This would be in line with Boyer's post-Vatican II interpretation of active participation of the laity as a "doing" as primarily an interior action, see Levering 2017, 69.

83 In fact, Jackson (2008, 118) argues that "the council fathers intended that this [active participation] should be understood above all as an interior participation." Similarly Levering (2017, 67–68), who underscores that "the active participation of the laity in the liturgy requires much more than just performing *external* actions," and that "*interior* participation is required if the liturgy is to efficaciously build up each believer, and the whole community, into 'a holy temple in the Lord.'" Emphases added. Cf. the Finnish Orthodox Bishop Aleksii (1941–1984), who, during Archbishop Paul's tenure, consistently encouraged the hearers of his congregational homilies to embody their role "living" as "active" members of the church, a status which they already held by virtue of

Concurrently, it is difficult to find Chrysostom advocating for lay participation in external or performative activities as a means to deepen engagement in the liturgy and transform the lives of his congregants. The essence of his approach could be encapsulated by citing Jackson's depiction of the liturgical theology of Vatican II: "In order for the liturgy to be fully effective in the lives of the faithful, they must have the proper dispositions to enter into it with integrity and be able to cooperate with the grace poured forth in it."<sup>84</sup>

Evidently, these observations open a broader perspective on Chrysostom's ideal of lay activities. One area deserving further exploration is his view that active participation in receiving ecclesiastical instruction and engaging in diligent prayer may cultivate Christian virtues in believers and inspire them to practice divine exhortations in between liturgical synaxes.<sup>85</sup> For Chrysostom, such a response could manifest in various activities: domestic delivery of and mutual encouragement in adhering to spiritual instruction,<sup>86</sup> Christian apology and spiritual edification of those outside of the church,<sup>87</sup> as well as almsgiving and charity towards those in need,<sup>88</sup> among others. However, a more comprehensive examination of Chrysostom's views on these activities must be left for future studies.

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their baptism. Aleksii emphasized that such activeness included regular participation in and inner concentration on the liturgy, participation in the mysteries, repentance and genuine faith, fasting, asceticism, vigilant daily prayer, spiritual reading, making the sign of the cross, veneration of icons, and charity towards those in need. For him, these practices were pathways to sanctification and union with God. However, unlike Archbishop Paul, Bishop Aleksii did not address vocal participation of congregants or their roles in the enactment or assistance of the liturgy in his homilies. While his orations do not explicitly reveal the reasons behind his approach to active participation, one wonders whether it may have been influenced by his evident emphasis on Chrysostom over other Patristic authors. See *UEV*, *passim*.

<sup>84</sup> Jackson 2008, 104.

<sup>85</sup> *In Gen. hom.* 27.3. For Chrysostom, indeed, it would be of no benefit to plainly hear the divine message without a practical response, see *In Gen. hom.* 19.6: οὐδὲν γὰρ ὄφελος τῆς ἀκροάσεως μόνης ἄνευ τῆς διὰ τῶν ἔργων ὑπακοῆς.

<sup>86</sup> *In Gen. hom.* 2.4; *De stat.* 3.7; 5.7; 6.7.

<sup>87</sup> *In Gen. hom.* 8.4; 14.22; *De stat.* 1.12.

<sup>88</sup> In Chrysostom's homilies on Genesis, the theme of almsgiving is nearly ubiquitous, see e.g. *In Gen. hom.* 15.5; 20.5; 21.6; 34.3; 35.8; 42.7. See also *De stat.* 2.7.

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