

# The Sacred Liturgy: A study of the teachings of Vatican II through today

**Session One:**

**The nature and purpose of the Liturgy**

*Why is ritual so important?*

# Liturgical Documents of Vatican II

- Sacrosanctum Concilium
  - The first document issued in the Second Vatican Council.
  - An Apostolic Constitution on the Liturgy promulgated by Bl. Paul VI on December 4, 1963.
- Vicesimus Quintus Annus
  - An Apostolic Letter promulgated by St. John Paul II on December 4, 1988, to mark the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Sacrosanctum Concilium.

# Goal of Vatican II

- The Second Vatican Council had several goals in mind:
  - to impart an ever increasing vigor to the Christian life of the faithful;
  - to adapt more suitably to the needs of our own times those institutions which are subject to change;
  - to foster whatever can promote union among all who believe in Christ;
  - to strengthen whatever can help to call the whole of mankind into the household of the Church.
- For these reasons, the council sought to reform and promote the Liturgy (SC, 1).

# What is the Liturgy?

## Divine worship

- The word, liturgy, means a “public work on behalf of the people.”
- In the Christian tradition, it refers to our participation in the work of God (CCC, 1069).
- Liturgy is a celebration of divine worship, strengthened by the proclamation of the Gospel. The liturgy motivates us to active charity (CCC, 1070).

# What is the Liturgy?

## A participation in Christ

- The liturgy is a participation in the prayer of Christ, addressed to the Father and in the Holy Spirit (CCC, 1073).
- The liturgy is the exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ (SC, 7).
- In the liturgy the whole public worship is performed by the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, that is, by the Head and His members (SC, 7).
- Through the liturgy, the work of our redemption is accomplished, especially in the divine sacrifice of the Eucharist (SC, 2).

# What is the Liturgy?

## An action of the Church

- Recall that a sacrament is an outward sign, instituted by Christ, and entrusted to the Church, to give grace (CCC, 1131).
- The liturgy is an action of Christ's Church that manifests the Church as the visible sign of communion between God and men (CCC, 1071). It is an expression both of the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church (SC, 2).
- In the liturgy the sanctification of mankind is signified by signs perceptible to the senses, and is effected in a way which corresponds with each of these signs (SC, 7).
- The liturgy is the summit to which the activity of the Church is directed and the source from which all her power flows (SC, 10).

# What is the Liturgy?

An action of both Christ and his Church

- Christ acts in the liturgy in an unseen but real manner by the power of the Spirit.
- The liturgy is a celebration of the Church and has great pastoral value (VQA, 10).

# The characteristics of the Church

The Church is:

- both human and divine
  - But the human is directed and subordinated to the divine,
- visible and yet invisibly equipped
  - the visible is directed to the invisible,
- eager to act and yet intent on contemplation
  - action is directed to contemplation,
- present in this world and yet not at home in it.
  - and this present world must be subordinated to that city yet to come, which we seek (SC, 2).

# The characteristics of the Church

In the liturgy, the Church is:

- Built up as a holy temple of the Lord,
- Built up as a dwelling place for God in the Spirit,
- Brought to the mature measure of the fullness of Christ.
- Strengthened marvelously in the power to preach Christ.
- Lifted up as a sign to the nations by which the scattered children of God may be gathered together as one sheepfold under one shepherd (SC, 2).

# Characteristics of the Liturgy

In 1998, St. John Paul II addressed the U.S. Bishops in Rome for their Ad Limina visit:

- Reflecting on the liturgy, we must move beyond misunderstandings and enter more deeply into the contemplative dimension of worship with a sense of awe, reverence, and adoration.
- We recognize that the liturgy is distinctive because it is:
  1. both local and universal,
  2. time-bound and eternal,
  3. horizontal and vertical,
  4. subjective and objective (1998 Ad Limina, 2).

# Characteristics of the Liturgy

In 1998, St. John Paul II addressed the U.S. Bishops in Rome for their Ad Limina visit:

1. The *universal* Church is united in the one great act of praise; but it is always the worship of a *particular community* in a particular culture.
2. It is the *eternal* worship of Heaven, but it is also steeped *in time*.
3. It gathers and builds a *human community*, but it is also the worship of the *divine majesty*.
4. It is *subjective* in that it depends radically upon what the worshippers bring to it; but it is *objective* in that it transcends them as the priestly act of Christ himself, to which he associates us but which ultimately does not depend upon us.

# Characteristics of the Eucharistic Liturgy

## Redemptionis Sacramentum

- An instruction issued by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments on March 25, 2004, regarding certain matters to be observed or to be avoided regarding the Most Holy Eucharist
- The Eucharistic Liturgy is not only a meal, but also and pre-eminently a Sacrifice.
- It is an error to strip the Eucharist of its sacrificial meaning, lest its significance be understood to be simply that of a fraternal banquet (RS, 38).

# The foundation of the Liturgy

- God spoke in many and varied ways in the Old Testament.
- The rituals of the Old Testament were a prelude to the work that Christ would accomplish in the New Testament.
- In the fullness of time, Christ came to preach the Gospel and to carry out the work of our redemption through the Paschal mystery.
- From the side of Christ, came forth the wondrous sacrament of the whole Church (SC, 5).

# The foundation of the Liturgy

- The New Testament Liturgy is understood through the Old Testament ritual of the Passover with its elements (Ex 12):
  - The year-old male lamb without blemish
  - The blood of the lamb applied to the doorposts and lintel
  - The meal consumed with unleavened bread
  - The protection from the angel of death

# The foundation of the Liturgy

- The New Testament Liturgy is also understood in the visit to Mount Sinai (Ex 24 and following):
  - After consecrating the people, Moses went up the mountain with Aaron and the elders of Israel who beheld God.
  - After Moses spent 40 days and 40 nights on the mountain, he descended and gave instructions for the building of the Ark and the tent or temple (Ex 25-31).
- The Letter to the Hebrews describes the temple as a copy of the heavenly temple:
  - “They worship in a copy and shadow of the heavenly sanctuary, as Moses was warned when he was about to erect the tabernacle. For he says, ‘See that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain’” (Heb 8:5).

# The purpose of the Liturgy

The earthly liturgy is a foretaste of the heavenly liturgy.

- The liturgy reminds us that we journey as pilgrims to the new and eternal Jerusalem.
- We join with the angels as we sing a hymn to the Lord's glory with all the warriors of the heavenly army.
- We venerate the memory of the saints as we hope for some part and fellowship with them.
- We eagerly await our Savior who is to come again (SC, 8).

# The presence of Christ in the Liturgy

- Christ sent the apostles, filled with the Holy Spirit, to proclaim Jesus Christ, and to carry out the work of salvation through the entire liturgical life of the Church (SC, 6).
- Christ continues to be present to the Church in every liturgical action (SC, 7):
  1. in the Church assembled at prayer;
  2. in the person of the ordained celebrant;
  3. in the word proclaimed;
  4. in the sacraments, especially the Eucharistic Species.

# The presence of Christ in the Liturgy

Christ present in the liturgy (VQA, 7):

1. Christ is present in the Church assembled at prayer in his name. The members of the body of Christ are united in praise of God.
2. Christ is present and acts in the person of the ordained minister who celebrates. In virtue of ordination, he acts “in persona Christi.”
3. Christ is present in his word as proclaimed in the assembly and commented upon in the homily. The word must be received with faith and assimilated in prayer.
4. Christ is present and acts by the power of the Holy Spirit in the sacraments and, in a preeminent way, in the Sacrifice of the Mass under the Eucharistic Species. Christ is present when the Eucharist is reserved in the tabernacle.

# The presence of Christ in the Liturgy

Christ present in the liturgy:

- The ordained minister and the assembled faithful are united as members of the body of Christ. The ordained minister stands in the place of Christ the head, always united to his members.
- The faithful are taught by the word of God and fed by the Eucharist. The Eucharist stands apart in an excellent way as the source and summit of the Christian life.

# The presence of Christ in the Liturgy

In 1978, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy issued a document: *Environment and Art in Catholic Worship*.

- This document seems to contradict what has been said above:
  - “Among the symbols with which liturgy deals, none is more important than [the] assembly of believers” (EACW, 28). “The most powerful experience of the sacred is found in the celebration and the persons celebrating, that is, it is found in the action of the assembly” (EACW, 29).
- This document mentions, but without the same emphasis, the celebrant, the word, and the Eucharist.

# The presence of Christ in the Liturgy

In 2000, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops issued the document: *Built of Living Stones*

- This document reaffirms the traditional teaching regarding the presence of Christ:
  - “In the liturgical assembly, Christ’s presence is realized in all the baptized who gather in his name, in the word of God proclaimed in the assembly, in the person of the priest through whom Christ offers himself to the Father and gathers the assembly, in sacramental celebrations, and especially, in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood” (BLS, 22).

# The presence of Christ in the Liturgy

Regarding the authority of these documents, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops stated the following:

- The USCCB clarified that the 1978 document “Environment and Art in Catholic Worship” was prepared by the Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy, but was never voted on by the whole conference of Bishops. As such, this document does not have the force of law.
- The Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy revised this document, “Built of Living Stones,” which was approved by the full body of Bishops in 2000.

# The reforms of Vatican II

- In the 2015 edition of the Jurist, Duncan Stroik, a church architect, wrote the following:

“As we know, all church architecture leading up to the Council was cruciform, built in outdated traditional styles, and used expensive pre-modern materials like stone.

“And the laity hated it.

“Then Vatican II came and everything immediately changed. Why? All good pastors, architects, and liturgists read the Vatican II documents carefully and they realized that the main goal of Vatican II was to totally change the liturgy and reinvent church architecture.

# The reforms of Vatican II

- In the 2015 edition of the Jurist, Duncan Stroik, a church architect, wrote the following:

...

“They read, among other things, that *Sacrosanctum Concilium* required that the priest face the people, semi-circular seating, statues to be destroyed, new images to be abstract, organs to be sold, tabernacles hidden away and new churches to be built in the modern style.

“I used to believe this myself until I made the mistake of actually reading the documents. As you are aware, the Vatican II document *Sacrosanctum Concilium* does not require any of these things.”

# Vatican II Principles for liturgical reform

- The constitutive elements of the liturgy come from Christ himself and are of Divine Law. The Church carefully safeguards these elements which she has received.
- The regulation of the sacred liturgy depends on the authority of the Church (the Apostolic See and, in certain cases, the bishop).
- Therefore, no other person, even if he be a priest, may add, remove, or change anything in the liturgy on his own authority (SC, 22).
- Attentive to these principles, the Council urged that sound traditions were to be retained, while remaining open to legitimate progress. Changes were to be carefully studied (SC, 23).

# Vatican II Principles for liturgical reform

- Sacred scripture is of the greatest importance in the celebration of the liturgy.
- The prayers, collects, and liturgical songs derive their inspiration from scripture.
- Scripture gives meaning to our liturgical actions and signs (SC, 24).
- The Council called for a wider use of scripture readings in the liturgy (SC, 35.1).

# Vatican II Principles for liturgical reform

- The use of sacred scripture expanded greatly after Vatican II.

The percentage of scripture passages that appear in the cycle of readings:

	Tridentine Mass	Novus Ordo Mass
Old Testament	1%	13%
New Testament Epistles	11%	55%
Gospels	22%	90%

# Vatican II Principles for liturgical reform

- The rites should be distinguished by a noble simplicity.
- They should be short, clear, and unencumbered by useless repetitions.
- They should be within the people's powers of comprehension, and normally should not require much explanation (SC, 34).
- The desired simplicity must not degenerate into an impoverishment of the signs. On the contrary, sacramental signs must be easily grasped and carry the greatest possible expressiveness. Bread and wine, water and oil, and also incense, ashes, fire and flowers, and indeed almost all the elements of creation have their place in the Liturgy as gifts to the Creator and as a contribution to the dignity and beauty of the celebration (VQA, 10).

# Vatican II Principles for liturgical reform

- The 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 (SC, 14).
- This is a topic for the next presentation...

... September 15, 2016, at 7:30 PM.

# The Sacred Liturgy: A study of the teachings of Vatican II through today

**Session Two:**

**Full and active participation**

*How do we participate in the Liturgy and ritual?*

September 15, 7:30 PM