

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?

Review

Liturgical Documents since 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 25th anniversary of Sacrosanctum Concilium.

Liturgiam Authenticam

- An instruction issued by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments on March 28, 2001.

Redemptionis Sacramentum

- An instruction issued by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments on March 25, 2004.

Motives for our full participation

- In the first presentation, we talked about the importance of the liturgy.
- Since the liturgy is so important, it is critical that we participate in it to the greatest extent possible.
- In this second presentation, we examine how that is to be done.

Review

The Liturgy is 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. It is the public worship 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).

Review

The Liturgy is an action of Christ and his Church

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).
- In the liturgy the sanctification of mankind is signified by visible signs perceptible to the senses, and is effected in an invisible way which corresponds with each of these signs (SC, 7).

The effect of the Liturgy on us

- In the Eucharist, the covenant between God and mankind draws us into the love of Christ so we may be set on fire.
- In the liturgy, we are nourished by this font of grace.
- Strengthened in our faith, we are motivated for apostolic works which ultimately seek to draw others to praise God. Therefore, drawing souls to praise God means that the liturgy is the summit, or goal, of our efforts.
- For this reason, we say that 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).

Being properly disposed

- For the liturgy to be most effective, we must come to it properly disposed:
 - Our minds should be attuned to our voices.
 - We seek to cooperate with divine grace, lest it be received in vain.
- Therefore, it is not enough to merely observe the laws for a valid and licit celebration. The faithful must take part with full awareness, and active engagement, to be enriched by the liturgy and its effects (SC, 11).
- Before receiving a sacrament, a person must be properly disposed to receive it (Code of Canon Law, c. 843 §1).

Private and public prayer

- The spiritual life is not limited only to our public prayer in the liturgy.
- We are called to pray privately, as the Gospel urges us to pray in the secret of our rooms where only the Father sees.
- In the Mass, we unite our private prayers to the public prayer of the Mass (SC, 12).
- For this reason, popular devotions are encouraged, especially those that
 - harmonize with the liturgical seasons,
 - are accord with the sacred liturgy,
 - are in some way derived from the liturgy and lead us to it.
- However, the liturgy, by its very nature, surpasses private devotions (SC, 13).

Call for full and active participation

These observations lead to the conclusion:

- “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. Such participation by the Christian people as ‘a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a sanctified people’ is their right and duty by reason of their baptism” (SC, 14).

Call for full and active participation

- “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.
- “Yet it would be futile to entertain any hopes of realizing this unless the pastors themselves, in the first place, become thoroughly imbued with the spirit and power of the liturgy, and undertake to give instruction about it” (SC, 14).

The implementation of liturgical reform

Twenty five years after Vatican II, St. John Paul II noted:

- It must be recognized that the application of the liturgical reform has met with difficulties... It can also be supposed that the transition from simply being present, very often in a rather passive and silent way, to a fuller and more active participation has been for some people too demanding.
 1. Some have received the new books with a certain indifference, or without trying to understand the reasons for the changes;
 2. Others, unfortunately, have turned back in a one-sided and exclusive way to the previous liturgical forms which some of them consider to be the sole guarantee of certainty in faith.
 3. Others have promoted outlandish innovations, departing from the norms issued by the authority of the Apostolic See or the bishops, thus disrupting the unity of the Church and the piety of the faithful (VQA, 11).

Errors regarding Full and Active Participation

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

- The key to understanding the call for “full, conscious and active participation” is the sharing of all the baptized in the one priesthood of Jesus Christ.
- Full participation certainly means that every member of the community has a part to play in the liturgy.
- But full participation does not mean that everyone does everything, since this would lead to a clericalizing of the laity and a laicizing of the priesthood; and this was not what the Council had in mind.
- The liturgy, like the Church, is intended to be hierarchical and polyphonic, respecting the different roles assigned by Christ and allowing all the different voices to blend in one great hymn of praise.

Errors regarding Full and Active Participation

In 1998, St. John Paul II continued:

- Active participation means that, in gesture, word, song and service, all the members of the community take part. This is not at all inert or passive.
- Yet active participation does not preclude active silence, stillness and listening.
- Worshippers are not passive when listening to the readings or the homily or when following the prayers of the liturgy. These are experiences of silence and stillness, but they are in their own way profoundly active.
- In a culture which neither favors nor fosters meditative quiet, the art of interior listening is learned only with difficulty. Here we see how the liturgy must be counter-cultural.

Silence

- For promoting and elucidating active participation, the recent renewal of the liturgical books fostered acclamations of the people, responses, psalmody, antiphons, and canticles, and called for sacred silence to be maintained at the proper times... (RS, 39; SC, 30).
- Before the celebration itself, it is a praiseworthy to keep silence in the church, in the sacristy, in the vesting room, and in adjacent areas, so that all may dispose themselves to carry out the sacred celebration in a devout and fitting manner. (General Instruction of the Roman Missal, 45).

Review

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).

Full and Active Participation engages the whole person

In 1998, St. John Paul II continued:

- Conscious participation calls for proper instruction on the mysteries of the liturgy, lest worship degenerate into a form of ritualism.
- It does not mean a constant attempt to make the implicit explicit, since this often leads to a verbosity and informality which are alien to the Roman Rite and end by trivializing the act of worship.
- Nor does it mean the suppression of all subconscious experience, which is vital in a liturgy which thrives on symbols that speak to the subconscious just as they speak to the conscious.
- If subconscious experience is ignored in worship, an affective and devotional vacuum is created and the liturgy can become not only too verbal but also too cerebral.
- Yet the Roman Rite is again distinctive in the balance it strikes between a sparseness and a richness of emotion: it feeds the heart and the mind, the body and the soul.

Full and Active Participation engages the whole person

- The Sacred Liturgy engages not only man's intellect, but the whole person, who is the "subject" of full and conscious participation in the liturgical celebration.
- Translators should therefore allow the signs, images, and ritual actions to speak for themselves;
- They should not attempt to render too explicit that which is implicit in the original texts.
- Consideration should also be given to including in the vernacular editions at least some texts in the Latin language, especially those from the priceless treasury of Gregorian chant, which has a great power to lift the human spirit to heavenly realities (LA, 28).

Review

The presence of Christ in the Liturgy

Christ present in the liturgy (SC, 7; 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 proclaimed in the assembly. 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.

Variety of roles and means of participation

- The Mass is an action of Christ and his Church which involves the individual faithful “in differing ways according to the diversity of orders, ministries, and active participation.”
- For the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical Priesthood, though they differ in essence and not only in degree, are ordered to one another, for both partake, each in its own way, of the one Priesthood of Christ (RS, 36).

Variety of roles and means of participation

- All of Christ's faithful, incorporated into the Church through Baptism, are deputed by means of a sacramental character for the worship of the Christian religion, so that by virtue of their royal priesthood, persevering in prayer and praising God, they may offer themselves as a living and holy sacrifice pleasing to God.
- Thus the participation of the lay faithful too in the Eucharist and in the other celebrations of the Church's rites cannot be equated with mere presence, and still less with a passive one, but is rather to be regarded as a true exercise of faith and of the baptismal dignity (RS, 37).
 - *Pray, brothers and sisters, that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.*

Variety of roles and means of participation

- Though the liturgical celebration entails activity, it does not follow that everyone must necessarily have something concrete to do beyond the normal actions and gestures.
- It is not necessary that a specific liturgical ministry be given to each individual to be carried out.
- Catechetical instruction should strive to correct those widespread superficial notions and practices, and to instill anew a sense of deep wonder before the greatness of the mystery of faith that is the Eucharist.
- For in the celebration of the Eucharist, the Church, after the manner of Saint Thomas the Apostle, prostrates herself in adoration before the Lord to exclaim “My Lord and my God!” (RS, 40).

Variety of roles and means of participation

- The Eucharistic Sacrifice is not considered a “concelebration”, in the univocal sense, of the Priest along with the people who are present.
- On the contrary, the Eucharist celebrated by the Priests transcends the power of the community. The community is by itself incapable of providing an ordained minister.
- Ambiguity should be avoided by not using injudiciously terms such as “celebrating community” or “celebrating assembly” (RS, 42).

Priestly prayers in the Mass

- The priest celebrant is reminded during the Mass of his unworthiness.
- Before and after the Gospel:
 - Cleanse my heart and my lips, almighty God, that I may worthily proclaim your holy Gospel.
 - Through the words of the Gospel may our sins be wiped away.
- During the preparation of the Gifts:
 - With humble spirit and contrite heart may we be accepted by you, O Lord, and my our sacrifice in your sight this day be pleasing to you, Lord God.
 - Wash me, O Lord, from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.

Priestly prayers in the Mass

- The priest celebrant is reminded during the Mass of his unworthiness.
- In the Eucharistic Prayer
 - To us, also, your servants, who though sinners, hope in your abundant mercies...
- Before receiving Communion:
 - May the receiving of your Body and Blood, Lord Jesus Christ, not bring me to judgment and condemnation, but through your loving mercy be for me protection in mind and body, and a healing remedy.
 - May the Body of Christ keep me safe for eternal life.

Priestly prayers in the Mass

A priest is to show reverence in handling the Blessed Sacrament:

- The priest's attitude in handling the bread and wine which have become the body and blood of the Redeemer should draw its inspiration. Thus it is necessary for all of us who are ministers of the Eucharist to examine carefully our actions at the altar, in particular the way in which we handle that food and drink which are the body and blood of the Lord our God in our hands: the way in which we distribute Holy Communion; the way in which we perform the purification (Dominicae Cenae, 11).

Practical Questions

Do I need to go to confession?

- Can. 916 A person who is conscious of grave sin is not to celebrate Mass or receive the body of the Lord without previous sacramental confession unless there is a grave reason and there is no opportunity to confess; in this case the person is to remember the obligation to make an act of perfect contrition which includes the resolution of confessing as soon as possible.

What is the fast before Communion?

- Can. 919 §1. A person who is to receive the Most Holy Eucharist is to abstain for at least one hour before holy communion from any food and drink, except for only water and medicine.
- §3. The elderly, the infirm, and those who care for them can receive the Most Holy Eucharist even if they have eaten something within the preceding hour.

Practical Questions

How many times can I receive in a day?

- Can. 917 A person who has already received the Most Holy Eucharist can receive it a second time on the same day only within the eucharistic celebration in which the person participates.

What about priests?

- Can. 905 §1. A priest is not permitted to celebrate the Eucharist more than once a day.
- §2. If there is a shortage of priests, the local ordinary can allow priests to celebrate twice a day for a just cause, or if pastoral necessity requires it, even three times on Sundays and holy days of obligation.

Ministries exercised by the faithful

- Before exercising any ministry, the faithful are, first and foremost, united in our common worship of God.
- Servers, lectors, and members of the choir exercise a genuine liturgical function. They ought, therefore, to discharge their office with the sincere piety and decorum demanded by so exalted a ministry and rightly expected of them by God's people.
- Consequently they must all be deeply imbued with the spirit of the liturgy, each in his own measure, and they must be trained to perform their functions in a correct and orderly manner (SC, 29).

Ministries exercised by the faithful

- The lay Christian faithful called to give assistance at liturgical celebrations should be well instructed and must be those whose Christian life, morals and fidelity to the Church's Magisterium recommend them.
- It is fitting that such a one should have received a liturgical formation in accordance with his or her age, condition, state of life, and religious culture.
- No one should be selected whose designation could cause consternation for the faithful (RS, 46).

Reverence for the Blessed Sacrament

- Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, together with Ordinary Ministers (bishops, priests, deacons), share the responsibility to see that the Blessed Sacrament is always treated with reverence.
- The faithful have the right to receive Communion on the tongue. Where permitted by the Bishops' Conference, they also may receive in the hand.
- However, special care should be taken to ensure that the host is consumed by the communicant in the presence of the minister, so that no one goes away carrying the Eucharistic species in his hand. If there is a risk of profanation, then Holy Communion should not be given in the hand (RS, 92).

Reverence for the Blessed Sacrament

- Communion under both species can be administered by drinking from the chalice directly, or by intinction, or by means of a tube or a spoon. When distributing by intinction, the communicant must receive on the tongue (RS, 103).
- The communicant may not intinct the host himself in the chalice, nor receive the intincted host in the hand (RS, 104).

Reverence for the Blessed Sacrament

- The pouring of the Blood of Christ after the consecration from one vessel to another is completely to be avoided, lest anything should happen that would be to the detriment of so great a mystery (RS, 106).
- In accordance with what is laid down by the canons, “one who throws away the consecrated species or takes them away or keeps them for a sacrilegious purpose, incurs a latae sententiae excommunication reserved to the Apostolic See.” (RS, 107).

Reverence for the Blessed Sacrament

- The sacred species are reserved after Mass principally so that the faithful who cannot be present at Mass (the sick and those advanced in age) may be united by sacramental Communion to Christ. In addition, this reservation also permits the practice of adoring this great Sacrament and offering it the worship due to God (RS, 129).
- It is forbidden to reserve the Blessed Sacrament in a place that is not subject in a secure way to the authority of the diocesan Bishop, or where there is a danger of profanation. Where such is the case, the diocesan Bishop should immediately revoke permission for reservation of the Eucharist (RS, 131).

Reverence for the Blessed Sacrament

- No one may carry the Most Holy Eucharist to his or her home, or to any other place contrary to the norm of law (RS, 132).
- A Priest or Deacon, or an extraordinary minister who takes the Most Holy Eucharist to a sick person, should go insofar as possible directly from the place where the Sacrament is reserved to the sick person's home, leaving aside any profane business so that any danger of profanation may be avoided and the greatest reverence for the Body of Christ may be ensured (RS, 133).

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Session Three:
Language in the Liturgy

Why is what we say so important?

September 22, 7:00 PM