

Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy

(*Sacrosanctum Concilium*)

4 December 1963

The Council's Goal (SC, #1)

1. Intensify the daily growth of Catholics in Christian living
2. Make more responsive to the requirements of our times those Church observances which are open to adaptation
3. Nurture whatever can contribute to the unity of all who believe in Christ
4. Strengthen those aspects of the Church which can help summon all of mankind into her embrace

The liturgy is the outstanding means by which the faithful can express in their lives, and manifest to others, the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church. (#2)

Nature of the Sacred Liturgy

Christ sent the apostles that they might proclaim that the Son of God had freed us from the power of Satan and from death, and brought us into the kingdom of his Father and that they might exercise the work of salvation which they were proclaiming, by means of sacrifice and sacraments, around which the entire liturgical life revolves. (#6)

Christ is always present in his Church, especially in her liturgical celebrations. He is present in the sacrifice of the Mass, not only in the person of his minister, ... but especially under the Eucharistic species. ... He is present in the sacraments. ... He is present in His word, since it is He Himself who speaks when the holy Scriptures are read in the church. He is present, finally, when the church prays and sings. (#7)

In the liturgy the sanctification of man is manifested by signs perceptible to the senses, and is effected in a way which is proper to each of these signs; in the liturgy full public worship is performed by the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, that is, by the Head and His members. From this it follows that every liturgical celebration ... is a sacred action surpassing all others. (#7)

The sacred liturgy does not exhaust the entire activity of the Church. (Preaching the good news of salvation, preparing believers for the sacraments, teaching Christ's commandments, and encouraging works of charity, piety, and the apostolate make clear that Christians are the light of the world and give glory to the Father before men.) (#9)

Nevertheless the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the fountain from which all her power flows. (#10)

Pastors (must) ensure that the faithful take part knowingly, actively, and fruitfully. (#11)

Popular devotions ... should be so drawn up that they harmonize with the liturgical seasons, accord with the sacred liturgy, are in some fashion derived from it, and lead the people to it, since the liturgy by its very nature far surpasses any of them. (#12)

Principles for Liturgical Reform

Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful be led to that full, 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** (emphasis added); for it is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit. (#14)

[The *Constitution* then gives several directives dealing with the liturgical instruction and formation of the clergy.]

Pastors of souls must promote the liturgical instruction of the faithful, and also their active participation in the liturgy both internally and externally. (#19)

Holy Mother Church desires to undertake ... a general restoration of the liturgy itself. ... (Liturgical) elements subject to change ... not only may but ought to be changed with the passing of time if features have by chance crept in which are less harmonious with the intimate nature of the liturgy, or if existing elements have grown less functional. In this restoration, both texts and rites should be drawn up so that they express more clearly the holy things which they signify. ... (People) should be able to understand them with ease and to take part in them fully, actively, and as befits a community. (#21)

The regulation of the liturgy depends on the authority of the Church, that is, on the Apostolic See and ... the bishop, ... (and) competent territorial bodies of bishops. ... No other person ... (may) change anything in the liturgy on his own authority. (#22)

Sacred Scripture is of paramount importance in the celebration of the liturgy. ... If the restoration, progress, and adaptation of the sacred liturgy are to be achieved, it is necessary to promote that warm and living love for Scripture to which the venerable tradition of both Eastern and Western rites gives testimony. (#24)

In liturgical celebrations ... each person should perform his role by doing solely and totally what the nature of things and liturgical norms require of him. (#28)

Servers, lectors, commentators, and members of the choir also exercise a genuine liturgical ministry. ... They must all be deeply penetrated with the spirit of the liturgy ... and be trained to perform their functions in a correct and orderly manner. (#29)

By way of promoting active participation, the people should be encouraged to take part by means of acclamations, responses, psalmody, antiphons, and songs, as well as by actions, gestures, and bodily attitudes. (#30)

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. (#34)