

Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy: *Sacrosanctum Concilium*

Solemnly Promulgated by His Holiness Pope Paul VI on December 4, 1963

(online at http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/)

INTRODUCTION (§§1-4)

CHAPTER I – General Principles for the Restoration and Promotion of the Sacred Liturgy

I. The Nature of the Sacred Liturgy and Its Importance in the Church’s Life (§§5-13)

7. To accomplish so great a work, *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*, “the same now offering, through the ministry of priests, who formerly offered himself on the cross,” but *especially under the Eucharistic species*. *By his power he is present in the sacraments*, so that when someone baptizes it is really Christ himself who baptizes. *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, lastly, when the Church prays and sings*, for he promised: “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt 18:20)...

10. Nevertheless *the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed*; at the same time it is *the font from which all her power flows*. For the aim and object of apostolic works is that all who are made children of God by faith and baptism should come together to praise God in the midst of His Church, to take part in the sacrifice, and to eat the Lord’s supper.

II. The Promotion of Liturgical Instruction and Active Participation (§§14-20)

14. Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that *full, 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 redeemed people” (1 Pet 2:9; cf. 2:4-5), is *their right and duty* by reason of their baptism.

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....

19. With zeal and patience, pastors of souls must promote the liturgical instruction of the faithful, and also their *active participation in the liturgy both internally and externally*, taking into account their age and condition, their way of life, and standard of religious culture. By so doing, pastors will be fulfilling one of the chief duties of a faithful dispenser of the mysteries of God; and in this matter they must lead their flock not only in word but also by example.

III. The Reform of the Sacred Liturgy (§§21-46)

21. In order that the Christian people may more certainly derive an abundance of graces from the sacred liturgy, holy Mother Church desires to undertake with great care a general restoration of the liturgy itself. For the liturgy is made up of immutable elements divinely instituted, and of elements subject to change. These not only may but ought to be changed with the passage of time if they have suffered from the intrusion of anything out of harmony with the inner nature of the liturgy or have become unsuited to it.

In this restoration, both texts and rites should be drawn up so that they express more clearly the holy things which they signify; the Christian people, so far as possible, should be enabled *to understand them* with ease and *to take part in them fully, actively, and as befits a community*.

CHAPTER II – The Most Sacred Mystery of the Eucharist (§§47-58)

CHAPTER III – The Other Sacraments and the Sacramentals (§§59-82)

CHAPTER IV – The Divine Office (§§ 83-101)

CHAPTER V – The Liturgical Year (§§ 102-111)

CHAPTER VI – Sacred Music (§§ 112-121)

CHAPTER VII – Sacred Art and Sacred Furnishings (§§ 122-130)

APPENDIX – *A Declaration of the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican on Revision of the Calendar*

Sacrosanctum Concilium: Chapter II – The Most Sacred Mystery of the Eucharist (§§47-58)

47. At the **Last Supper**, on the night when He was betrayed, our Savior instituted the **eucharistic sacrifice** of His Body and Blood. He did this in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the Cross throughout the centuries until He should come again, and so to entrust to His beloved spouse, the Church, a **memorial** of His death and resurrection: a **sacrament** of love, a **sign** of unity, a **bond** of charity⁽³⁶⁾, a paschal **banquet** in which Christ is eaten, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us⁽³⁷⁾.

48. The Church, therefore, earnestly desires that Christ's faithful, when present at this mystery of faith, should **not** be there as strangers or silent spectators; **on the contrary**, through a good **understanding** of the rites and prayers they should **take part** in the sacred action **conscious** of what they are doing, with **devotion** and **full collaboration**. They should be **instructed by God's word** and be **nourished at the table of the Lord's body**; they should *give thanks* to God; by offering the Immaculate Victim, not only through the hands of the priest, but also with him, they should learn *also to offer themselves*; through Christ the Mediator⁽³⁸⁾, they should be drawn day by day into ever more perfect union with God and with each other, so that finally God may be all in all.

49. For this reason the sacred **Council**, having in mind those Masses which are celebrated with the assistance of the faithful, especially on Sundays and feasts of obligation, has made the following **decrees** in order that the sacrifice of the Mass, even in the ritual forms of its celebration, **may become pastorally efficacious to the fullest degree**.

50. The rite of the Mass is to be revised in such a way that the **intrinsic nature and purpose** of its several parts, as also the **connection** between them, may be more clearly manifested, and that **devout and active participation** by the faithful may be more easily achieved.

For this purpose the rites are to be *simplified*, due care being taken to preserve their substance; elements which, with the passage of time, came to be duplicated, or were added with but little advantage, are now to be *discarded*; other elements which have suffered injury through accidents of history are now to be *restored* to the vigor which they had in the days of the holy Fathers, as may seem useful or necessary.

51. **The treasures of the Bible are to be opened up more lavishly, so that richer fare may be provided for the faithful at the table of God's word.** In this way a more representative portion of the holy scriptures will be read to the people in the course of a prescribed number of years.

52. By means of the **homily** the *mysteries of the faith* and the *guiding principles of the Christian life* are expounded from the sacred text, during the course of the liturgical year; the homily, therefore, is to be highly esteemed as part of the liturgy itself; in fact, at those Masses which are celebrated with the assistance of the people on Sundays and feasts of obligation, it should not be omitted except for a serious reason.

53. Especially on Sundays and feasts of obligation there is to be restored, after the Gospel and the homily, "the **common prayer**" or "the **prayer of the faithful**." By this prayer, in which the people are to take part, intercession will be made for *holy Church*, for the *civil authorities*, for *those oppressed* by various needs, for *all humankind*, and for the *salvation of the entire world*⁽³⁹⁾.

54. In Masses which are celebrated with the people, a suitable place may be allotted to their **mother tongue**. This is to apply in the first place to the readings and "the common prayer," but also, as local conditions may warrant, to those parts which pertain to the people, according to the norm laid down in Art. 36 of this Constitution.

Nevertheless steps should be taken so that the faithful may also be able to say or to sing together in **Latin** those parts of the Ordinary of the Mass which pertain to them. And wherever a more extended use of the **mother tongue** within the Mass appears desirable, the regulation laid down in Art. 40 of this Constitution is to be observed.

55. That *more perfect form of participation* in the Mass whereby *the faithful, after the priest's communion, receive the Lord's body from the same sacrifice*, is strongly commended. The dogmatic principles which were laid down by the Council of Trent remaining intact⁽⁴⁰⁾, **communion under both kinds** may be granted when the bishops think fit, not only to clerics and religious, but also to the laity, in cases to be determined by the Apostolic See, as, for instance, to the newly ordained in the Mass of their sacred ordination, to the newly professed in the Mass of their religious profession, and to the newly baptized in the Mass which follows their baptism.

56. The **two parts which, in a certain sense, go to make up the Mass**, namely, the **liturgy of the word** and the **eucharistic liturgy**, are **so closely connected** with each other that they form but **one single act of worship**. Accordingly this sacred Synod strongly urges pastors of souls that, *when instructing the faithful, they insistently teach them to take their part in the entire Mass*, especially on Sundays and feasts of obligation.

[§§57-58 on Concelebration]