

Session 2: Vatican II and the Sacred Liturgy

- I. Introduction to the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*)
 - A. Four parts to this presentation:
 1. The main ideas of Vatican II's teaching on the Sacred Liturgy
 2. A quick overview of how Vatican II applies these ideas to the Sacraments other than the Holy Eucharist, the sacramental, and other aspects of the Church's liturgical life
 3. A focus on how Vatican II's liturgical teaching applies to the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass
 4. Some common myths about Vatican II and the Liturgy
 - B. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* in some ways least controversial document
 1. Bishops approved it 2,147 to 4.
 2. The pre-Vatican II Liturgical Movement, along with the efforts of popes such as Pius X and Pius XII to renew the Sacred Liturgy, helped the bishops accept the Constitution relatively easily.
- II. Vatican II's Main Ideas about the Sacred Liturgy
 - A. Vatican II set out to restore and promote the Sacred Liturgy. Chapter 1 of the Constitution is titled "**General Principles for the Restoration and Promotion of the Sacred Liturgy**"
 1. "Restore" and "reform"
 - a. "Restore" to original purpose
 - b. "Reform" bring back or return to its proper "form"
 - c. Promotion of the Sacred Liturgy
 2. The bishops believe important elements of the Liturgy have been diminished or obscured over time; they want to recover them
 - B. Liturgy is a form of the Church's **participation in the Paschal Mystery of Christ**
 1. Paschal Mystery refers to the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus that brings about a mysterious reconciliation between God and man
 2. Christ acts in the Liturgy in his Church (SC 7):
 - a. He is present in the **Sacrifice of the Mass** in the **minister**, and **especially in the Eucharist**
 - b. He is present in the **Sacraments by his power**
 - c. He is present in his **Word (Scripture)**
 - d. He is present in the **Church when the people pray and sing together**
 - e. Christ associates his Church with his great work in the Liturgy, SC 7:
"Christ indeed always associates the Church with Himself in this great work wherein God is perfectly **glorified and men are sanctified**. The Church is His beloved Bride who calls to her Lord, and through Him offers worship to the Eternal Father."
 - 1) God is glorified and man sanctified (human beings are made holy, like God)
 - 2) Together, **Christ and his Bride** offer worship to the Father
 3. SC 7's "**working definition**" of the Liturgy: "Rightly, then, the liturgy is considered as an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ. In the liturgy the sanctification of the man is signified by signs perceptible to the senses and is effected in a way which corresponds with

- each of these signs; in the liturgy the whole public worship is performed by the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, that is, by the Head and His members.”
- a. Exercise of **Jesus’ priesthood**, uniting God and man (humanity) in the Spirit
 - b. **Sanctification through signs** (words and actions perceptible to the senses) that bring about what they signify, each sign (sacrament) in its own way
 - c. Liturgy involves **whole public worship of God by the Mystical Body**—head and members (including the congregation)
4. Liturgy doesn’t exhaust the Church’s activities—the Church evangelizes the world—but the liturgy is the **highest activity of the Church** and the other activities lead back to the Liturgy as their summit and the Church’s power to do such things flows from the Liturgy (SC 10). *Lumen Gentium* 11 will call the Eucharist the “**source and summit**” of the Christian life.
 5. In the Liturgy, the priest acts in the person of Christ and in the name of the Church, Christ’s Body/Bride, **but the congregation should act along with the priest**.
 - a. Vatican II wants to deepen the people’s participation
 - b. To do this, it calls for restoring/renewing the Liturgy to **clarify the mysteries** in which the **people are to participate**
- C. Deeper participation
1. People should be properly disposed, their minds should be attuned to their voices, and pastors should help them (SC 11)
 2. SC 14 is key text for Vatican II on Liturgy: “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 redeemed people (1 Pet. 2:9; cf. 2:4-5), is their right and duty by reason of their baptism.
 - a. Full, conscious, active participation demanded by the **very nature of the Liturgy**
 - b. Such participation is the **right and duty of the baptized**.
 3. Consequently: “**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. (SC 14).
- D. Means to deeper participation
1. Education and deeper devotion of priests (SC 18)
 2. Education of future priests, religious (SC 17), and laity (SC 19)
 3. Foster both external and internal participation
 - a. **External participation**: faithful speaking the words and carrying out the actions intended for them in the Liturgy. (Not have the altar servers give the congregation’s responses.)
 - b. **Internal participation**: includes understanding and meaning what one says and does, uniting one’s actions with those of the priest, praying along with him
- E. Renewal and restoration of the rites: **renewing the rites to clarify the mysteries**
1. **Unchangeable and changeable parts of the Liturgy; changing what should change**; principle for changing the changeable or not changing it: “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.” (SC 21)
2. **Clarifying the mysteries:** “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. (SC 21)
 3. **Noble simplicity**, eliminate unnecessary repetitions: “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).
 4. **More Scripture** (SC 35), plus a sermon; **Bible services recommended**
 5. **Short explanations**, as needed (SC 35)
 6. **Language of Liturgy**
 - a. Latin: “Particular law remaining in force, the use of the Latin language is to be preserved in the Latin rites. (SC 36.1)
 - b. Vernacular’s use extended, since it frequently can be of great advantage to the people (SC 36.2)
 7. **Some cultural adaptation permitted** insofar as it is compatible with the spirit of the Liturgy (SC 37).
 8. **Principle of necessary, organic development:** “Finally, there must be no innovations unless the good of the Church genuinely and certainly requires them; and care must be taken that any new forms adopted should in some way grow organically from forms already existing.” (SC 23)
 9. **Changes must be approved by proper authority:** “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)
- F. Communal Dimension of Liturgical Celebration
1. Liturgy not properly a “private” activity, though this does not preclude “quasi-private” celebrations because even in such cases the heavenly Communion of Saints is present; **participation of the faithful on earth preferred, especially when it comes to Mass and the other Sacraments** (SC 27)
 2. Each person, minister or laity, should carry out **only the tasks proper to the office** (SC 28)—servers, lectors, commentators, and choir have genuine liturgical function. (SC 29)
- III. A very quick, **selective** overview of how Vatican II applies its ideas to the Sacraments other than the Holy Eucharist and other aspects of the Church’s Liturgical Life
- A. “Full, conscious, active participation” is key to participation in all the sacraments and other aspects of the Liturgy, including the sacramentals and the Divine Office
 - B. Regarding adaptation: “With the passage of time, however, there have crept into the rites of the sacraments and sacramentals certain features which have rendered their nature and purpose far from clear to the people of today; hence some changes have become necessary to adapt them to the needs of our own times” (SC 62)
 - C. Language: vernacular may be used (SC 63), according to SC 36 (**Latin retained but vernacular may be approved**). Both/and approach.
 - D. New rituals to be devised with instructions (SC 63)

- E. Restoration of the Catechumenate (origin of the modern RCIA) (SC 64)
- F. Rites of Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist revised to clarify their initiatory aspects
- G. Revision of Rite of Penance and Extreme Unction—latter clarified as sacrament of healing for the seriously sick, not only for dying (SC 73)—preferable to call it the **Anointing of the Sick**; Revision of “last rites”, with a ritual to prepare the sick for Anointing after Confession but before Viaticum (SC 74)
- H. Rites of Holy Orders and Matrimony to be revised
- I. Revision of sacramentals such as blessings, consecration of virgins, religious professions, renewal of vows, burial rites, and the revision of the rite of infant burial, with a special Mass
- J. Revision of the Divine Office to incentivize praying the Office during the day, at the assigned times; encouragement of lay involvement; Latin retained though allowance for vernacular made.
- K. Revision of the Liturgical Year to focus more on Sundays and the main elements of the Liturgical Seasons (Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter), tied to the mystery of Christ and the Church; reform of the sanctoral cycle (saints’ days)
- L. Sacred Music
 - 1. **Treasure of sacred music greater than any other art because the words and music of sacred music form “a necessary or integral part of the solemn liturgy”** (SC 112)
 - 2. Scripture, Church Fathers, and 20th century Popes (especially **Pius X—“active participation” first used by him in a papal document; referred to people chanting Mass parts**) stressed sacred music of divine worship. (We can summarize this as **singing the Mass, not just singing at Mass**)
 - 3. Liturgical worship more **noble when celebrated solemnly in song** with help of sacred ministers and the **active participation of the people** (SC 113)
 - 4. Language of Sacred Music: back to art 36 and other pertinent articles: **have Latin but add vernacular too. Both/and, not either/or.**
 - 5. Preserve and foster treasure of sacred music (SC 114)
 - a. Train and acquire choirs
 - b. Pastors must ensure people can **participate according to their proper parts**
 - c. Seminaries and other schools should train people, including composers and choirs (SC 115)
 - d. **Gregorian chant** should have pride of place, though **other forms not excluded, “so long as they accord with the spirit of the liturgical action”** (SC 116)
 - e. Preparation of proper chant and other musical books
 - f. Some inculturation of musical traditions permitted, especially in mission situations (SC 119).
 - g. **Instruments:** Pipe organ in high esteem, though other appropriate instruments may be used in divine worship, with proper authority’s consent (SC 120); **stress on the dignity of temple and true edification of the people.**
 - h. Composers encouraged to create appropriate music drawing on Scripture and liturgical sources (SC 121).
- M. Sacred Art and Furnishings.
 - 1. **Church supports fine arts so care must be taken to make sure sacred furnishings are worthy and beautiful to serve the dignity of divine worship** (SC 122)

2. “Preserve” the Church’s artistic patrimony doesn’t mean treat as museum pieces but to continue to use in worship (SC 123)
3. Contemporary art from different cultures may be used “provided that it adorns the sacred buildings and holy rites with due reverence and honor” (SC 123).
4. Bishops should encourage **noble beauty in sacred art, not mere sumptuous display**; likewise with vestments and ornamentation (SC 124)
5. Bishops should remove from churches and other sacred places those works repugnant to faith, morals, and Christian piety; and otherwise offense to true Christian sense.
6. Churches need to be suitable for liturgical services and the active participation of the people (SC 124)
7. Sacred images should be used appropriately—in moderation and in the proper places
8. Local diocesan commissions and experts should help bishops
9. Artists should be formed according to the spirit of sacred art and the Sacred Liturgy, as artists imitate God the Creator
10. Revision of books regarding material things in worship, including altars, tabernacles, sacred images, vestments, etc, with adaptation to local needs (SC 128)
11. Formation of priests so they can appreciate and preserve the Church art and advise artists (SC 129)

IV. Vatican II’s teaching on the Liturgy of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass

- A. The main ideas of Vatican II about the Liturgy in general were applied to the Mass
- B. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* puts the Liturgy of Holy Mass in the context of Jesus’ institution the Eucharist at the Last Supper:
 1. Eucharist as **perpetuation of the sacrifice of the Cross**
 2. **Memorial** of Jesus’ death and resurrection **given to his Bride, the Church**
 3. A sacrament of love, sign of unity, bond of charity, and a **paschal banquet** in which communicant receives grace of Communion
 4. **SC does not downplay Sacrifice of the Mass, the role of the ministerial priest; also stresses the paschal banquet and the communal dimension of the Mass**
- C. **Stress on participation of the Congregation:** “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, 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.” (SC 48)
 1. Holy Mass is **not something the congregation watches**; it is something in which the people take part—consciously, with understanding of the rites and prayers
 2. Instruction in Scripture, including the homily
 3. Nourished at the table of the Lord’s body
 4. Congregation offers the Immaculate Victim (note sacrificial language) **both through the priest but also with him**

5. Offering of self united to the Eucharistic sacrifice

D. Main changes to the Liturgy of the Mass (SC 50)

1. **Clarify** through revisions **the intrinsic nature and purpose**, and links between, of the various parts of the Mass
2. **Simplification of rites as needed**, while preserving their substance—remove unhelpful duplications
3. **More “lavish” use of “treasures” of the Bible in the Mass** (SC 51); in other words, the lectionary is to be expanded and the homily is to explain the mysteries of faith and the Christian life based on the readings (SC 52)
4. Restoration of the **prayer of the faithful** after the Gospel and homily, especially on Sundays and feast days
5. Language of Mass: **both/and approach: Latin and vernacular**, especially for the congregation’s elements and the readings: “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**.”
6. **Communion under both kinds**—the form of bread and the form of wine—allowed for limited circumstances, but with opportunity for wider use under diocesan bishop. (Note, though, Vatican II reaffirms Trent’s doctrine about the whole Christ being present under either forms.) (SC 55)
7. Faithful should participate in the single act of worship of the Mass, which includes both the Liturgy of the Word and the Eucharistic Liturgy (SC 56)
8. Recovery of **Concelebration of Mass** under limited circumstances and development of a corresponding rite (SC 57)

V. Some Common Myths about Vatican II and the Liturgy

- A. Vatican II called for the elimination of Latin in the Liturgy. No: It called for both retaining Latin and allowing for more of the vernacular. It expected the congregation to be able to respond in Latin or the vernacular and stressed the readings and common prayer in Latin.
- B. Vatican II called for Mass “facing the people” as opposed to the common orientation of priest and people together. Actually, it said nothing about the subject.
 1. Stressed divine worship, thus oriented the actions to God, not the community toward itself.
 2. Stressed full, active participation of action directed toward God.
 3. Readings in the vernacular by implication toward the people for their better understanding but Vatican II said nothing about the Eucharistic prayer prayed “toward the congregation”. Although some leaders favored this, its widespread adoption was a later development not advocated by Vatican II.
- C. Vatican II abolished old-fashioned church music and called for contemporary music in worship. Nope.

1. Kept Pius X's (1907) and other popes' stress on Gregorian chant for the people, so they could chant their parts
 2. Praised polyphony and allowed other forms of music consistent with the spirit of the Liturgy.
 3. **Both/and, not either/or** re: traditional sacred music and development of new liturgically authentic sacred music
- D. Vatican II stressed the communal dimension of Mass and downplayed or eliminated the sacrificial, hierarchical aspects. No.
1. Through *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the sacrificial aspect of the Mass is affirmed, the special presence of the Eucharistic Christ is stressed, and the ministerial priesthood is discussed.
 2. The communal nature of the Liturgy of Holy Mass isn't asserted over against sacrifice and the ministerial priesthood; the emphasis is upon the community participating in the sacrifice of the Mass, through and with the ministerial priest.
 3. As we will see in *Lumen Gentium*, Vatican II balances the elements of hierarchy and common participation.

VI. Conclusion

- A. The Constitution on the Liturgy was issued in 1963. Revision of rites began shortly thereafter, over the course of 6-10 years or so.
- B. Revision of the Liturgy of the Mass promulgated by Pope Paul VI in 1969, put into practice in 1970-1971.
- C. Did the revisions achieve Vatican II's objective for liturgical renewal as outlined in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy? Were the goals met or missed? Some, none, or all? Debate and discussion continue.