



# VATICAN II

*Celebrating 50 Years*

**Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy**  
***Sacrosanctum Concilium***

## **Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy**

### *Sacrosanctum Concilium*

Promulgated December 4, 1963

*This session is about an hour in length and is designed to introduce the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. This presentation may be accompanied by PowerPoint slides and handouts, both provided.*

### **Opening Prayer (PowerPoint Slide 2)**

Welcome to the third session of our series on the documents of Vatican Council II. The last session focused on the foundational document of the Council, *Lumen Gentium*.

This session will focus on *Sacrosanctum Concilium, the Sacred Liturgy*.

**“This sacred Council has several aims in view: it desires 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. The Council therefore sees particularly cogent reasons for undertaking the reform and promotion of the liturgy.” (SC #1)**

Articles 5-46, in the Constitution, lay the groundwork for all that is to follow, as well as for all the specific reforms of the Liturgy enacted after the close of Vatican II such as the use of common languages, the turning around of the altar, and the development of roles for lay people in the Mass.

### ***Background* (PowerPoint Slide #3)**

The bishops had followed liturgical scholarship as it developed over many years and much work had been done before Vatican Council II on changing the liturgy:

- 1947—dialogue Mass introduced by Pius XII

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- 1947—*Mediator Dei*--Document on Sacred Liturgy
- 1951—reform of the entire Holy Week liturgy, especially the Easter Vigil
- 1955—*Musicae Sacrae Disciplina*--Document on Sacred Music
- 1956—European liturgical committees organized the Assisi Congress as a tribute to Pius XII, where in his address he referred to the liturgical movement as a sign of God’s providential care of the church.
- 1957—changed the rule of fasting before reception of the Eucharist to one hour; allowed evening Mass on feast days

Pope John XXIII, before Vatican Council II, updated the liturgy also:

- 1960—simplified the liturgical calendar, the breviary and the celebration of Mass
- 1962—Tridentine Mass was modified; vernacular could be used, but the canon was still recited in Latin; priest and people did not face each other; two Scripture readings; only males could assist priest at the altar.

In the three and half years between the announcement of the council and its opening, special “commissions” had been at work in the Vatican preparing documents for action by the council. This process had often been contentious and uncoordinated and it produced some seventy documents of various shapes and sizes. Among these the document on the liturgy was considered well prepared, of particular importance, and ready for action. With it, therefore, the council began.

Although for a full three weeks the council engaged in sharp debate over it, it approved the text by an absolute landslide of 2,162 in favor and 4 opposed. This document would have the most far-reaching effects on the lives of the faithful.

When the council convened, Pope John stated that the liturgy would be the first major topic for discussion. The document sought to undertake “the reform and promotion of the liturgy”. (1) Liturgy as “the work of the people,” the work of redemption, is essential.

**What is liturgy? (PowerPoint Slide 4)**

Liturgy is from a Greek word meaning work of the people or work for the people.

### **(PowerPoint Slide 5)**

Liturgy is the

- public work of the Body of Christ
- public response to the free gift of grace from our loving God
- participation in God's work in the world

### **(PowerPoint Slide 6)**

Liturgy consists of

- the Mass
- the Sacraments
- the Liturgy of the Hours

*Sacrosanctum Concilium* regards seriously the involvement of the worshipping assembly when it states that all the faithful should be led to full, conscious and active participation in liturgical celebrations.

### **(PowerPoint Slide 7)**

The goals of this document are to

1. energize the Catholic faithful
2. update the church
3. encourage the unity of all Christians
4. reach out to the whole world

In general the objective was to make the liturgy more dynamic, simpler, more understandable and more participatory:

- rites to be short, clear and free from useless repetition; bishops permitted to allow the use of vernacular in their dioceses
- provide for cultural adaptations
- explain Biblical readings in the homily
- strengthen symbolism of Christ's death and resurrection by encouraging faithful to receive the Lord's body under the bread and wine consecrated at the same sacrifice (55).

The role of the priest as presider is to voice the faith of the people. He is a member of the community and a link between the community and the world-wide church.

The document makes clear that the church is the whole People of God. This new role for laypeople in the rites of the Mass and the sacraments gave them a whole new understanding of themselves as church which is still unfolding.

### **(PowerPoint 8)**

Liturgy affects us (influences)

Liturgy creates an affect in us (emotion)

Liturgy produces an effect in us (transforms and changes)

Liturgy causes an effect (response/action)

Liturgy becomes a part of us the more we practice it.

\*How we worship reflects what we believe and determines how we will live.

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Activity: Discuss your answer with the person next to you. **3 minutes**

Do you find that the Liturgy is absolutely central in your experience of being a Christian? Or is something else more central (such as devotion to Mary or one of the saints?)

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Liturgy is the source and goal of all the Church's activity.

### *Chapter 2: The Most Sacred Mystery of the Eucharist.*

This chapter of the Constitution gives details about how the Liturgy of the Word and the Eucharist are to be revised and reformed following Vatican II. It recalls that Christ left us this single memorial of himself.

The Eucharistic liturgy is the work of the Trinity.

### **Father: (PowerPoint Slide 9)**

- Source of all blessings from the beginning
- Plan of salvation
- Source of the liturgy's blessings

### **Son: (PowerPoint Slide 10)**

- Communicates his grace to the faithful of all times and places
- Through the Apostles and their successors
- Christ makes present the work of salvation in the Eucharistic sacrifice and the Sacraments.

### **Holy Spirit: (PowerPoint Slide 11)**

- Prepares the assembly to encounter Christ
- Recalls and manifests Christ to the assembly
- Makes the mystery of Christ really present
- Makes the gift of communion bear fruit.

### **(PowerPoint Slide 12)**

Though all of the Sacraments “form an organic whole” in which each particular sacrament has its own vital place, “the Eucharist occupies a unique place as the ‘Sacrament of Sacraments’: all the other sacraments are ordered to it as to their end.” (CCC, #1211)

### **(PowerPoint Slide 13)**

Christ is present. Christ is at work in the bread and wine, in the presider, in the Word of God proclaimed, in the assembly, in all the sacred words and actions.

In the Mass we, the faithful, offer ourselves to the Father in union with Christ. Christ transforms us into himself, so we can transform the world with his presence.

### **(PowerPoint Slide 14)**

Liturgy is remembering (anamnesis).

Liturgy is becoming what we celebrate through the power of the Holy Spirit. (epiclesis)

- How is Jesus really present? How are the Paschal events real to us? Through the power of the Holy Spirit – we become what we celebrate the catechism says: we become the Body of Christ. This is called the epiclesis (epi –over: kalein – call down or upon).

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- So liturgy then becomes our work as well – the work of remembering and calling the Holy Spirit upon our gifts of bread and wine, as well as on ourselves that we might become living sacrifices. (see CCC 1109)

### *Implementation*

Pope Paul VI signed the Constitution on the liturgy and then set about the task of implementing it. He will go down in history as one of the great reformers of the liturgy.

In 1964 he created a commission to oversee the liturgical changes called for by Vatican II's *Constitution on the Liturgy*. He declared the Tridentine Mass was no longer the official rite of the Catholic Church. (Pope Benedict XVI later permitted its use in special circumstances.)

The rites of the Mass are to be revised in such a way that the faithful can actively participate. It says the rites are to be simplified, eliminating duplications, and restoring practices from the ancient Church which have been lost.

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### Activity:

**(3 Minutes)**

How many changes have you experienced during your lifetime as a Catholic? What have you gained or lost in your personal experience of the Mass because of these changes?

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### **PowerPoint Slide #15**

The commission presented these changes:

- The priest and altar faced the people.
- Churches were renovated to give way to spare, uncluttered churches with the altar the focus of attention.
- Removal of the altar rail allowed people to move closer to the altar.
- People became involved in helping to plan the services.
- They served as Eucharistic ministers.
- There were three Scriptural readings in place of two with a three-year cycle of readings.
- The revised liturgical year emphasized the central saving action of Christ.

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- Laymen and laywomen were recruited as lectors
- Eucharist was received standing and in the hands -- taking our own nourishment
- Requiem Mass where the priest wore black replaced with the Mass of the Resurrection.

The Fathers of Vatican II took away one of the last vestiges of the sacramental divide between the ordained and the non-ordained when they approved taking communion in the hand, and giving the laity the cup as well.

The Masses became simpler; an emphasis was placed on Holy Scripture promoting love for the word of God, and the liturgy was conducted in the language of the people.

Catholics were encouraged to think communally. The Masses got nosier! People were encouraged to put their rosaries “in their pockets” and join in the prayer of the priest.

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**(PowerPoint Slide 16)**

**Activity:**

**(2 Minutes)**

Reflect on this question for just one minute. Then share your answer with the person next to you:

What do the liturgy and the Sacraments have to do with my life, and with the life of the Church?

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**(PowerPoint Slide 17)**

We must come to Mass with the proper disposition

We must fully and consciously participate in the Liturgy

We must follow through with prayer

Do we live our Baptismal call?

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**(PowerPoint Slide 18)**

**Small Group Activity: Reclaiming and Celebrating Sunday (3 Minutes)**

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**How might we help others “participate more fully, more consciously and more actively in the Sunday Mass?”**

**In a culture focused on the “weekend”, how can we help others reclaim Sunday as the “day of the Lord”—a day dedicated to God?**

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### **Chapter 3: The Other Sacraments and the Sacramentals**

**This chapter continues the discussion about reforms, but goes on to address sacraments other than the Eucharist.**

**(SC#59) The purpose of the sacraments is to sanctify men, to build up the Body of Christ, and finally, to give worship to God. They not only presuppose faith, but by words and objects they . . . nourish, strengthen, and express it”.**

**(SC#60) [Sacramentals] are sacred signs that bear a resemblance to the sacraments. They signify effects. . . which are obtained through the Church’s intercession.**

**The Council Fathers recognized the need for change in the celebration of the sacraments. Certain features had rendered their nature and purpose far from clear. Some changes were necessary to adapt them to present-day needs. For that reason the Council decreed a revision in the sacramental rites.**

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### **PowerPoint Slide # 19**

**Activity:**

**(3 Minutes)**

**Select one sacrament where you have seen a change. How are you celebrating the sacraments differently today than in the past?**

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### **(PowerPoint Slide 20)**

**Four areas the Council Fathers focused on in relation to the liturgy were restoring the Catechumenate (RCIA), music, art and the liturgical calendar.**

### **PowerPoint Slide #21**

#### **Sacraments of Initiation**

The Fathers of the church recognized that the sacraments of Christian Initiation—Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist—lay the *foundations* of every Christian life. We are born anew by Baptism, strengthened by the sacrament of Confirmation, and receive in the Eucharist the food of eternal life. (CCC #1212)

From the time of the apostles, becoming a Christian has been accomplished by a journey and initiation in several stages. This journey can be covered rapidly or slowly, but certain essential elements will always have to be present: proclamation of the Word, acceptance of the Gospel entailing conversion, profession of faith, Baptism itself, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and receiving Eucharistic communion.

The catechumenate is to be a formation of the whole Christian life.

### **PowerPoint Slide #22**

In addition to the catechumenate, revised rites include:

- Rite of the Baptism of Infants, reconsidering the role of parents and godparents
- Rite of Reception of the Baptized into Full Communion for those who are already validly baptized
- Rite of Confirmation to show its intimate connection with the whole of Christian initiation
- Rite and formulae of Penance so they more clearly show the nature and effect of the sacrament
- Rite of “Extreme Unction” which is more fittingly called “Anointing of the Sick” and not reserved to one who is dying
- Rite of Ordination, both ceremonies and texts
- Rite of Marriage was to more clearly emphasize the graces of the sacrament and the duties of the spouses
- Rite of the Consecration of Virgins and religious profession
- Funeral Rites so they may more clearly express the character of Christian death
- Rite for the Burial of Infants.

### **Chapter 4: The Divine Office/Liturgy of the Hours**

**This chapter of the Constitution addresses the Divine Office (Liturgy of the Hours) and how it's used in the modern Church.**

**When we talk about liturgy, we generally think about the Mass. But the church has other beautiful liturgies too. One of its expressions is in the Liturgy of the Hours. This official prayer of the church was required to be said daily by those who were ordained or in religious orders. The Council called for revisions so they would be more understandable and easier for lay participation.**

**(SC#84) “The divine office, in keeping with ancient Christian tradition, is so devised that the whole course of the day and night is made holy by the praise of God”—from sunrise to sunset.**

**The revisions were these:**

- **The number of hours was reduced to five**
- **Readings now included selections from the psalms, other scripture passages, and even reflections by theologians**
- **The liturgy of the hours became organized in four-week rotations.**

### **Chapter 5: The Liturgical Year**

**This chapter of the Constitution addresses the calendar of the liturgical seasons of Advent-Christmastide, Lent, Eastertide, as well the feast of saints and liturgical observances in the life of the Church.**

**(SC#102) In the course of the year the church unfolds the whole mystery of Christ from the incarnation and nativity to the ascension, to Pentecost and the expectation of the blessed hope of the coming of the Lord.**

#### **PowerPoint Slides #23 & #24**

**(SC#106) “By a tradition handed down from the apostles, which took its origin from the very day of Christ’s resurrection, the Church celebrates the paschal mystery every eighth day, which day is appropriately called the Lord’s Day or Sunday. For on this day Christ’s faithful are bound to come together into one place. They should listen to the word of God and take part**

in the Eucharist, thus calling to mind the passion, resurrection and glory of the Lord.”

The Constitution says that Sunday is to be observed as a day of freedom from work.

### Chapter 6: Music and Art

Two essential elements to enlivening our sacramental life are music and art.

(SCR, 1967)

This chapter of the Constitution addresses music as an element of Sacred Worship in the Church. The chapter gives several major principles on the use of music and musical instruments in the Liturgy. In addition guidelines are proposed for composers of liturgical music to use when composing hymns.

The musical tradition of the universal church is a treasure of inestimable value, greater even than that of any other art. The main reason for the pre-eminence is that, as a combination of sacred music and words, it forms a necessary or integral part of the solemn liturgy. (SC #112) The purpose of sacred music is the glory of God and the sanctification of the faithful.

- The council encourages choirs be carefully given musical, liturgical and spiritual formation, so that the choir members themselves receive spiritual benefit.
- The council also encouraged singing by the assembly.
- (SC#120) The pipe organ is the traditional musical instrument. Other instruments can also be used as long as they contribute to the faith of the people.
- Texts for music should be drawn chiefly from Sacred Scripture and from liturgical sources.
- The selections of the parts of the Mass which are to be sung are outlined in the document. Musicians, especially, should be familiar with these directives.

Fr. Michael Joncas made these suggestions:

1. Reclaim the voice of the assembly as a regular constituent part of Catholic song worship.

2. Singing vernacular texts corresponds to the council's call for full, conscious and active participation of the baptized in the liturgy.
3. Sing biblical and biblically-inspired texts. Various English-language Psalm translations provide a new mode of sung vernacular psalmody in which a refrain was assigned to the congregation. Various groups such as the Dameans and St. Louis Jesuits are dedicated to making biblical texts singable.
4. Employ music from a variety of cultures.
5. Employ music from a variety of religious heritages.

### Chapter 7: Sacred Art and Furnishings

This section of the Constitution deals with the use of art and furnishing in the church building in which we assemble for liturgy.

The Constitution states that new buildings and spaces should be designed in such a way that the faithful are encouraged to participate.

#### **SUMMARY POINTS:**

- The bishops wanted to give vigor to the Christian life of the faithful; to adapt what is changeable to the needs of today; to promote union among all who believe in Christ, and to strengthen the church's mission to all humankind.
- This document established that the Mass (liturgy) is the source and summit of the Christian life.
- For the liturgy to be effective, the faithful must be well disposed, know what they are doing, and participate.
- Some elements are changeable (language, books, prayers, music, persons and places) and some are not (Scripture, bread, wine, offertory, consecration and communion).
- It allowed for use of the vernacular in worship. Latin was retained in an official way but for full participation to become a reality, the language of the people would be needed.
- It restored the Eucharist as an act rather than a static devotional object. This meant a down-playing of devotions outside of Mass (rosary, benediction, and so forth) in order to focus on the liturgical year and rites.
- It established Baptism and Eucharist with primacy among the sacraments.

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- It called for full, active, conscious participation of all the faithful as the aim to be considered before all others.
- It reminds us it is never enough to simply follow the “letter of the law” making sure we are correct and proper.
- It allowed for the removal of elements that are “out of harmony with the inner nature of the liturgy”.
- It proposed a list of reforms, including simpler rites, more use of the Bible, the prayer of the faithful, roles for the laity and others.

More importantly the goal of the Council was to help us participate more fully in the Paschal Mystery of Christ.

### **PowerPoint Slide #24**

- \* “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him.” (Jn 6:56)
- \* Spiritual sacrifice by the assembly of the faithful: offering ourselves to the Father in union with Christ
- \* Christ transforms us into himself, so we can transform the world with his presence

### **(PowerPoint Slide 25)**

If the liturgy is meant to transform and change us, and make us part of the Body of Christ – then Christ must be brought to the streets of our world. In some cultures and dioceses, the Eucharist is literally brought into the streets on Corpus Christi. But we are challenged by the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy to not only have such processions, but to bring Christ to the streets of our daily lives. How do our lives bring about communion with all people? How do we work to redirect our culture back to life instead of death? How are we his hands, his feet, his eyes, his ears, his lips? May our participation in the Eucharist and the love of Christ permeate our daily lives.

### **Closing Prayer: Christ in the Streets**

Heavenly Father, we give you thanks for the gift of Christ in the Eucharist, and we ask you to send the Holy Spirit upon us so that we, like the Apostles, might take Him “to the streets” of our daily lives. We ask this through the intercession of Mary, Our Lady of the Eucharist and Queen of the Apostles. Amen