

Vatican Council II: Hope and Challenge

Sacrosanctum Concilium: Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy

Promulgated December 4, 1963

“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)

What is liturgy?

- * Greek word, *leitourgia*, means the public work of the people or for the people
- * 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

Liturgy consists of the Mass, the seven Sacraments and the Liturgy of the Hours. Liturgy is the work of the Trinity. So liturgy has the power to influence:

- * Liturgy affects us (influences)
- * Liturgy creates an affect in us (emotion)
- * Liturgy produces an effect in us (transforms & changes)
- * Liturgy causes an effect (response/action)
- * Liturgy becomes an effect (becomes a part of us the more we practice it)

Eucharist is central:

“. . . 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)

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

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 remembering (anamnesis) and it is becoming what we celebrate through the power of the Holy Spirit. (epiclesis)

- **How is the Holy Spirit 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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Activity: 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?

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

Activity: Reclaiming & Celebrating Sunday

- * **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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(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.

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

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?**