

# **Sacrosanctum concilium (1963)**

## EXCERPTS

### **INTRODUCTION**

2. "For the liturgy, "through which the work of our redemption is accomplished," most of all in the divine sacrifice of the Eucharist, is the outstanding means whereby the faithful may express in their lives, and manifest to others, the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church. It is of the essence of the Church that she be both human and divine, visible and yet invisibly equipped, eager to act and yet intent on contemplation, present in this world and yet not at home in it; and she is all these things in such wise that in her the human is directed and subordinated to the divine, the visible likewise to the invisible, action to contemplation, and this present world to that city yet to come, which we seek."

(Action is subordinated to and flows forth from contemplation. Contemplation is our destiny in the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God enters into this world through it. This is why the Mass is a top pastoral priority.)

4. "Lastly, in faithful obedience to tradition, the sacred Council declares that holy Mother Church holds all lawfully acknowledged rites to be of equal right and dignity; that she wishes to preserve them in the future and to foster them in every way. The Council also desires that, where necessary, the rites be revised carefully in the light of sound tradition, and that they be given new vigor to meet the circumstances and needs of modern times."

(Tradition and Development are not at odds with each other. If Development is necessary, and if we are not to create for ourselves an entirely new liturgical rite, Tradition must be the "genetic code" of Development. Authentic Development is possible only if careful attention is paid to the inner structural logic of the rite. Just as a gardener cares for a living plant as it develops, with due attention to the power of growth and life within the plant and the rules it obeys, so the Church ought to give reverent care to the Liturgy through the ages, distinguishing actions that are helpful and healing from those that are violent and destructive.)

### **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. "...For His humanity, united with the person of the Word, was the instrument of our salvation. Therefore in Christ "the perfect achievement of our reconciliation came forth, and the fullness of divine worship was given to us"... For it was from the side of Christ as He slept the sleep of death upon the cross that there came forth "the wondrous sacrament of the whole Church"."

(The Incarnation revealed the worship of the Trinity. Old Testament worship was just a type, awaiting its fulfillment in the cross and in the Eucharist which furthers the work of the cross.)

6. "...they receive the spirit of adoption as sons "in which we cry: Abba, Father" (Rom 8:15), and thus become true adorers whom the Father seeks. In like manner, as often as they eat the supper of the Lord they proclaim the death of the Lord until He comes. For that reason, on the very day of

Pentecost, when the Church appeared before the world, "those who received the word" of Peter "were baptized." And "they continued steadfastly in the teaching of the apostles and in the communion of the breaking of bread and in prayers..."

(The Spirit of the Son which we receive in the sacrament of Baptism is ordered towards worship in Spirit and Truth, a living filial knowledge of the Father. Upon our entry into the body of Christ through baptism, we enter into apostolic fellowship and teaching, and into the Eucharistic Liturgy. This is what marks us off specifically as followers of Christ.)

7. "...Rightly, then, the liturgy is considered as an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ...From this it follows that every liturgical celebration, because it is an action of Christ the priest and of His Body which is the Church, is a sacred action surpassing all others; no other action of the Church can equal its efficacy by the same title and to the same degree."

(Note the dignity of the Liturgy. It is Christ's priestly service. See Heb 8:6 and Lk 1:23)

8. "In the earthly liturgy we take part in a foretaste of that heavenly liturgy which is celebrated in the holy city of Jerusalem toward which we journey as pilgrims, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, a minister of the holies and of the true tabernacle..."

(Note our Last End is to participate in the "liturgy" of Christ in heaven. The Mass is literally heaven come down to earth. It is through the Mass that the Kingdom of God or the City of God enters into and transforms the City of Man.)

9. "The sacred liturgy does not exhaust the entire activity of the Church. Before men can come to the liturgy they must be called to faith and to conversion..."

(The Sunday Mass presupposes our own spiritual efforts and labors throughout the week. And it is then that the offering of Christ in the Eucharist makes the offering of our lives valid and supernaturally significant.)

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 sons 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."

(This is the ultimate end of all apostolic labor.)

11. "But in order that the liturgy may be able to produce its full effects, it is necessary that the faithful come to it with proper dispositions, that their minds should be attuned to their voices, and that they should cooperate with divine grace lest they receive it in vain. Pastors of souls must therefore realize that...it is their duty also to ensure that the faithful take part fully aware of what they are doing, actively engaged in the rite, and enriched by its effects."

("Think what you say." It is important thus to meditate on the words of the Mass and study them. The newer translation helps us to do that, even if it requires a little more work on our part.)

12. "The spiritual life, however, is not limited solely to participation in the liturgy. The Christian is indeed called to pray with his brethren, but he must also enter into his chamber to pray to the Father, in secret; yet more, according to the teaching of the Apostle, he should pray without ceasing."

(The prayer of the Mass presupposes personal prayer. The mass is the highpoint of our weekly prayer, not it's only occasion.)

## **II. The Promotion of Liturgical Instruction and Active Participation**

14. "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."

"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."

(We need to know what is going on in the Liturgy. We need to enter into it more fully. The new translation helps us to do this, even if it requires a little more work on our part.)

## **III. The Reform of the Sacred Liturgy**

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."

(Again note how the "inner nature" of the liturgy is the controlling principle of reform. This is what is meant by "organic development".)

23. "That sound tradition may be retained, and yet the way remain open to legitimate progress, careful investigation is always to be made into each part of the liturgy which is to be revised. This investigation should be theological, historical, and pastoral. Also the general laws governing the structure and meaning of the liturgy must be studied in conjunction with the experience derived from recent liturgical reforms and from the indulgences conceded to various places. 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."

(Again, note the whole "organic" theme. The inner logic and meaning of the historical rite is always the "road map" by which new liturgical routes are charted. The new translation is an attempt to more fully uncover the inner nature of the Roman Rite.)

24. "Sacred scripture is of the greatest importance in the celebration of the liturgy. For it is from scripture that lessons are read and explained in the homily, and psalms are sung; the prayers, collects, and liturgical songs are scriptural in their inspiration and their force, and it is from the scriptures that actions and signs derive their meaning. Thus to achieve the restoration, progress, and adaptation of the sacred liturgy, it is essential to promote that warm and living love for scripture to which the venerable tradition of both eastern and western rites gives testimony."

(Scripture is not just found in the readings. The Roman Rite as a whole is informed and inspired by Scripture. The new translation tries to do justice to this fact.)

30. "To promote 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. And at the proper times all should observe a reverent silence. The revision of the liturgical books must carefully attend to the provision of rubrics also for the people's parts."

(Rubrics are not just for priests! Know your mass!)

35. "That the intimate connection between words and rites may be apparent in the liturgy: 1) In sacred celebrations there is to be more reading from holy scripture, and it is to be more varied and suitable. 2) Because the sermon is part of the liturgical service, the best place for it is to be indicated even in the rubrics, as far as the nature of the rite will allow; the ministry of preaching is to be fulfilled with exactitude and fidelity. The sermon, moreover, should draw its content mainly from scriptural and liturgical sources, and its character should be that of a proclamation of God's wonderful works in the history of salvation, the mystery of Christ, ever made present and active within us, especially in the celebration of the liturgy."

(In the extraordinary form, the priest would take off his maniple to give the homily. But the reformed Roman rite emphasizes how the homily is an integral part of the Mass.)

36. "1. Particular law remaining in force, the use of the Latin language is to be preserved in the Latin rites. 2. But since the use of the mother tongue, whether in the Mass, the administration of the sacraments, or other parts of the liturgy, frequently may be of great advantage to the people, the limits of its employment may be extended. This will apply in the first place to the readings and directives, and to some of the prayers and chants, according to the regulations on this matter to be laid down separately in subsequent chapters."

(We are Roman Rite Catholics. Our Liturgy is therefore essentially and inescapably Latin. We would cease to be who we are if it were any other way. The use of the vernacular to render our Latin liturgy is subordinate to original Latin. The use of the vernacular is meant to help us enter more deeply into our Latin Liturgy, not to supplant it. Much less is the use of the vernacular the opportunity to create a new rite. Discuss different rites on board and how each is essentially Latin, Greek, or Syriac. If Slavonic or other local languages were used for parts of the various rites, it was sacral in character, sometimes (but not always) very literalistic.)

41. "The bishop is to be considered as the high priest of his flock, from whom the life in Christ of his faithful is in some way derived and dependent. Therefore all should hold in great esteem the liturgical life of the diocese centered around the bishop, especially in his cathedral church; they must be convinced that the pre-eminent manifestation of the Church consists in the full active participation of all God's holy people in these liturgical celebrations, especially in the same eucharist, in a single prayer, at one altar, at which there presides the bishop surrounded by his college of priests and by his ministers."

42. "But because it is impossible for the bishop always and everywhere to preside over the whole flock in his Church, he cannot do other than establish lesser groupings of the faithful. Among these the parishes, set up locally under a pastor who takes the place of the bishop, are the most important: for in some manner they represent the visible Church constituted throughout the world."

43. "Zeal for the promotion and restoration of the liturgy is rightly held to be a sign of the providential dispositions of God in our time, as a movement of the Holy Spirit in His Church."

## **CHAPTER II**

## **THE MOST SACRED MYSTERY OF THE EUCHARIST**

47. "At the Last Supper, on the night when He was betrayed, our Saviour 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, a paschal banquet in which Christ is eaten, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us."

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..."

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."

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."

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 mankind, and for the salvation of the entire world."

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."

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..."

## **CHAPTER III**

### **THE OTHER SACRAMENTS AND THE SACRAMENTALS**

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## **CHAPTER**

### **IV THE DIVINE OFFICE**

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## **CHAPTER V**

### **THE LITURGICAL YEAR**

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## **CHAPTER VI**

### **SACRED MUSIC**

112. "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 this pre-eminence is that, as sacred song united to the words, it forms a necessary or integral part of the solemn liturgy."

113. "Liturgical worship is given a more noble form when the divine offices are celebrated solemnly in song, with the assistance of sacred ministers and the active participation of the people..."

116. "The Church acknowledges Gregorian chant as specially suited to the Roman liturgy: therefore, other things being equal, it should be given pride of place in liturgical services. But other kinds of sacred music, especially polyphony, are by no means excluded from liturgical celebrations, so long as they accord with the spirit of the liturgical action, as laid down in Art. 30."

117. "The typical edition of the books of Gregorian chant is to be completed; and a more critical edition is to be prepared of those books already published since the restoration by St. Pius X. It is desirable also that an edition be prepared containing simpler melodies, for use in small churches."

120. "In the Latin Church the pipe organ is to be held in high esteem, for it is the traditional musical instrument which adds a wonderful splendor to the Church's ceremonies and powerfully lifts up man's mind to God and to higher things. But other instruments also may be admitted for use in divine worship, with the knowledge and consent of the competent territorial authority, as laid down in Art. 22, 52, 37, and 40. This may be done, however, only on condition that the instruments are suitable, or can be made suitable, for sacred use, accord with the dignity of the temple, and truly contribute to the edification of the faithful."

## **CHAPTER VII**

### **SACRED ART AND SACRED FURNISHINGS**