

November, 2012 (really late)

Dear friend of the missions,

I will get back on schedule, I know you need to read three reflections of Vatican II documents to get all of the rewards of the Year of Faith. I was a very busy couple of months. All of us are grateful to you for your kindness to the missions, and we pray for you every day. . We all have to live with that, sorry.

Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Culmen et Fons*

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The liturgy is the summit toward which all activity of the Church is directed; it is also the source from which all its powers flow. [Art 10]

The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (*CSL*) [*Sacrosanctum Concilium*] was the first document approved by Vatican II, on December 4, 1963. It was apparent as the Council began that most bishops who participated felt that something needed to be done in this area. There has been a lot of study, reflection on and renewal of the liturgy during the 100 years before the Council. The study of liturgy began to take on a more systematic, historical approach and not just the study of rubrics. Various rites and rituals had been renewed in that time: the Rites of Holy Week were renewed and the introduction of the dialogue Mass were among two from the 1950's. Let us look at the document from the perspective of methodology of the council fathers: *ressourcement* (historical research), *aggiornamento* (updating) and *development*.

This document really set the tone for the council, and it really challenged in an area that most people thought was unchangeable and that the mass that people were experiencing at the beginning of the 1960's was the Mass as Jesus did it. We all know that is not true, but popular myth gave people that impression. The Mass was mostly accessible only through pious, devotional interpretation, not by true participation [full and active to quote *CSL*]. When you interpret from the outside, the interpretation never gets to true experience of the Mystery, but caught up in the superficial and non-essential. When these undergo the scrutiny of the Tradition, they, like most superficial and non-essentials, are brought into question. For many, very many, they prayed at Mass all kinds of prayers as individuals, but were not praying the Mass as a community. The *CSL* precipitated some real and much need change.

Ressourcement. The Council was able to draw on all of the patristic and liturgical research that restored interest in the liturgical life of the Church, and could draw on the resources of the writings, especially on liturgy in the early centuries of the Church—the Didache, Justin Martyr, Hippolytus, Egeria, John Chrysostom, Basil, Cyril of Jerusalem, Ambrose, and Leo the Great to name a few.

The realization of the centrality of liturgy in the life of the Church was affirmed. Liturgy was more than rubrics, it was at the center of the Church. It was in the liturgy that the Tradition was developed, proclaimed, was passed on and allowed each age to add to its development. The intimate relationship between the *lex orandi* and the *lex credendi* was rediscovered, not just by a few theologians, but embraced by the whole Church—basically that the rule of prayer and the rule of faith are intimately tied together [art 1–10].

The rites of initiation and the mystagogical treatises of early Church preachers and teachers started new interest in the welcoming and formation of new members to the Church [art 64–65]. The study of feasts and seasons and the rediscovery of the primacy of Sunday spurred on the restoration of the liturgical year as the celebration of the Paschal Mystery [Chapter V]. The rites of the early Church offer a challenge to the pieties of the post-Trent time of the Church, which arose to replace the priest-centered liturgy's disconnect from the people [art 13].

It became apparent that if liturgy was to be the center of the Church and the best source of the sought after renewal full and active participation would need to be restored [art 14]. The study of the early texts also reflected the sobriety and noble simplicity of the Roman liturgy and the Council decided that this hallmark of the Roman Rite should be restored [art 34]. The Christ-centeredness of the liturgy was again recognized and that real presence included, not just the reserved eucharist but the presence of Christ in the praying community, the word, the minister and acts is every sacramental celebration [art 7]. These are but a few. *Ressourcement* continued after the Council and was also a tactic used by other Christians in the renewal of their worship. By the way, the methodology it continues.

Aggiornamento. Take the opportunity to read all of Chapters II and III of *CSL*. The Council makes references to divinely instituted unchangeable parts of the liturgy and those which are not and were thus subject to change.. *Ressourcement* demonstrated that there were not as many as many divinely instituted parts as people had thought before the Council.

In the pre-council time, the Mass consisted of two parts: Mass of the Catechumens and Mass of the Eucharist. I guess because of the dismissal of catechumens, it did not seem to count for when people wondered about fulfilling Sunday attendance requirements, you only had to “be there” for the offertory, consecration and communion (of the priest). The *CSL* speaks of the two parts as the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The Word is closely tied to the Eucharist, that together they are a single act [art 56]. Reception of the Eucharist was not to be a special occasion it was supposed to be the highest form of participation and communion under both species could be offered to all [art 55]. Postures for communion were to be examined so that full and active participation may be more obvious to each member of the community. In past times, the language of the Mass was in the language of the people who were celebrating. While Latin was still seen as part of the patrimony of the Church, full and active participation,

may demand a great use of the vernacular [art 54]. The practice of numerous private masses was spoken to with the return of concelebration for certain occasions [art 57].

In the previous times, the sermon was not considered a part of Mass, thus you remember may remember that the priest took off at least the maniple to preach the sermon which was rarely on the readings of the day. Remembering that a great source of what we believe was the homiletic discourses coming from the patristic area, the homily became an integral part of the Liturgy of the Word, especially on Sunday and major feasts [art 52]. The General Intercessions were also restored to the Mass so that the baptized may join in the special exercise of their baptismal priesthood [art 53].

All the other sacraments were studied and examined. Chapter III is particularly clear about this renewal. It is really worth reading! Sacraments of Initiation were to be restored and updated according the Tradition. Adult initiation was to be in stages [art 64]. Infant baptism was to be renewed. Before this the baptism for an infant was basically the adult version recited quickly and in Latin. The Council also asked that the roles of parents and godparents were to be enhanced [art 67]. The connection between confirmation and the other sacraments of initiation was to be affirmed [art 71].

The realization of the sacrament of penance was an act of worship was to be made clearer [art 72]. Sacraments for the sick and the dying were to be represented. Extreme Unction was to be called 'Anointing of the Sick', with emphasis on a sacrament for those who are seriously ill and not at the moments before death [art 73]. Viaticum is the sacrament for the dying [art 74].

Recalling the agreements of the early Church about funeral rites, the Council called for a revision of the funeral rites both for adults and infants that reflects the relation of Easter to death and pastoral sensitivity to those who mourn [art 81,82]. St. John Chrysostom has a very interesting discussion of the colors used at funerals: he preferred white to remember Easter, many still preferred dark colors for mourning.

Development. This causes the most anxiety. The tradition is vibrant and always new. Development should not be impossible and because the Tradition demands legitimate progress. That is what God asks of us all as individuals and as Church.

One of the developments that came was the new embrace of the Word of God. The Council encouraged that the depths of the Bible be shared at a very real level. It used to be that the readings for Sundays and feasts were the same each year. The Bible was proclaimed each year, but most was at the celebrations of liturgy of the hours. The Sunday readings were basically the biblical minimum that any Christian should reflect on, but in Latin, that was difficult. The lack of the homily also discouraged the development of appreciation the Word of God [art 51].

The restored liturgical year [read Chapter III] showed how legitimate progress works. What began with every Sunday being Easter, and then the development of the seasons and feasts, shows how the Tradition advances. It is also an example of the need for restoration. With lack of emphasis on the Church Year, pieties for days, weeks and months refocused people away from the Church Year. The assigning of certain votive themes for daily worship: Friday Passion/ Sacred Heart, etc distracted from strong seasons. The use of certain weekdays for decades of the rosary would sometimes find people praying the rosary on a Friday in December using the sorrowful mysteries even if that Friday was Christmas itself. The special months also distract from the Church year. While the Church does offer special texts for Masses during the Easter Season, I have seen a celebration of the feast of Our Lady of Fatima (which almost always falls during the Easter Season) celebrated without even a mention of Easter. We live 50 years after this document became a part of the Church's Tradition and we are still to follow its lead, and remember that it is still calling us forward.

The council also said to take a look at music, and architecture [Chapters V and VII]. There is a push for some adaptation according to cultures so that the liturgy can be more accessible and the very interesting thing about that is it was left to competent authorities in each area [art 22, 37 and 40].

Obstacles. Some of the obstacles which have made implementation of *CSL* difficult and contentious are fear gone wild, lack of appreciating the process, not studying the texts, not recognizing that *CSL* challenges us to go into the future letting go of some things and bringing some things along, and enthusiasm gone wild. These are but a few. Those who kept saying things such as the Mass is the same everywhere in the world, something which is not true, created some problems. Those who refused to accept the data of ressourcement: the Mass was always said facing East, or that communion was always received kneeling and on the tongue nurtured fear and created antagonism. Those who try to restore such things at the expense of the Tradition have not truly followed the lead of the Council. Those who try to show how the extraordinary rite and the ordinary rites of the Mass are the same are mistaken, they are different, which is not bad. Any who would say that just watching Mass and praying privately is the same as the full and active participation sought by the council have seriously missed the point. Those devotions that propagate pieties that are not consonant with the Bible, the Liturgy or the Church Year have not helped either.

I want you to appreciate that the words of the Council were to encourage us to answer the call of God to go into the future. The Council began with the liturgy using a process that would enable the past, the present and the future to speak with each other. This would be that way, the Council would tackle every document with a way to being what God has called the Church and all of its members to be a Church ever new and vibrant, making it possible to look for and work for the Day of the Lord's coming.

Reflection Questions:

1. How does the Liturgy support and sustain your faith?
2. What does "full and active participation" mean to you?
3. Do you ever study about liturgy or the very liturgical texts?
4. What would you hope for liturgy in the future?

I hope to be back on track by Easter. Next reflection: Constitution on Divine Revelation
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