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## PART TWO

# The Celebration of the Sacred Mystery

### INTRODUCTION

The liturgy proclaims and celebrates the mysteries professed in the Apostles' Creed, notably the paschal mystery by which Christ redeemed the world.

*Liturgy* literally means a public service by and for the people. Theologically, the liturgy is both a participation of the Christian faithful in Christ's work of redemption, and Christ's continuing His work of our redemption in, with, and by the Church.

The liturgy is therefore rightly considered the exercise of Christ's priesthood, in which man's sanctification is signified and realized in ways proper to each sensibly perceptible liturgical sign.

Liturgical catechesis is instruction in the liturgy on two levels: as mystery and celebration in general, and as sacraments and sacramentals in particular. (1066-1075)



### SECTION I: THE SACRAMENTAL ECONOMY

The expression "sacramental economy" simply means the communication or dispensation of the fruits of Christ's paschal mystery through the celebration of the sacramental liturgy.

It is therefore necessary to explain the meaning of this sacramental dispensation and the essential features of liturgical celebration. (1076)

## CHAPTER ONE

THE PASCHAL MYSTERY IN THE TIME OF  
THE CHURCH

Our task here is to see how the liturgy is the work of the Holy Trinity. This will be viewed from the perspective of each of the three divine Persons: the Father as the source and goal of the liturgy; Christ's role in the liturgy; and the Holy Spirit working with the Church in the liturgy.

## ARTICLE 1: THE LITURGY—WORK OF THE HOLY TRINITY

**474. How is God the Father the source of the liturgy?**

In the same way that He is the source of all creation; the blessings of the liturgy are the words and gifts of God the Father to us. We give Him our blessing as our Creator by responding to His grace. (1077–1078)

**475. How does the Father manifest His blessings?**

He has done so from the dawn of human history, as recounted in the Old Testament. Noah and Abraham, Isaac and David, the Chosen People, the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms are all revealed witnesses to how God has blessed those who believed in Him before the coming of Christ. The Christian liturgy preserves the record of these blessings and responds to them in faith and love. (1079–1083)

**476. What is Christ's work in the liturgy?**

Christ, now at the right hand of the Father, pours out the blessings of the Holy Spirit through the sacraments of the Church. Indeed, the risen Savior communicates the supernatural gifts that He won for us on Calvary by all the channels of His grace, through the Church that He founded on the Apostles. Paramount among these channels is the Holy Eucharist, through the Sacrament of Holy Orders. (1084–1087)

**477. How is Christ present in the earthly liturgy?**

He is always present in his Church, but especially in her liturgical celebrations. Most especially He is present when He offers Himself to His heavenly Father in the Sacrifice of the Mass. He is fully present in the Holy Eucharist. By His power, He is present in the sacraments as well as in the Sacred Scriptures when they are read in the Church. In fact, He is present whenever two or three are gathered together in His name. (1088-1089)

**478. What is the heavenly liturgy?**

The heavenly liturgy is the celebration of God's praises by the whole company of angels and saints in the holy city of Jerusalem. (1090)

**479. How does the Holy Spirit work in the Church's liturgy?**

He is the Teacher whom Christ promised. He enlightens our faith and inspires our response. Provided we respond to His illuminations and inspirations, He unites us in a loving community in the Church and enables us to live the risen life of Christ. (1091-1092)

**480. How does the Holy Spirit prepare us for Christ?**

He does so by enabling Christ's followers to see the Old Testament as a preparation for the New. He does so by using the Church's liturgy to prepare us to see Christ in one another, to love one another in spite of our differences of race, color, and personality. He does so by the light and strength of His grace to receive the blessings of the liturgy, especially of the Eucharist, which Christ won for us by His paschal mystery. (1093-1098)

**481. How is the Holy Spirit the Church's memory?**

Mainly in two ways. The Holy Spirit enlightens the minds of the faithful to understand the words of the liturgy, including the inspired words of Scripture. And the Spirit awakens in the hearts of the assembly the memory of the events that the liturgy commemorates, so they can unite themselves with these events in thanking and praising God. (1099-1103)

**482. How does the Holy Spirit actualize the mystery of Christ?**

He does so by making the liturgy the source of His grace. Most importantly, it is by the power of the same Holy Spirit that Mary conceived her Divine Son at Nazareth and that the elements of bread and wine are changed at Mass into the living Christ offering Himself to His heavenly Father. (1104–1107)

**483. What is the communion of the Holy Spirit?**

This is the spiritual union, produced by the Holy Spirit, between Christ and his people. Since the Holy Spirit is the Soul of the Mystical Body, it is only logical to see the Holy Spirit, like the juice of the wine that is Christ, invigorating us, the branches, with the supernatural life and making us heirs of heaven and children of God. (1108–1109)

## ARTICLE 2: THE PASCHAL MYSTERY IN THE SACRAMENTS OF THE CHURCH

The Church's whole liturgical life revolves around the Sacrifice of the Eucharist and the sacraments. (1113)

Our focus here will be on the Church's doctrine on the seven sacraments, namely, Baptism, Confirmation (or Chrismation), the Eucharist, Penance (or Reconciliation), Anointing of the Sick, Orders, and Marriage.

We shall first look at the sacraments in general, and then reflect on each sacrament in particular.

**484. How are the sacraments, sacraments of Christ?**

They are sacraments of Christ because they were all instituted personally by Christ during His visible stay on earth. They are the foundations of the grace that He makes accessible through the Church. They are so many powers flowing from the Body of Christ, as actions of the Holy Spirit at work in this Body, which is the Church. (1114–1116)

**485. How are the sacraments, sacraments of the Church?**

They are sacraments of the Church because they are dispensed by the Church, and they are dispensed for the Church's growth in Christ. Thus, through Baptism and Confirmation, the faithful are enabled to celebrate the liturgy. Those in Holy Orders are to feed the Church with God's word and His grace. That is why these three sacraments confer an indelible character as a permanent seal of assimilation to Christ. Moreover, these three sacraments cannot be repeated. (1117-1121)

**486. Why are the sacraments, sacraments of faith?**

They are sacraments of faith because it is the faith of the Church in the sacraments that Sacred Tradition has preserved the sacraments in her liturgy. Moreover, it is the faith of the Church's believers that underlies their use of the sacraments since apostolic times. The Church's faith in the sacraments makes the sacramental liturgy determined by the authority of Christ. Finally, all progress in the restoration of Christian unity depends on fidelity to Christ's teaching on the sacraments which He instituted. (1122-1126)

**487. How are the sacraments, sacraments of salvation?**

They are sacraments of salvation because they confer the grace they signify. Without grace, there is no salvation. The sacraments actually confer the grace that the liturgical ritual signifies. Invariably, just because a sacrament is properly administered, grace is received. In this light, it is no wonder the Church teaches that for believers, the sacraments are necessary for salvation. (1127-1129)

**488. How are the sacraments, sacraments of eternal life?**

They are sacraments of eternal life twice over.

- Already in this life, those who receive the sacraments possess by anticipation the gift of divine life, which they are to enjoy in a blessed eternity.

- Through the sacraments, the faithful are assured the graces they need on earth in order to enter into eternal glory in the life to come. (1130)

CHAPTER TWO  
SACRAMENTAL CELEBRATION OF THE  
PASCHAL MYSTERY

As we enter the wide field of sacramental celebration, we divide our subject into four logical areas. We ask:

- Who celebrates the sacraments?
- How do we celebrate the sacraments?
- When do we celebrate?
- Where do we celebrate?

Immediately, a pointed question should be answered. Why speak of "celebrating" the sacraments? Why not "administering" or "receiving" the sacraments? Because to "celebrate" includes their conferral and reception. Not only that, "celebration" adds the critical fact that the sacraments are acts of divine worship by which we honor God and in which the Church herself is liturgically involved. (1135)

ARTICLE 1: CELEBRATING THE LITURGY OF THE  
CHURCH

**489. In the widest sense, who celebrates the liturgy?**

It is all of creation, beginning with the heavenly hosts of angels and saints, and extending to the whole universe, which glorifies the Creator. (1136-1139)



**490. Who celebrates the liturgy on earth?**

It is the whole Church. The basis for this ecclesial celebration is that in every sacrament, Christ is acting as head of the Mystical Body, which is the Church. (1140-1141)

**491. Do all members of the Church have the same function in the sacramental liturgy?**

No, because not all have been called by God to participate in the sacraments in the same way. This is especially true of the Eucharistic Liturgy, which only ordained priests can celebrate. (1142)

**492. What is the role of liturgical ministries outside of Holy Orders?**

Their function is to participate in the liturgy according to the Church's traditions and her pastoral needs. (1143)

**493. Does the whole assembly participate in the liturgy?**

Yes, each according to his office, and all together in the unity of the Holy Spirit, who is active in every participant. (1144)

**494. What is the place of signs and symbols?**

They are sensibly perceptible words, actions, and objects that express the meaning of each sacramental celebration. They are drawn from human experience, where God is constantly speaking to us by means of sensibly perceptible creation. But they have been elevated by Christ to express the mysteries of His work of salvation and sanctification. (1145-1149)

**495. What are the signs of the old covenant?**

They are the symbols the Church has adapted to her own sacramental liturgy. Thus, anointing, laying on of hands, consecrations, and sacrifices in the Old Testament prefigure the corresponding sacramental signs of the new covenant. (1150)

**496. What are the signs used by Christ?**

They are the words and actions of Christ by which He revealed the mysteries of the New Testament. They were at once a fulfillment of the prophetic signs of the Old Law and a preparation for the New. (1151)

**497. What are sacramental signs?**

They are the sensibly perceptible means by which the Holy Spirit sanctifies the people of God through the sacraments. (1152)

**498. What do liturgical actions express?**

They express both God's word and His readiness to bless His people and their faithful willingness to respond to His love. (1153)

**499. How is the Liturgy of the Word related to liturgical actions?**

The Liturgy of the Word includes everything associated with the Scriptures (including books, candles, incense, readings, and the homily). Its role is to serve as a channel of instruction by the Holy Spirit, which leads to the fruitful reception of the sacraments. (1154-1155)

**500. How important are liturgical song and music?**

So important that the Church considers them invaluable treasures and greater than any other art. This, as attested by St. Paul, goes back to the earliest days of the Church and is expressed by St. Augustine's statement that "he who sings, prays twice" (Eph 5:19). It is assumed that both the words to be sung and the music itself are consistent with Catholic teaching. (1156-1158)

**501. What is the significance of sacred images?**

Sacred images are representations in painting or sculpture of Christ, the Blessed Virgin, or the saints. Solemnly defended by the Church's teaching authority, sacred images are a great help in conveying the truths of our faith and inspiring the believing mind with devotion to Christ, His Mother, the angels, and the saints. (1159-1162)

**502. What is liturgical time?**

Liturgical time is a certain day (or other period of time) that already in the Old Testament was specially dedicated to the corporate worship of God. Since the coming of Christ, the Church has consistently set aside certain days or seasons for believers to express their common profession of faith and devotion to the Savior, His Mother, and the holy ones of God. (1163-1165)

**503. What is the Lord's Day?**

The Lord's Day, from apostolic times, celebrates the mystery of Christ's Resurrection. It is, par excellence, the day for liturgical assembly, when the faithful gather together to hear the Word of God and participate in the Holy Eucharist. Called Sunday, after the pagan "day of the sun," it is a weekly commemoration of Christ's Resurrection and special reception of the graces He won for us by His Passion and death. (1166-1167)

**504. What is the liturgical year?**

With Easter, "the feast of feasts," as its center, the liturgical year is the annual cycle of the mysteries of Christianity. It begins with the season of Advent and closes with the thirty-fourth week of Ordinary Time. (1168-1171)

**505. What is the sanctoral cycle?**

This is the annual cycle of feasts of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the martyrs, and saints whom the Church commemorates. They are proposed to the faithful as examples for our imitation, whom we are to ask to intercede for us through Christ our Lord. (1172-1173)

**506. What is the Liturgy of the Hours?**

Also called the Divine Office, it is a group of psalms, hymns, prayers, and biblical and spiritual readings formulated by the Church for chant or recitation at stated times every day. (1174)

**507. How is the Liturgy of the Hours an extension of the Eucharistic celebration?**

Through adoration and worship before the Blessed Sacrament, the Liturgy of the Hours complements the Liturgy of the Eucharist. (1174–1178)

**508. What is a Catholic church?**

It is a house of prayer suited for private devotion and liturgy, where the faithful gather for the Sacrifice of the Mass and where the Eucharist is reserved for adoration. (1179–1181)

**509. What are the principal furnishings of a Catholic church?**

They are:

- the altar, where the Sacrifice of the Mass is offered;
- the tabernacle, situated in a most dignified place for adoration and prayer before the Real Presence;
- the sacred chrism, in the sanctuary, for the holy oils of catechumens and the sick;
- the chair of the bishop (or priest), to express his office of presiding over the assembly;
- the lectern, for reading the Scriptures, homily, and announcements;
- the baptistry and holy water font;
- the confessional, for hearing confessions and giving absolution. (1182–1186)

ARTICLE 2: LITURGICAL DIVERSITY AND UNITY OF THE MYSTERY

**510. What have always been the two main features of the Church's liturgy?**

Since apostolic times, the Church's liturgy has been one and the same paschal mystery, celebrated in a variety of forms. (1200–1201)

**511. Why have there been so many different liturgical traditions?**

The basic reason is that there are varied cultures in the world. The Church is ready to adapt the liturgy to reflect this cultural variety, but always on one condition: that essential unity is maintained by fidelity to the Apostolic Tradition, by professing the same faith, receiving the same sacraments deriving from apostolic succession, and obedience to the Roman Pontiff. (1202–1205)

**512. Can liturgical diversity be a source of tension?**

Yes. Always to be kept in mind is that adaptation to different cultures must never endanger unity of faith, or sacramental validity, or submission to hierarchical authority. Moreover, adapting the liturgy to the people's culture requires conversion of their heart and, if need be, surrender of their ancient practices that are incompatible with the Catholic faith. (1206)



SECTION II: THE SEVEN SACRAMENTS OF THE CHURCH

As we begin our reflection on each of the seven sacraments, it should be noted that they can be classified into three categories:

- The three sacraments of *initiation*—Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist—lay the foundations of our life as Christians.
- The two sacraments of *healing*—Penance and the Anointing of the Sick—provide for the restoration to supernatural life and health.
- The two sacraments of Orders and Matrimony are for the service of the communion and mission of the faithful. (1210–1211)