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SESSION TWO

LITURGY AND THE SACRAMENTAL ECONOMY

HISTORY TO MYSTERY (NOS. 1066–1134)



SESSION OBJECTIVES

After this session, you should ...

- Be able to identify the paschal mystery as the “nexus point”—or most important event—in human history.
- See how the paschal mystery is signified and made present in the sacraments of the Church.
- Understand the role the sacraments play in our journey back to the Blessing described in the *Catechism*.



PART I: GETTING YOUR BEARINGS

In Session Two, “Liturgy and the Sacramental Economy,” you will learn what the liturgy is and why we celebrate it. We will consider the role liturgical worship plays in the life of faith—a critical point given our contemporary culture, which is especially preoccupied with the present and the future but denigrates the past.

As Christians, we need to recall that the most important event in history has already occurred. The salvation won for us in Christ by his passion, death, and resurrection—the paschal mystery—gives a vital significance to the present and the future. An uncritical belief in the inevitability of human progress can adversely influence our thinking and our growth in faith. While we believe in progress, true progress consists in the fulfillment of this past event through the “recapitulation” (or summing up) of all things in Christ.

We celebrate the liturgy to commemorate the paschal mystery as the culminating event of the economy of salvation. In paragraph 1076, the *Catechism* tells us that the mystery of God’s plan of salvation as it is played out in the economy can be divided into two parts or “dispensations.” The first dispensation (communication) is the economy of the Old Testament, in Creation and the covenant promises God made to Israel. The second is the “sacramental dispensation,” of the “age of the Church” in which we live. The pivotal event that links the two is the paschal mystery: “It is this mystery of Christ that the Church proclaims and celebrates in her liturgy so that the faithful may live from it and bear witness to it in the world” (No. 1068).

The word *liturgy* is from the Greek *leitourgia*, which literally meant a “work of the people.” In ancient times, it applied to any civic duty, such as serving on the city council. Today, we would call this type of activity “public service.” In the Greek version of the Old Testament, the term took on a religious significance as it was used for priestly service in the Temple. This usage carried over into the New Testament. In Luke 1:23, Zechariah, the father of St. John the Baptist, is said to perform his “liturgy” when he receives the revelation of his son’s place in God’s plan. In Hebrews 8:6, Christ is said to have obtained a “liturgy” (often translated “ministry”) that is superior to that of the Temple. In the Church, the word “liturgy” has come to mean “service in the name of/on behalf of the people” (No. 1069). The *Catechism* notes that the term is also used in the New Testament with reference to Gospel proclamations and works of love. (See No. 1070.) In baptism, we are made capable of offering the liturgy in union with the priest, who stands in the place of Christ, leading us in prayer.

In addition, the *Catechism* tells us the liturgy manifests and makes Christ present to the Church, his body (No. 1071). Our liturgical prayer is a participation in the very prayer of Christ himself to the Father, who is the “source and goal” (No. 1073) of all prayer. The *Catechism* also reminds us that there is a profound connection between liturgy and catechesis (Nos. 1074–1075).

INTO FOCUS

Ex Opere Operato

Grace comes to us effectively through the sacraments. The Church has long understood this as "*ex opere operato*."¹ This Latin phrase describes the sacraments as efficacious "by the very fact of the action's being performed" when validly administered by the Church. For example, when baptism is given, it is Christ himself who baptizes; the minister of the sacrament serves as the instrument of Christ's own power. When sins are confessed to a priest and absolution given, it is Jesus who listens and absolves the penitent of his or her sins in the person of the priest. Therefore the effectiveness, or efficacy, of the sacrament is not dependent on the personal holiness or the worthiness of the minister. Christ and his grace are present as long as the sacrament is performed according to the Church's norms.

This doesn't mean, of course, that our personal level of availability to God's grace is unimportant. For the grace that is promised to us in the sacraments to have its full effect, we must be well disposed to receive it. When we are well disposed by prayer and penance and an avid desire to receive all that he offers, God's grace can rush in with full force and make us saints!

¹ Literally, "from the work having been worked."



BEGIN WITH PRAYER

In your daily prayer time this week, consider the texts from Leviticus 23 and Revelation 22:1-5.

MYTH BUSTER

Latin is a dead language.

While Latin is not necessarily spoken as a popular language in our world today, it is still studied and read in multiple countries for its historical value and its precision, especially in law and the sciences. The Church, in particular, has kept Latin alive in our day.

Ecclesiastical Latin, or church-related Latin, has been derived from Classical Latin and used since the fourth century. It continues as the primary language used in the Church for its liturgy, the Divine Office, magisterial documents, canon law, and more.

Ecclesiastical Latin even impacts English-speaking Catholics. For example, the *editio typica* or the original version of the *Roman Missal*, the texts for the Mass, is in Latin. All the vernacular missals for churches around the world are translated from its text. Since Advent 2011, English-speaking Catholics have been using a new English version of the third Latin edition of the *Roman Missal*. This newer translation reflects the truth of our Faith found in the ancient Latin prayers. Those who do not understand Latin may now learn the theological tradition of the Church as celebrated in the Mass.

While priests are called upon to learn Latin, the Church also recommends that all her members know at least their basic prayers in Latin.





PART 2: QUESTIONS TO GUIDE YOUR READING

READING THE CATECHISM

The presentation for Session Two covers *Catechism* Nos. 1066–1134. Please read those paragraphs to prepare for the presentation. Of course, the idea of reading sixty-eight paragraphs might sound daunting—and it is no small assignment. However, many of these “paragraphs” are actually only a few sentences, so give it a try.

If you do not have the time to get through all of the paragraphs, or if you find that the *Catechism* is a little more difficult to get through than you had thought, don't become discouraged. You are not alone if, at first, you find the *Catechism* difficult to read. If you grew up with the question-and-answer format of the *Baltimore Catechism*, you may prefer to start with the *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which is a shorter catechism that employs the more traditional format. It is available online, or you can purchase a copy at your local Catholic bookstore.

This said, you will derive the greatest benefit from this course if you read the actual text of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. To assist you, we have selected paragraphs for each lesson that are the most important in the lecture presentation. Try reading these first if your time is limited or if you find it too difficult to get through all the paragraphs.

The essential paragraphs for this session are: 1066–1070, 1074–1085, 1088, 1090–1095, 1098–1100, 1103–1106, 1108, 1109, 1114–1116, 1118–1121, 1123, 1124, 1127–1129, 1131.

If you are reading along in the *Compendium*, these paragraphs of the *Catechism* correspond to questions 218–232 in the *Compendium*.

“... 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.”

—*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, No. 2

GLOSSARY TERMS

During your reading, if you come across unfamiliar words or phrases—after all, it has been a *few* years since you attended Catholic school or religious-education classes!—the *Catechism* contains a wonderful glossary of terms at the end, which you can use to brush up.

So if you come across a term you don't recognize, fear not. Key terms will be included in a glossary at the beginning of each lesson, and they will be explained throughout the text.

Here are the terms for Session Two:

- **Anamnesis** – A Greek word meaning “reminiscence” or “memorial.” In the context of the liturgy, it refers to our recollection of God’s “saving interventions in history” (No. 1103), which makes his power sacramentally present.

- **Baptism** – A sacrament of initiation, baptism enables us to “celebrate the liturgy”¹ (No. 1119). As with confirmation and holy orders, baptism confers a permanent sacramental “mark” (or “character”) and gives us a share in Christ’s priesthood and makes us members of the Church; it gives us “a positive disposition for grace” (No. 1121).

- **Epiclesis** – A Greek word meaning “invocation upon.” The prayer of the priest in the sacraments, asking the Father to send the Holy Spirit.

- **Liturgy** – The word *liturgy* originally referred to a “public work,” something done in the service of others; in a Christian sense, liturgy refers to the participation of God’s people in divine worship, as well as proclaiming the gospel and performing works of charity (Nos. 1069–1070).

- **Mystagogy** – The Greek word *mustes* means an “initiate,” and *agogos*, a “guide” or “leader”; together they mean, “leading an initiate into the faith.” In Christian terms, this refers to the initiation of a newly baptized Christian into the meaning of the sacramental mysteries (No. 1075); a part of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA).

¹ LG 11 § 2.

GOING TO THE DOCTOR



St. Bonaventure

St. Bonaventure (1217-1274) was in the Order of Friars Minor. One of the greatest Scholastics of the Middle Ages, he was perhaps best known for his passionate love of God. A gentle, charitable man, he brimmed with joyful simplicity. True to Franciscan form, when papal envoys arrived to elevate him to cardinal-bishop, they found him outdoors doing the dishes. The humble Bonaventure asked them to hang his new cardinal's hat on a tree until he finished.

What is the secret to eternal happiness? Bonaventure would say "a true knowledge of Jesus Christ, and ... a love of him."

- **Paschal mystery** – Refers to the passion, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, by which he “destroyed our death” and “restored our life” (No. 1067). The word *paschal* comes from the Greek *pascha*, meaning “passing over,” a reference to the Passover of the Hebrews (Exodus 12), which was a “type” of Jesus’ ultimate victory over sin and death.
- **Sacrament** – According to the *Catechism*, “The sacraments are efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us” (No. 1131). The visible sign of each sacrament differs in accord with the grace being conferred.

QUESTIONS

The questions in these sections are intended to help you identify the key concepts. It may help you to read them before you begin to read the paragraphs indicated at the top of each set of questions. You can “grade yourself” by looking at the “Answer Key” on the page following these questions. Please complete this section in preparation for the upcoming presentation and the discussion that will follow.

From the *Catechism*, Nos. 1066–1076

1. “... the Church celebrates in the _____ above all the _____ by which Christ accomplished the work of our salvation.”
2. “The word ‘liturgy’ originally meant a ‘_____’ or a ‘service in the name of/on behalf of the people.’ In Christian tradition it means the participation of the _____ in ‘the work of God.’”
3. “The liturgy is also a _____ in Christ’s own prayer to the Father in the Holy Spirit. In the liturgy, all Christian prayer finds its source and goal.” How have you experienced this connection between the liturgy and your own prayer life? _____

4. “_____ is intrinsically linked with the whole of liturgical and sacramental activity, for it is in the _____, especially in the Eucharist, that Christ Jesus works in fullness for the transformation of men.”

“Lord, you first loved me, so that I might love you.”

– St. Augustine¹

Commentary on Psalm 118 (27), 15.

From the *Catechism*, Nos. 1077–1134

5. Who is the “source and goal” of the liturgy? _____
6. The *Catechism* lists the six ways Christ is liturgically present in the Church, as described in No. 1088. Name four of them.
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
7. “In the liturgy the Holy Spirit is teacher of the faith of the People of God and artisan of ‘God’s masterpieces,’ the _____ of the New Covenant.”
8. In addition to “recalling” the events of salvation, what does the liturgy accomplish?
- _____
- _____
9. What is the purpose of the sacraments, as described in No. 1123?
- _____
- _____
10. What does it mean when the Church teaches that the sacraments act *ex opere operato*?
- _____
- _____

ANSWER KEY

1. "liturgy"; "paschal mystery" (No. 1067)
2. "Public work"; "People of God" (No. 1069)¹
3. "participation" (No. 1073)
4. "Catechesis"; "sacraments" (No. 1074)²
5. God the Father (Nos. 1077–1083)
6. Possible answers: In the Mass; in the priest; in the Eucharist; in the sacraments; in the Scriptures; and in the communal prayer of the Church (see No. 1088)³
7. "sacraments" (No. 1091)
8. The liturgy "actualizes" the events of salvation and "makes them present" (No. 1104)
9. To "sanctify men, to build up the Body of Christ and, finally, to give worship to God"⁴ (No. 1123)
10. *Ex opere operato* literally means "by the very fact of the action's being performed"⁵ (No. 1128). This indicates that the sacraments confer grace by virtue of the saving work of Christ rather than the holiness of either the minister or the recipient.

¹ *Jn* 17:4.

² John Paul II, *CT* 23.

³ *SC* 7; *Mt* 18:20.

⁴ *SC* 59.

⁵ St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh*, III, 68, 8.

"No one can have God as Father who does
not have the Church as Mother."

– St. Cyprian*

* *De unit.* 6: PL 4, 519



PART 3: PRESENTATION OUTLINE


SESSION TWO: LITURGY AND THE SACRAMENTAL ECONOMY
HISTORY TO MYSTERY (Nos. 1066–1134)

I. Introduction

A. Why liturgy? Why history matters to the present (see No. 1066)

1. Most important event in history has already occurred
2. In liturgy, we celebrate the paschal mystery – Christ's redemption of the world (see No. 1067)

HISTORY TO MYSTERY



Economy of salvation Paschal mystery Sacramental economy

B. What does “liturgy” mean? (Nos. 1069–1070)

C. Liturgical catechesis – *mystagogy* – “to lead into the mysteries” (see No. 1075)

II. The “What” of Liturgy

A. Liturgy = work of the whole Trinity

- B. Nos. 1077–1083: Count your blessings! “In the Church’s liturgy the divine blessing is fully revealed and communicated” (No. 1082)
- C. Liturgy makes present the paschal mystery of Christ (No. 1085)
- D. Holy Spirit and his masterpieces (Nos. 1091–1109)

THE WORK OF THE HOLY TRINITY



Father: source and goal
His Blessing

Christ: principal actor
His paschal mystery

Holy Spirit: teacher and animator
His masterpieces

1. The four tasks of the Holy Spirit in the liturgy (No. 1092)
2. Work of the Spirit in liturgy parallels Spirit’s work in economy (No. 737)
3. In Holy Eucharist, the Holy Spirit acts in the same way:
 - a. Prepares us (in Scripture, word, and deed)
 - b. Recalls and manifests Christ

- c. Makes Christ present

- d. Brings us to communion with him

III. Central Mystery = paschal mystery

- A. Christ's "sacraments" – our visible Savior and his mysteries (see No. 1115)

- B. Church's sacraments – instituted by Christ to be "by her" and "for her" (see No. 1118)

- C. Purpose of sacraments (see No. 1123):
 - 1. To sanctify us

 - 2. To build up the Church

 - 3. To allow us to worship God

- D. Necessity of sacraments (No. 1129):
 - 1. They are effective signs of grace; work "*ex opere operato*" (No. 1128)

 - 2. We must be disposed to receive this grace (*ex opere operantis*)

- E. Sacraments – signs of eternal life (see No. 1130)

- F. Definition of sacraments (No. 1131)



PART 4: GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. According to the *Catechism*, what does the word *liturgy* mean in a Catholic context?
2. Why do you think the word *blessing* is used more than twenty times in *Catechism*? (Nos. 1077–1083)
3. Based on the presentation of the *Catechism*, discuss how Christ is present in the “earthly liturgy.” (See Nos. 1088–1089.)
4. What important Jewish elements of worship continue to be part of our liturgical celebrations? (Nos. 1093–1096)
5. In this session, we considered many of the rich and glorious components of the sacred liturgy as presented in this section of the *Catechism*. Discuss two meaningful things you learned about the liturgy with the group.
6. Describe a time when one of the sacraments of the Church “came alive” for you.



CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, source of every blessing, we thank you for the gift of revelation, the words and deeds by which you have redeemed us. We thank you, too, for the words and deeds of power that you give us in the sacraments of the Church that Christ founded. Grant that our words and works of obedient faith in our liturgies may be proper expressions of adoration of your glory until we come to receive the full blessing in heaven, of which our liturgies are but a foretaste. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.
