

Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy

7a. To accomplish so great a work, Christ is always present in his Church, especially in its liturgical celebrations. He is present in the sacrifice of the Mass, not only in the person of his minister, “the same now offering, through the ministry of priests, who formerly now offered himself on the cross,” but especially under the eucharistic elements. By his power He is present in the sacraments, so that when a man baptizes it is really Christ himself who baptizes. He is present in his word, since it is he himself who speaks when the holy Scriptures are read in the Church. He is present, lastly, when the Church prays and sings, for he promised: “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Mt 18:20).

7b. Christ, always truly associates the Church with himself in this great work wherein God is perfectly glorified and the recipients made holy. The Church is the Lord’s beloved Bride who calls to him and through him offers worship to the eternal Father.

7c. Rightly, then the liturgy is considered as an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ. In the liturgy, by means of signs perceptible to the senses, human sanctification is signified and brought about in ways proper to each of these signs; in the liturgy, the whole public worship is performed by the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, that is, by the Head and his members.

7d. 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 effectiveness by the same title and to the same degree.

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14a. The Church earnestly desires that all the faithful be led to that full, conscious and active participation in liturgical celebrations called for by the very nature of the liturgy. Such participation by the Christian people is their right and duty by reason of their baptism.

14b. In the reform and promotion of the 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 must zealously strive in all their pastoral work to achieve such participation by means of the necessary instruction.

14c. Yet it would be futile to entertain any hopes of realizing this [full and active participation of all the baptized] unless, in the first place, the pastors themselves become thoroughly imbued with the spirit and power of the liturgy and make themselves its teachers.

General Instruction on the Roman Missal

16. The celebration of Mass, as the action of Christ and of the People of God arrayed hierarchically, is the center of the whole of Christian life for the Church both universal and local, as well as for each of the faithful individually. For in it is found the high point both of the action by which God sanctifies the world in Christ and of the worship that the human race offers to the Father, adoring him through Christ, the Son of God, in the Holy Spirit. In it, moreover, during the course of the year, the mysteries of redemption are celebrated so as to be in some way made present. As to the other sacred actions and all the activities of the Christian life, these are bound up with it, flow from it, and are ordered to it.

18. This will fittingly come about if, with due regard for the nature and other circumstances of each liturgical assembly, the entire celebration is arranged in such a way that it leads to a conscious, active, and full participation of the faithful, namely in body and in mind, a participation fervent with faith, hope, and charity, of the sort which is desired by the Church and which is required by the very nature of the celebration and to which the Christian people have a right and duty in virtue of their Baptism.

20. Since, however, the celebration of the Eucharist, like the entire Liturgy, is carried out by means of perceptible signs by which the faith is nourished, strengthened, and expressed, the greatest care is to be taken that those forms and elements proposed by the Church are chosen and arranged, which, given the circumstances of persons and places, more effectively foster active and full participation and more aptly respond to the spiritual needs of the faithful.