



Vatican Council II
Sacrosanctum
Concilium

Lex orandi, lex credendi

- “The law of prayer, (is) the law of belief.”
- “*Ut legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi* (that the law of praying establishes the law of believing)—Prosper of Aquitaine, 5th century.
- “The Church’s teaching (*lex credendi*) is articulated and made manifest in the celebration of liturgy and prayer (*lex orandi*)” (All from USCCB, Sep. 20, 2009).

Reflection

How is your understanding of the Church affected by your experience at Mass?

Sacrosanctum Concilium

- “Sacred Council”—First document; intro emphasizes goals of Vatican Council II.
- Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy
 - Liturgy discussed first both because the document was farther advanced than others (Hahnenberg 13), and because liturgy is central to our understanding of who we are as Catholics.
 - Liturgical reform movements had put many of the “new” ideas on liturgy into practice. Pius XII *Mediator Dei*.
 - There was general agreement on content; first vote on text after three weeks 2,469 for, 46 against (16).

Balance Sought

- The bishops sought to bring about change while still emphasizing continuity and the timeless nature of the Church.
- In introducing change “[the bishops] first acknowledged the value of the past, and then opened the door to the future [see SC 36]” (Hahnenberg 19).

Major Elements

- Liturgy is of prime importance to the Church—
“source and summit.”
- It is the duty of the faithful to actively participate in liturgy, and the responsibility of the Church to make participation easier.
- Rites (sacraments and sacramentals) reformed, clarified, and simplified.
- Liturgical year revised.
- Use of Liturgical music clarified and expanded.

Source and Summit

- “The liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; it is also the the source from which all its power flows” (10).
- “Christ is always present in his church, especially in liturgical celebrations”:
 - In the priest
 - Most of all in the Eucharist
 - In the sacraments
 - In the Word
 - In the people gathered to pray and sing

Active Participation

- “In the restoration and development of the sacred liturgy the full and active participation by all the people is the paramount concern” (14).
- “It is very much the wish of the church that all the faithful should be led to take that full, conscious, and active part in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy” (14).

Purpose of Revision to Enhance Participation

- In order for the people to participate, the bishops felt it was the responsibility of the Church to make it easier for them to participate.
- Hahnenberg states that encouraging full participation “is the primary concern of liturgical renewal. This call for all people to participate runs throughout SC (it is repeated over a dozen times)” (18).

Formation

- Pastors are charged with forming the faithful in full and active participation in the liturgy (14, 19).
- SC notes, however, that this will not be possible unless the pastors are well formed (14).
- So new rules are made ensuring that sacred liturgy is a compulsory part of seminary curricula (16) and that experts are hired to teach it (15).
- Active priests are also to study liturgy (18).

Not Private Functions

- “It must be emphasized that rites which are meant to be celebrated in common, with the faithful present and actively participating, should as far as possible be celebrated in that way rather than by an individual and quasi-privately. This applies with special force to the celebration of the Mass” (27).
- Laity “exercise a genuine liturgical ministry” (29).
- Concelebration encouraged (57).

“Noble Simplicity”

- “The rites should radiate a noble simplicity. They should be short, clear, and free from useless repetition. They should be within the people’s powers of comprehension, and normally should not require much explanation” (34).
- “There is to be more reading from holy scripture” (35). (Later, 3-year cycle is created).
- Restored the importance of the homily and emphasized that the homily should be based on scripture and liturgy (35).

The Mother Tongue

- “The use of the Latin language . . . is to be preserved in the Latin rites” (36.1).
- “But since the use of the vernacular . . . may frequently be of great advantage to the people, a wider use may be made of it” (36.2)
- Note that the Latin language is to be preserved, not the Tridentine rite.

Communion and Concelebration

- “Communion under both kinds may be granted when the bishops think fit, not only to clerics and religious, but also to the laity” (55).
- Use of concelebration encouraged and expanded with new rite. Again, left to bishops discretion (57, 58).
- “Nevertheless, each priest shall always retain his right to celebrate Mass individually, though not at the same time in the same church as a concelebrated Mass” (57).

Reflection

- Discussion question from Hahnenberg:

Read SC 7, 21, and 34: Where do you fall on the spectrum of understanding and mystery? How would you describe the liturgy at your parish in terms of these categories? Give specific examples.

Role of Bishop

- “One of the more important theological rediscoveries of SC is its vision of the local church united with its bishop around the Eucharist” (Hahnenberg 19).
- “The bishop is to be considered as the high priest of his flock, from whom the life of Christ of his faithful is in some way derived and dependent” (SC 41).
- “Therefore the liturgical life of the parish and its relationship to the bishop must be fostered theoretically and practically among the faithful and clergy; efforts must also be made to encourage a sense of community within the parish, above all in the common celebration of the Sunday Mass” (SC 42).

Other Sacraments and Sacramentals

- This section opens with a recap of revisions to the Mass, especially emphasizing simplification, expanded use of the Bible, the importance of the homily, and use of “the mother tongue”, and communion under both kinds.
- Other sacraments are to be revised “without delay” using the norms established for the Eucharist.
- RCIA, Baptism, Confirmation, and Anointing are addressed.

Catechumenate

- “The catechumenate for adults, comprising several distinct steps is to be restored” (64).
- The rite of baptism for adults should be different from that for infants.
- The RCIA should distinguish between the unbaptized and the baptized and treat them differently (69).
- Confirmation should be more clearly linked to baptism (71).

Anointing of the Sick

“‘Extreme unction,’ which may also and more fittingly be called ‘anointing of the sick,’ is not a sacrament for those only who are at the point of death. Hence, as soon as any one of the faithful begins to be in danger of death from sickness or old age, the fitting time for him to receive the sacrament has certainly already arrived” (73).

Liturgy of the Hours

- The Divine Office
- Revised for uniformity, restoration of tradition, accessibility, and compatibility with modern life. Opened the door to the vernacular.
- Interestingly, “the accounts of martyrdom or the lives of the saints are to accord with the facts of history” and “whatever smacks of mythology or ill accords with Christian piety is to be removed or changed” (92-93).

Liturgical Year

- Established Sunday liturgy as preeminent over other feasts.
- Revised the liturgical year to reflect ancient practice while meeting modern conditions.
- Reduced the number of saints' feast days to establish the rhythm of the “proper of time.”
- Focused Lent on baptism and penance.

Sacred Music

- “Sacred music is to be considered the more holy in proportion as it is more closely connected with the liturgical action” (112).
- Opened the door to more varied types of music and instrumentation.
- “Religious singing by the people is to be intelligently fostered so that . . . the voices of the faithful may ring out” (118).

Sacred Art

- “Ordinaries are to take care that in encouraging and favoring truly sacred art they should look for noble beauty rather than sumptuous display” (124).
- “Let bishops carefully remove from the house of God . . . those works of art which are repugnant to faith, morals, and Christian piety, and which offend true religious sense either by depraved forms or by lack of artistic worth mediocrity, and pretense” (124).
- “Bishops should have a special concern for artists, so as to imbue them with the spirit of sacred art and of the sacred liturgy” (127).