

Lithuania Priests

Talk Three

The Liturgy of the Church

Second Plank for Renewal of the Church: Renewal of the Liturgy

First document issued by the Council. Why do I start with one of last documents of Council (Dei Verbum) and then move to the first? Because all begins with the Word. True of all liturgy: order is Word of God followed by Sacrament. Sacrament is in effect the ritual enactment of the Word of God. The sacramentality of the Word: Verbum Domini, 56. "Faith acknowledges God's Word by accepting the words and actions by which he makes himself known to us." Sacraments as the actions of Jesus, visible signs in which He is presents and acts in the power of the Spirit. In the beginning was the Word The Word became flesh.

Liturgy is not one thing the Church does; it is the Church gathered before her Lord in his Name by the power of the Spirit. The gathered assembly is Church becoming more deeply Church. "The principal manifestation of the church consists in the full, active participation of all God's holy people in the same liturgical celebrations, especially in the same Eucharist, in one prayer, at one altar, at which the bishop presides, surrounded by his college of priests and by his ministers." (SC, 41). Amazing considering concelebration was only being reintroduced by the same document.

Three dimensions in liturgy as being Church, learning Church. Lex orandi lex credendi.

1. Trinitarian structure of liturgy produces Trinitarian structure of Church and Christian life. Word coming from Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit. Then our worship going back to the Father as we are united with Jesus in the Holy Spirit. We have to help our people live this Trinitarian communion.

In the Eucharist the Holy Spirit makes present the work of the Son in bringing the rich chaotic diversity into unity (Francis). Priest as minister of reconciliation, as servant of unity: first within the church community. We will look later at the priest's role in bringing others into this unity of salvation through evangelization, and also as agent of reconciliation with others.

2. Liturgy involves right relation between PAST, PRESENT and FUTURE. "O sacrum convivium in quo Christus sumitur,

"O sacred banquet in which Christ is received as food, the memory of his Passion is renewed, the soul is filled with grace and a pledge of the life to come is given to us." (CCC 1402).

PAST. The Church remembers: Eucharist as ANAMNESIS. Do this in memory of Me. The Church remembers the foundational acts from which she lives. Recalls the promises of God

PRESENT: The foundational action of Passion, Death and Resurrection is made present now. Eucharist builds Church because the Holy Spirit makes present the

action of God that founds the Church. Grace (Trinitarian) Life is given now. Not just Jesus there on altar or in tabernacle, but whole work of Trinity in Jesus making present the saving power of His sacrifice that unites us to the Father through the Holy Spirit.

All effected by the Holy Spirit. Memorial in the power of the Spirit (Jewish conviction about Passover as reliving the Exodus). Epiclesis: 1. To transform bread and wine; 2. To transform us and make us one. (CCC 1105).

FUTURE: This action is a pledge, a guarantee of the life to come. A pledge to the Church. It is already preparing us for the banquet in the Kingdom of God. "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life and I will raise him up at the last day." (John 6: 54). CCC 1107, 1130. Gathered community is anticipation of coming kingdom of glory.

We don't have to try and make it so, it is so by nature of liturgy. We have to become more conscious of all its dimensions and live them.

3. Learning to worship as a people. We need to help the people understand this: at heart of liturgical renewal (Beauduin). Praying the psalms, morning and evening prayer. Living the liturgical seasons. Learning to celebrate liturgy, for priests and people, is learning to act before God, in God's presence, in full Christian and human dignity. Learning Christian deportment. Palm Sunday procession, Corpus Christi procession, kiss of peace. Gospel procession, Lectors reading with full conviction. Benedict XVI emphasis on beauty (theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar). Not opposed to simplicity, dignity and love. Importance of liturgical postures: standing with and in faith ("Put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything to stand." Eph. 6: 13). Military know importance of standing upright. Standing position of resurrection faith, posture of those who know their dignity as redeemed sons and daughters of God: EP to stand in your presence; kneeling posture of penitence, of humbling ourselves. Acting as whole person.

Devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. Jesus, gift of the Father and way to the Father. Loving Jesus in the fullness of His being as Son. Jesus as one totally filled with the Holy Spirit who pours out his Spirit upon us.