

word on worship

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The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy: Deepening Spiritual Insights

Balthasar Fischer on the 25th Anniversary of Sacrosanctum Concilium

*During the fall semester of 1988, Immaculate Conception Seminary, So. Orange, NJ, hosted visiting professor, Rev. Balthasar Fischer of Trier, W. Germany. A world renowned liturgist, Fr. Fischer most recently headed the international committee responsible for reviving the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (R.C.I.A.) In addition to his teaching at the seminary, Fr. Fischer lectured regarding other important aspects of liturgical renewal. Because he was present during Vatican II, he is particularly knowledgeable concerning the intent of the documents and the progress of changes that have occurred since the promulgation of the **Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy**, December 4, 1963.*

The following is a paraphrase of Fr. Fischer's talk to the seminarians and an interview with this editor, both held this past fall. We are indebted to Fr. Fischer for his contributions.

While much has been accomplished since December 4, 1963, much remains to be done. However, this is said with a joyful note--a "looking forward" and a "looking forward to" something which is very good, very hopeful. With this consideration, I offer eight spiritual insights in the area of liturgy that, in my mind, still need to be deepened.

Priestly Action of Christ

The first is based on the following statement: "The liturgy, then, is rightly seen as an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ" (CSL, #6). Liturgy is *not* the ceremonial framework which surrounds the "important" part. Liturgy *is* what happens when the Church celebrates the mysteries of her God. How can liturgy be the "summit" and the "fount" if it is only the ceremonies? It cannot! Rather, the Paschal Mystery is the highpoint and the source from which all her power flows.

In the United States, liturgy and sacramental theology are taught together because they belong together. Our language should not be "it is only liturgy." If it is liturgy, it is the priestly action of Christ which lives among us.

Christ, the Word

A second spiritual insight that needs to be deepened is the realization that Christ is present also in his word when it is announced and expounded (#7).

While the idea of Christ's presence in the preached word prompted initial hesitation at the Council, it has become more vivid since then. The understanding of the relationship between the announced word and the expounded word is a big leap forward in the Church. When the readings are read and expounded, Christ is speaking to me. I must be open to him. I make the sign of the cross on my forehead, lips, and heart at the beginning of the gospel. This sign is traditionally a sign of belonging, a baptismal sign. I sign myself and want to say, "The one who speaks here is my Lord. I belong to him." This sign is not to be omitted; it is not old-fashioned. Lives have been changed by the word announced and preached, thus testifying to its importance and power.

The Power of the Holy Spirit

All happens "through the power of the Holy Spirit" (#6). This concept was added during the Council at the request of the oriental bishops in order to give more respect to the Holy Spirit. This third insight requires a deeper awareness of the fact that we have nothing to offer by ourselves. In all the presidential prayers, the presider raises his empty hands--beggar's hands: "Please, fill these hands."

"We cannot say, 'Abba! Father!' but by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Romans 8:18). Nor can anyone say "Jesus is Lord!" but in the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians). These two passages are fundamental to the theology of the liturgy. The West tends to be over-cerebral; we have much to learn from the East about the values of the heart.

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Liturgy Preparers' Notes

Remember that:

- the Easter Candle remains visible until Pentecost evening prayer is concluded.
- design your flower and decoration budget to provide a festive tone throughout the whole Easter season.
- Easter hymns, even those which mention Easter Day can be used throughout the 50 days of Easter.

The Solemnities of Holy Trinity and Corpus Christi are not part of the Easter celebration. They should be experienced as distinct from the Easter Season.

General Intercessions for youth preparing for first Eucharist or Confirmation should be included throughout this season.

The Baptism of infants is appropriate on the Sundays of Easter. It is fitting to schedule Confirmation, an Easter Sacrament, during this season.

The mandating of Special Ministers of Communion is more appropriate in this season than on Holy Thursday.

This also applies to the blessing of Easter food. Families should be instructed to use the book of *Catholic Household Blessings & Prayers* before the first meal of Easter.



Letter on the Easter Feasts - *Paschalis Sollemnitatis Part III*

The following is Part III of a series of three installments of a circular letter from the Vatican Congregation for Divine Worship concerning the preparation for and celebration of the Easter feasts. The notes for liturgy preparers are included to help parishes in preparing to celebrate Lent, the Triduum and Easter.

VIII. Easter Season

100. The celebration of Easter is prolonged throughout the Easter season. The 50 days from Easter Sunday to Pentecost Sunday are celebrated as one feast day, the "great Sunday."¹⁰⁵

101. The Sundays of this season are regarded as Sundays of Easter, and so termed, and they have precedence over all feasts of the Lord and over all solemnities. Solemnities that fall on one of these Sundays are anticipated on the Saturday.¹⁰⁶ Celebrations in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary or the saints which fall during the week may not be transferred to one of these Sundays.¹⁰⁷

102. For adults who have received Christian initiation during the Easter Vigil the whole of this period is given over to mystagogical catechesis. Therefore wherever there are neophytes the prescriptions of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, Nos. 37-40 and 235-239, should be observed. Intercession should be made in the eucharistic prayer for the newly baptized through the Easter octave in all places.

103. Throughout the Easter season the neophytes should be assigned their own special place among the faithful. All neophytes should endeavor to participate at Mass along with their godparents. In the homily and, according to local circumstances, in the general intercessions mention should be made of them. Some celebration should be held to conclude the period of mystagogical catechesis on or about Pentecost Sunday, depending upon local custom.¹⁰⁸ It is also appropriate that children receive their first Communion on one or other of the Sundays of Easter.

104. During Easter time, pastors should instruct the faithful who have been already initiated into the eucharist on the meaning of the Church's precept concerning the reception of holy communion during this period.¹⁰⁹ It is highly recommended that communion be brought to the sick also, especially during the Easter octave.

105. Where there is the custom of blessing houses in celebration of the resurrection, this blessing is to be imparted after the solemnity of Easter, and not before, by the parish priest or other priests or deacons delegated by him. This is an opportunity for exercising a pastoral ministry.¹¹⁰ The parish priest should go to each house for the purpose of undertaking a pastoral visitation of each family. There he will speak with the residents, spend a few moments with them in prayer using texts to be found in the Book of Blessings.¹¹¹ In larger cities consideration should be given to the gathering of several families for a common celebration of the blessing for all.

106. According to the differing circumstances of places and peoples, there are found a number of popular practices linked to celebrations of the Easter season, which in some instances attract greater numbers of the people than the sacred liturgy itself; these are not in any way to be undervalued, for they are often well adapted to the religious mentality of the faithful. Let episcopal conferences and local ordinaries, therefore, see to it that practices of this kind, which seem to nourish popular piety, be harmonized in the best way possible with the sacred liturgy, be imbued more distinctly with the spirit of the liturgy, in

some way derived from it, and lead the people to it.¹¹²

107. This sacred period of 50 days concludes with Pentecost Sunday, when the gift of the Holy Spirit to the apostles, the beginnings of the Church and the start of its mission to all tongues and peoples and nations are commemorated.¹¹³

Encouragement should be given to the prolonged celebration of Mass in the form of a vigil, whose character is not baptismal as in the Easter Vigil, but is one of urgent prayer, after the example of the apostles and disciples, who persevered together in prayer with Mary, the Mother of Jesus, as they awaited the Holy Spirit.¹¹⁴

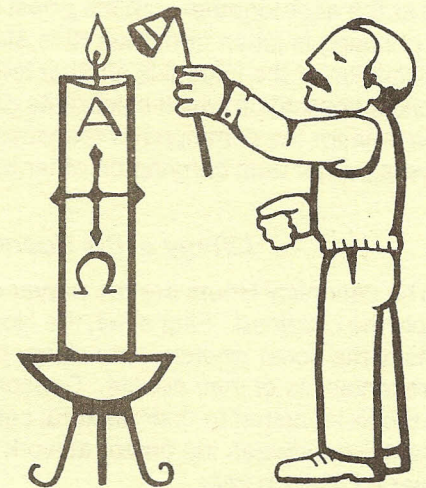
108. "It is proper to the paschal festivity that the whole Church rejoices at the forgiveness of sins, which is not only for those who are reborn in holy Baptism, but also for those who have long been numbered among the adopted children."¹¹⁵ By means of a more intensive pastoral care and a deeper spiritual effort, all who celebrate the Easter feasts will by the Lord's grace experience their effect in their daily lives.¹¹⁶

Given at Rome, at the offices of the Congregation for Divine Worship, January 16, 1988.

Cardinal Paul Augustine Mayer
 Prefect
 Archbishop Virgilio Noe
 Secretary

Footnotes

- 105Cf. General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar, 22.
- 106Cf. *ibid.*, 5, 23.
- 107Cf. *ibid.*, 58.
- 108Cf. Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, 235-237; cf. *ibid.*, 238-239.
- 109Cf. Canon 920.
- 110 *Maxima redemptionis nostrae mysteria*, 24.
- 111Book of Blessings, Chaps. 1, 2; Blessing of a Family in Its Own Home.
- 112Cf. Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 13; cf. Congregation for Divine Worship, *Orientamenti e Proposte per la Celebrazione dell'Anno Mariano*, (April 3, 1987) 3, 51-56.
- 113Cf. General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar, 23.
- 114 It is possible to combine the celebration of first Vespers with the celebration of Mass as provided for in the General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours, 96. In order to throw into greater relief the mystery of this day, it is possible to have several readings from Holy Scripture, as proposed in the Lectionary. In this case, after the collect the reader goes to the ambo to proclaim the reading. The psalmist or cantor sings the psalm, to which the people respond with the refrain. Then all stand and the priest says, "Let us pray," and after a short silent pause, he says the prayer corresponding to the reading (for example, one of the collects for the ferial days of the seventh week of Easter).
- 115St. Leo the Great, *Sermo 6 de Quadragesima*, 1-2, PL 54, 285.
- 116Cf. Roman Missal, Saturday of the Seventh Week of Easter, Opening Prayer.



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The Faithful Participate

Our fourth insight centers on the idea that the faithful are not "strangers or silent spectators" but offer the holy gifts at the altar together with the priest (#48). Actually, this phrasing is taken from Pius XII's *Mediator Dei*. The participation of the faithful is another leap forward. One practical application which celebrants can implement is to allow time for the community's response to presidential prayers, rather than carrying on other business at the altar.

Liturgy of the Hours

The canonical Hours are the prayer of the Church, not simply the ordained. First of all, the Hours are expressions of the local church. The clergy pray the Hours as representatives of their people. Deacons and priests pray "for those entrusted to their pastoral care". This is an important link between the pastor at work and the pastor at prayer (cf. Canon 246).

Interestingly, the Hours are popular in Germany, particularly among the young who pray them in the church before going to school or work. It has taken the form of popular piety, an area that the United States has yet to learn and develop.

Catechumenate: Conversion

Article 64 of the CSL calls for the restoration of the catechumenate. Becoming a Christian calls for the conversion of one's whole being. Our sixth insight calls for a major shift in ecclesiology, not only in liturgy. "Shepherds do not make sheep. Sheep make sheep." This simple, humorous saying reveals much about the heart of the RCIA: Pastors do not make converts; the community does. This statement is a bit sharp and one-sided, but it has a kernel of truth. To say the priest has no part is wrong. The clergy are the "animators of the animators" *Ecclesia Mater* (the church as mother bringing forth new life) is made up of both clergy and faithful - a patristic idea almost lost. Understandably, then, conversion without the participation of the sheep (congregation) is not authentic

conversion.

In addition, we need to remember that the RCIA is not a "program". It is THE way of becoming a Christian.

The United States has progressed rapidly in the area of the restored catechumenate. We also hoped that this renewal would be active in the missions. Our hopes are being fulfilled.

The Gift of Language

Our seventh insight concerns the use of the mother tongue. It is wise to note that such use is utilitarian, not theological. Languages are the granddaughters of God! Our Church uses 343 for liturgical purposes. Such use proclaims that languages may now fulfill their mission after a long time of waiting. In the liturgy, languages reach their highest goal: "He who created those languages has created them all for his praise and honor" (Pope John VIII).

"She (the Church) will grow until she is able to embrace all languages" (St. Augustine).

Mary

Mary--that which the Church "wholly desires and hopes to be" (#103). We need to develop a balanced approach to Mary. In Germany we speak of maximalism in her regard. However, since the Vatican Council, we have become minimalistic. She, however, "is inseparably linked with her son's saving work. In her the Church admires and exalts the most excellent fruit of redemption..." Thus, the Council itself expressed insights that should inspire us in relation to Mary.

A Final Word

As we said in the beginning, much has been accomplished; much remains to be done. The Church may be compared to a glider. Whoever travels by glider must patiently look forward to a fair wind and leave himself trustfully to that wind. "The wind blows where it wills..." Let us leave ourselves trustfully to that wind, deeply convinced that all that happens happens "through the power of the Holy Spirit."

Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy Update

New Committee Members and Advisors

The Most Reverend Joseph P. Delaney, Chairman of the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, recently made three appointments to the Committee. The Most Reverend Charles J. Chaput, OFM Cap, ordained as Bishop of Rapid City this past summer, was appointed as the seventh member of the Committee. This position had been vacant for the past year.

Newly appointed as advisors to the Committee were: Sister Jennifer Glen, CCVI, instructor in liturgical studies at Saint Mary's Seminary in Houston and a doctoral candidate in the Liturgical Studies Program at the Catholic University of America; and Reverend John Huels, OSM, professor of canon law at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago and a specialist in liturgical and sacramental law.

Sister Rosa Maria Icaza, CEVI, member of the pastoral team of the Mexican American Cultural Center in San Antonio, TX, was recently elected president of the Institute for Hispanic Liturgy. By virtue of that position, she will serve as an *ex-officio* advisor to the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, replacing Father Juan Sosa of Miami. Sr. Icaza also serves as a member of the Hispanic Liturgy Subcommittee.

Advisors who have served on the Liturgy Committee during the past year but whose appointments were not previously announced in the *Newsletter* are: Sister Nancy Swift, RCE, professor of liturgy at Saint John's Seminary, Brighton, MA, and previously associated with the Woodstock Center for Religion and Worship; Reverend Douglas Ferraro, Director of the Office for Liturgy and Worship of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles; and Reverend Andrew Ciferni, O Praem, instructor in liturgical studies at The Catholic University of America, Washington, DC, who serves as an *ex-officio* advisor to the Liturgy Committee as the representative of the Conference of Major Superiors of Men Religious.

Continuing to serve as advisors to the Committee are: Reverend William M. Cieslak, OFM Cap, Franciscan School of Theology, Berkeley, CA; Sister Kathleen Loewen, OP, Director of the Office of Worship, Archdiocese of Milwaukee; Reverend Michael Spillane, Executive Secretary of the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions; and Reverend Richard E. Ward, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the FDLC.

Liturgy Committee members are: Bishops Joseph P. Delaney, Patrick R. Cooney, Wilton D. Gregory, Ricardo Ramirez, CSB, Michael J. Sheehan, and Richard J. Sklba. Episcopal consultants are: His Eminence Joseph Cardinal Bernardin (Member, Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments); Most Reverend Daniel E. Pilarczyk (U.S. Representative on the ICEL Episcopal Board), Most Reverend John J. Snyder, and Most Reverend John F. Whealon (chairman, Lectionary Subcommittee).

November 1988 Meeting of the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy

The NCCB Liturgy Committee met in Washington, DC, on November 13, 1988. In addition to reviewing the seven liturgical action items on the agenda of the NCCB Plenary Meeting [see *Newsletter*, November 1988, pp. 41-42.] the members also approved the agenda for the Workshop and Presentation on the *Progress Report on the Revision of the Roman Missal*, which was conducted on Tuesday, November 15, 1988.

These matters were also discussed: 1) the North American Consultation on Common Text's *A Celebration of Baptism: An Ecumenical Liturgy*; 2) Liturgical Texts: Memorial of Saint Lawrence Ruiz and companions, martyrs (approved for submission to the NCCB Administrative Committee in March); 3) *Criteria for the Evaluation of Inclusive Language in Scripture Translations Destined for Use in the Liturgy*, drafted by the Joint Committee (Liturgy and Doctrine) on Inclusive Language; 4) the FDLC Resolutions from the October 1988 National Meeting of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions in San Diego; 5) Lakota as a Liturgical Language; 6) Proposed National Guidelines on Cremation and Catholic Burial Practices (a task force will be established in June to begin studying these various matters).

Reports were received on several projects: *Lectionary for Mass*, second edition; *Catholic Worship and Black Americans*, a proposed statement of the Black Liturgy Subcommittee; the proposed statement of the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy on, and the ritual for, Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest; and the *Lectionary for Masses with Children and for other Celebrations*. In addition Bishop Ramirez reported on the projects of the Hispanic Liturgy Subcommittee: 1) the Spanish *Sacramentario* for use in the dioceses of the United States; 2) bilingual editions of the rites of baptism and marriage; 3) *Order of Christian Funerals* in Spanish (possibly a bilingual edition); 4) Spanish edition of the American additions to the *Book of Blessings*.

The Liturgy Committee members, consultants and advisors will meet for their annual plenary meeting at Seton Hall University in South Orange, NJ, on June 13-15, 1989.

??? What's Rite ???

May the parent of a candidate for Confirmation be the sponsor at the ceremony?

As far as possible there should be a sponsor for the person to be confirmed. The sponsor's duty is to see that the one confirmed acts as a true witness to Christ and faithfully fulfills the duties inherent in this sacrament. (Cf. Canon 892)

It is desirable that the one who took the role of sponsor at baptism be sponsor at confirmation.

In order to undertake the duty of a confirmation sponsor it is necessary:

- a) That the one chosen have the aptitude for and intention of carrying out this duty.
- b) that one be at least 16 years of age, unless a different age has been established by the diocesan bishop or it seems

to the pastor or minister that an exception is to be made for just cause.

- c) that one is Catholic, confirmed, and already has received the Holy Eucharist, and likewise leads a life in harmony with the undertaking of this duty.
- d) that one is not bound by any canonical penalty legitimately imposed or declared.
- e) one is not the father or mother of the candidate.

Therefore, parents may not be the canonical sponsor for the confirmation of their children. They may however, present their children for confirmation.

Church law and practice definitely favor the baptismal godparent to be the sponsor for confirmation.



Word on Worship

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