

CHAPTER I

THE IMPORTANCE AND
DIGNITY OF THE CELEBRATION
OF THE EUCHARIST

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.²² 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.²³ In it, moreover, during the course of the year, the mysteries of redemption are celebrated so as to be in some way made present.²⁴ 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.²⁵

17 It is, therefore, of the greatest importance that the celebration of the Mass or the Lord's Supper be so ordered that the sacred ministers and the faithful taking part in it, according to the state proper to each, may draw from it more abundantly²⁶ those fruits, to obtain which, Christ the Lord instituted the Eucharistic Sacrifice of his Body and Blood

22 Cf. Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 41; Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium*, no. 11; Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, *Presbyterorum ordinis*, nos. 2, 5, 6; Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops, *Christus Dominus*, no. 30; Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis redintegratio*, no. 15; Sacred Congregation of Rites, Instruction, *Eucharisticum mysterium*, May 25, 1967, nos. 3e, 6; *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 59 (1967), pp. 542, 544-545.

23 Cf. Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 10.

24 Cf. Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 102.

25 Cf. Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 10; cf. Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, *Presbyterorum ordinis*, no. 5.

26 Cf. Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, nos. 14, 19, 26, 28, 30.

and entrusted it as the memorial of his Passion and Resurrection to the Church, his beloved Bride.²⁷

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.²⁸

19 Even though it is on occasion not possible to have the presence and active participation of the faithful, which manifest more clearly the ecclesial nature of the celebration,²⁹ the celebration of the Eucharist is always endowed with its own efficacy and dignity, since it is the act of Christ and of the Church, in which the Priest fulfills his own principal function and always acts for the sake of the people's salvation.

Hence the Priest is recommended to celebrate the Eucharistic Sacrifice, in so far as he can, even daily.³⁰

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,³¹ the greatest care is to be taken that those forms and elements proposed by the Church are

27 Cf. Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 47.

28 Cf. Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 14.

29 Cf. Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 41.

30 Cf. Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, *Presbyterorum ordinis*, no. 13; *Code of Canon Law*, can. 904.

31 Cf. Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 59.

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.

- 21 Hence this Instruction aims both to offer general lines for a suitable ordering of the celebration of the Eucharist and to explain the rules by which individual forms of celebration may be arranged.³²
- 22 The celebration of the Eucharist in a particular Church is of the utmost importance.

For the Diocesan Bishop, the prime steward of the mysteries of God in the particular Church entrusted to his care, is the moderator, promoter, and guardian of the whole of liturgical life.³³ In celebrations that take place with the Bishop presiding, and especially in the celebration of the Eucharist by the Bishop himself with the Presbyterate, the Deacons, and the people taking part, the mystery of the Church is manifest. Hence, solemn celebrations of Mass of this sort must be exemplary for the entire diocese.

The Bishop should therefore be determined that the Priests, the Deacons, and the lay Christian faithful grasp ever more deeply the genuine significance of the rites and liturgical texts, and thereby be led to the active and fruitful celebration of the Eucharist. To that end, he should also be vigilant in ensuring that the dignity of these celebrations be enhanced and, in promoting such dignity, the beauty of the sacred place, of the music, and of art should contribute as greatly as possible.

32 Special celebrations of Mass should observe the guidelines established for them: For Masses with particular groups, cf. Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, Instruction, *Actio pastoralis*, May 15, 1969: *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 61 (1969), pp. 806-811; for Masses with children, cf. Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, *Directory for Masses with Children*, November 1, 1973: *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 66 (1974), pp. 30-46; for the manner of joining the Hours of the Office with the Mass, cf. Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, *General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours*, nos. 93-98; for the manner of joining certain blessings and the crowning of an image of the Blessed Virgin Mary with the Mass, cf. *Rituale Romanum, De Benedictionibus*, editio typica, 1984, Prænotanda, no. 28; *Ordo coronandi imaginem beate Mariæ Virginis*, editio typica, 1981, nos. 10 and 14.

33 Cf. Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican, Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops, *Christus Dominus*, no. 15; cf. also Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 41.

- 23** Moreover, in order that such a celebration may correspond more fully to the prescriptions and spirit of the Sacred Liturgy, and also in order that its pastoral effectiveness be enhanced, certain accommodations and adaptations are set out in this *General Instruction* and in the Order of Mass.
- 24** These adaptations consist, for the most part, in the choice of certain rites or texts, that is, of the chants, readings, prayers, explanatory interventions, and gestures capable of responding better to the needs, the preparation, and the culture of the participants and which are entrusted to the Priest Celebrant. However, the Priest will remember that he is the servant of the Sacred Liturgy and that he himself is not permitted, on his own initiative, to add, to remove, or to change anything in the celebration of Mass.³⁴
- 25** In addition, at the proper place in the Missal certain adaptations are indicated which in accordance with the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy pertain respectively to the Diocesan Bishop or to the Conference of Bishops³⁵ (cf. also below nos. 387, 388-393).
- 26** As for variations and the more profound adaptations which give consideration to the traditions and culture of peoples and regions, to be introduced in accordance with article 40 of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, for reasons of usefulness or necessity, those norms set out in the *Instruction on the Roman Liturgy and Inculturation*³⁶ and below in nos. 395-399 are to be observed.

34 Cf. Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 22.

35 Cf. Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, nos. 38, 40; Paul VI, Apostolic Constitution, *Missale Romanum*, April 3, 1969: *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 61 (1969), pp. 217-222.

36 Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, Instruction, *Varietates legitimæ*, January 25, 1994: *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 87 (1995), pp. 288-314.