

## 1956 Address of Pope Pius XII on the Liturgy

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### 1956 Address of Pope Pius XII on the Liturgy

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<p><b>Mike</b></p> <p><b>Joined:</b> Wed May 17, 2006 3:38 pm <b>Posts:</b> 456 <b>Location:</b> New England</p>	<p><a href="#">✚</a> <a href="#">1956 Address of Pope Pius XII on the Liturgy</a></p> <p>The following is an exact reproduction of Pope Pius XII's address as it appears in <i>The Pope Speaks</i>, (Winter 1956–1957), v. 3, no. 3, p. 273, which is the English translation of the original: AAS (October 29, 1956), 48: 711–725; also <i>Osservatore Romano</i> (September 24, 1956) *</p> <h3>The Liturgical Movement An Address of Pope Pius XII to the International Congress on Pastoral Liturgy (September 22, 1956)</h3> <p>You have asked Us to deliver an address upon the closing of the International Congress on Pastoral Liturgy which has just been held in Assisi. We readily accede to your request and bid you welcome.</p> <h4>The progress of thirty years</h4> <p>If the position of the liturgical movement today is compared to that of thirty years ago, undeniable progress in its extent and in its depth becomes evident. Interest in the liturgy, practical accomplishments, and the active participation of the faithful have undergone a development which would then have been difficult to anticipate.</p> <p>The chief driving force, both in doctrinal matters and in practical applications, came from the Hierarchy and, in particular, from Our saintly Predecessor, Pius X, who gave the liturgical movement a decisive impulse by his Motu Proprio of October 23, 1913, "<i>Abhinc duos annos.</i>" (1)</p> <p>The faithful received these directives gratefully and showed themselves ready to comply with them. Liturgists applied themselves to their task with zeal and, as a result, many interesting and rewarding projects were soon under way, although, at times, certain deviations had to be corrected by the Church's authority.</p> <p>Of the many documents published on this subject in recent times, it will suffice for Us to mention three: The Encyclical "<i>Mediator Dei</i>," "<i>De sacra liturgia</i>," of November 20, 1947 (2); the new decree on Holy Week, dated November 16, 1955,(3) which has helped the faithful to achieve a better understanding and fuller participation in the love,</p>

sufferings and triumph of our Savior; and finally, the Encyclical "*De musica sacra*" of December 25, 1955. (4)

Thus the liturgical movement has appeared as a sign of God's providential dispositions for the present day, as a movement of the Holy Spirit in His Church, intended to bring men closer to those mysteries of the faith and treasures of grace which derive from the active participation of the faithful in liturgical life.

### **The Congress on Pastoral Liturgy**

The Congress which is just concluding has had for its particular end a demonstration of the inestimable value of the liturgy in the sanctification of souls, and, consequently, in the Church's pastoral activity.

You have studied this aspect of the liturgy as it is revealed in history and has continued to be revealed. You have also seen how this aspect of the liturgy is founded in the nature of things, that is, how it is derived from essential elements of the liturgy.

Your Congress, then, included a study of historical developments, some reflections on existing conditions, and an examination both of objectives to be sought in the future and of means suitable for their attainment. After careful consideration of your program, We express Our hope that this new sowing of seed, added to those of the past, will produce rich harvests for the benefit of individuals and the whole Church.

In this address, instead of presenting to you in greater detail norms which the Holy See has already spoken sufficiently, We have decided it would be more useful to touch on a few important points which are actually under discussion in the field of liturgy and dogma, and which hold Our special interest. We shall group these considerations under two headings. These will be simple pointers rather than the express themes We propose to develop: The Liturgy and the Church, the Liturgy and the Lord.

## **I. The Liturgy and the Church**

As we have said in the Encyclical "*Mediator Dei*," the liturgy is a vital function of the whole Church, and not simply of a group or of a limited movement. "The Sacred Liturgy is the whole public worship of the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, Head and members." (5)

The Mystical Body of our Lord lives on the truth of Christ and on the graces which flow through its members, giving them life and uniting them to one another and their Head. This is what St. Paul means when he says in the first Epistle to the Corinthians: "*All are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.*"(6) All then is directed toward God, His service, and His glory.

The Church, filled with the gifts and the life of God, devotes herself with a deep and spontaneous movement to the adoration and praise of the infinite God. Through the liturgy she renders to Him, as a corporate body, that worship which is His due.

To this unique liturgy, all the members, those clothed with episcopal power and those belonging to the body of the faithful, bring all that they have received from God, all the powers of their minds and hearts and all of their achievements. This is true, above all, of the Hierarchy, since it holds the "*depositum fidei*" and the "*depositum gratiae*."

### **Deposit of faith**

From the "*depositum fidei*," from the truth of Christ contained in Scripture and Tradition, the Hierarchy draws the great mysteries of the faith, in particular, those of

the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Redemption, and causes them to pass into the liturgy. But it would be difficult to find a truth the Christian faith which is not expressed in some manner in the liturgy, whether in readings from the Old and the New Testament during Holy Mass and the Divine Office, or in the riches which the mind and heart discover in the Psalms.

Moreover, the solemn ceremonies of the liturgy are a profession of faith in action. They give concrete expression to the great truths of the faith which concern the inscrutable designs of God's generosity and His inexhaustible benefits to men, the love and mercy of the heavenly Father for the world, the salvation for which He sent His Son and delivered Him to death.

It is thus that the Church communicates in abundance in the liturgy the treasures of the "*depositum fidei*," of the truth of Christ.

### **Treasury of grace**

Through the liturgy also are diffused the riches of the "*depositum gratiae*" which the Savior has transmitted to His Apostles: sanctifying grace, the virtues and gifts, the power to baptize, to confer the Holy Spirit, to forgive sins through the sacrament of Penance, and to ordain priests.

At the heart of the liturgy is the celebration of the Eucharist, the sacrifice and the repast. In the liturgy also are all the sacraments gathered up, and the Church, by means of the sacramentals, generously multiplies gifts of grace in the most varied circumstances.

The Hierarchy also extends its care to all that helps increase the beauty and dignity of liturgical ceremonies: the places of worship, their furnishing, the liturgical vestments, sacred music, and sacred art.

### **Role of the Laity**

If the Hierarchy communicates the truth and the grace of Christ by means of the liturgy, the faithful on their side, have a duty to receive them, to give them their whole-hearted consent, to transform them into values for life. They accept all that is offered to them—the graces of the sacrifice of the altar, of the sacraments and sacramentals – not as mere passive recipients of the graces flowing over them, but cooperating in these graces with all their will and strength, and, above all, participating in the liturgical offices, or at least following their performance with fervor.

The laity have contributed in large measure, and by a constant effort to continue to contribute, to increase the external solemnity of worship, to build churches and chapels, to adorn them, to enhance the beauty of the liturgical ceremonies with all the splendors of sacred art.

### **Unity of shepherds and flock**

The contributions which are brought to the liturgy by the Hierarchy and by the faithful are not to be reckoned as two separate quantities, but represent the work of members of the same organism, which acts as a single living entity. The shepherds and the flock, the teaching Church and the Church taught, form a single and unique body of Christ. So there is no reason for entertaining suspicion, rivalries, open or hidden opposition, either in one's thought or in one's manner of speaking and acting. Among members of the same body there ought to reign, before all else, harmony, union and cooperation. It is within this unity that the Church prays, makes its offering, grows in holiness. One can declare therefore with justice that the liturgy is the work of the *Church whole and*

*entire.*

### **Private worship**

But We have to add: public worship is not on that account the *whole Church*. It does not exhaust the field of her activities. Alongside public worship, which is that of the community, there is still place for private worship, which the individual pays to God in the secret of his heart or expresses by exterior acts. This private worship has as many variations as there are Christians, though it proceeds for the same faith and the same grace of Christ. The Church not only tolerates this kind of worship, but gives it full recognition and approval, without however raising it in any way to the primary position of liturgical worship.

### **Teaching and pastoral care**

But when We say that public worship does not exhaust the field of the Church's activities, We are thinking in particular of the tasks of teaching and of pastoral care, of the "*Tend the flock of God, which is among you.*" (7)

We have recalled the role which the Magisterium, the depository of the truth of Christ, exercises through the liturgy. The influence of the governing power upon it is also evident. For it belongs to the Popes to give recognition to rites which are in force, to introduce any new practices, to establish rules for the manner of worship. It pertains to the Bishops to watch carefully that the prescriptions of canon law with regard to divine worship are observed. (8)

But the functions of teaching and control extend even beyond that. To ascertain this it is sufficient to glance at canon law and its statements concerning the Pope, the Roman Congregations, the Bishops, Councils, the Magisterium, and ecclesiastical discipline. The same conclusion may be reached by observing the life of the Church, and in Our two Allocutions of May 31 and November 2, 1954, on the threefold function of the Bishop, We expressly insisted on the extent of his obligations. They are not limited to teaching and government, but embrace also all other human activities in the measure in which religious and moral interests are involved. (9)

### **Universal duties and interests**

If then the duties and the interests of the Church on this point are universal, the priests and the faithful will be cautious in their manner of thinking and acting, lest they fall into narrowness of view or lack of understanding.

Our Encyclical "*Mediator Dei*," has already corrected certain erroneous statements which were tending either to orientate religious and pastoral teaching into a form exclusively liturgical, or to raise obstacles to the liturgical movement because it was not understood.

In reality, there exists no objective difference between the end pursued by the liturgy and that of the other functions of the Church. As for differences of opinion, though they are genuine, they do not present insuperable obstacles.

These considerations will suffice to show, We hope, that the liturgy is the work of the whole Church, and that all of the faithful, as members of the Mystical Body, ought to love and value it, and take part in it, while understanding that the tasks of the Church extend well beyond it.

## **II. THE LITURGY AND THE LORD**

We wish to consider now in a special manner the liturgy of the Mass and the Lord Who in it is both Priest and Oblation. As some inaccuracies and some misunderstandings are coming to light here and there with regard to certain points, We shall say a word about the “*actio Christi*,” and about the “*praesentia Christi*,” and about the “*infinita et divina maiestas Christi*.”

## 1. “**ACTIO CHRISTI**”

The liturgy of the Mass has for its end the expression through the senses of the grandeur of the mystery which is accomplished in it, and efforts are being made today which tend to make the faithful participate in as active and intelligent a manner as possible. Though this aim is justified, there is risk of lessening reverence if attention is distracted from the main action to direct it to the splendor of other ceremonies.

### **Eucharistic Sacrifice**

What is this main action of the Eucharistic sacrifice?

We have spoken explicitly of it in the Allocution of November 2, 1954. (10) We there cited first the teaching of the Council of Trent: “*In this divine sacrifice which takes place at Mass, the same Christ is present and is immolated in an unbloody manner, Who once on the altar of the Cross offered Himself in a bloody manner...For the victim is one and the same, now offering Himself through the ministry of His priests, Who then offered Himself on the Cross; only the manner of offering is different.*” (11)

And We continued in these words: “*Thus the priest celebrant, putting on the person of Christ, alone offers sacrifice, and not the people, nor the clerics, nor even the priests who reverently assist. All, however, can and should take an active part in the sacrifice.*” (12)

### **An erroneous conclusion**

We then emphasized that, from a failure to distinguish between the participation of the celebrant in the fruits of the sacrifice of the Mass and the nature of the action which he performs, the conclusion was reached that “*the offering of one Mass, at which a hundred priests assist with religious devotion, is the same as a hundred Masses celebrated by a hundred priests.*” Concerning this statement We said: “*It must be rejected as an erroneous opinion.*”

And We added by way of explanation: “*With regard to the offering of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, the actions of Christ, the High Priest, are as many as are the priests celebrating, not as many as are the priests reverently hearing the Mass of a Bishop or a priest; for those present at the Mass in no sense sustain, or act in, the person of Christ sacrificing, but are to be compared to the faithful layfolk who are present at the Mass.*” (13)

On the subject of liturgical congresses, We remarked on the same occasion: “*These meetings sometimes follow a definite program, so that only one offers the Mass, and others (all or the majority) assist at this one Mass, and receive the Holy Eucharist during it from the hands of the celebrant. If this is done for a good and sound reason,...the practice is not to be opposed, so long as the error We have mentioned is not underlying it,*” that is to say, the error of equating the offering of a hundred Masses by a hundred priests to the offering of one Mass at which a hundred priests are devoutly present.

### **The Consecration**

According to this, the central element of the Eucharistic Sacrifice is that in which Christ

intervenes as “*se ipsum offerens*” – to adopt the words of the Council of Trent. (Sess. XXII, cap. 2) That happens at the consecration when, in the very act of transubstantiation worked by the Lord, (14) the priest–celebrant is “*personam Christi gerens*.”

Even if the consecration takes place without pomp and in all simplicity, it is the central point of the whole liturgy of the sacrifice, the central point of the “*actio Christi cuius personam gerit sacerdos celebrans*,” or “*sacerdotes concelebrantes*” in the case of a true concelebration.

Some recent events give Us the occasion to speak with precision on certain points regarding the matter. When the consecration of the bread and wine is validly brought about, the whole action of Christ is actually accomplished. Even if all that remains could not be completed, still, nothing essential is wanting to the Lord’s oblation.

### **Concelebration**

After the consecration is performed, the “*oblation hostiae super altare positae*” can be accomplished by the priest–celebrant, by the Church, by the other priests, by each of the faithful. But this action is not “*actio ipsius Christi per sacerdotem ipsius personam sustinentem et gerentem*.” In reality the action of the consecrating priest is the very action of Christ Who acts through His minister. In the case of a concelebration in the proper sense of the word, Christ, instead of acting through one minister, acts through several. On the other hand, in a merely ceremonial consecration, which could also be the act of a lay person, there is not question of simultaneous consecration, and this fact raises the important point: “What intention and what exterior action are required to have a true concelebration and simultaneous consecration?”

On this subject let Us recall what We said in our Apostolic Constitution “*Episcopalis Consecrationis*” of November 30, 1944. (15) We there laid down that in an episcopal consecration the two Bishops who accompany the consecrator must have the intention of consecrating the Bishop–elect, and that, consequently, they must perform the exterior actions and pronounce the words by which the power and the grace to transmit are signified and transmitted. It is, then, not sufficient for them to unite their wills with that of the chief consecrator, and to declare that they make his words and actions their own. They must themselves perform the actions and pronounce the essential words.

The same thing likewise happens in concelebration in the true sense. It is not sufficient to have and to indicate the will to make one’s own the words and actions of the celebrant. The concelebrants must themselves say over the bread and the wine, “This is my Body,” “This is my Blood.” Otherwise, their concelebration is purely ceremonial.

### **Essential Elements**

And so it may not be affirmed that, “in the last analysis the only decisive question is to know in what measure personal participation, supported by the grace which one receives in the offering of worship, increases the participation in the cross and in the grace of Christ, Who unites us to Himself and with each other.” This inaccurate manner of putting the question We have already rejected in the Allocution of November 2, 1954; but certain theologians still cannot reconcile themselves to it. We therefore repeat it: the decisive question (for concelebration as for the Mass of a single priest) is not to know the fruit the soul draws from it, but the nature of the act which is performed: does or does not the priest, as minister of Christ, perform “*actio Christi se ipsum sacrificantes et offerentis?*”

Likewise for the sacraments, it is not a question of knowing the fruit produced by them, but whether the essential elements of the sacramental sign (the performing of the sign

by the minister himself who performs the gestures and pronounces the words with the intention *saltem faciendi quod facit ecclesia*) have been validly performed.

Likewise, in celebration and concelebration, one must see whether, along with the necessary interior intention, the celebrant completes the external action, and, above all, pronounces the words which constitute the "*actio Christi se ipsum sacrificantis et offerentis*." This is not verified when the priest does not pronounce over the bread and the wine our Lord's words: "This is my Body," "This is my Blood."

## **2. "PRAESENTIA CHRISTI"**

Just as altar and sacrifice dominate liturgical worship, the life of Christ must be said to be completely dominated by the sacrifice of the Cross.

The Angel's words to His foster-father: "*He shall save his people from their sins*," (16) those of John the Baptist: "*Behold the lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world*," (17) those of Christ Himself to Nicodemus: "*Even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that those who believe in him... may have life everlasting*," (18) to His disciples: "*But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished*," (19) and the words especially which He spoke at the Last Supper and on Calvary, all show that the core of our divine Lord's life and thought was the Cross and the offering of Himself to the Father in order to reconcile men to God and to save them.

But is not He who offers sacrifice somehow greater than the sacrifice itself? So now we would like to speak to you about the Lord Himself, and first of all to call your attention to the fact that in the Eucharist the Church possesses the Lord, flesh and blood, body and soul and divinity. This is solemnly defined by the Council of Trent, in its thirteenth Session, canon 1. It suffices, moreover, to take the words pronounced by Jesus in their clear, literal, unambiguous meaning to arrive at the same conclusion: "Take and eat. This is my Body, which shall be given for you. Take and drink, this is my Blood, which shall be shed for you." And St. Paul uses the same clear and simple words in his first letter to the Corinthians. (20)

On this subject there is neither doubt nor divergence of opinion among Catholics. But as soon as speculative theology begins to discuss the manner in which Christ is present in the Eucharist, serious differences of opinion rise on a number of points. We do not wish to go into these speculative controversies. We would like, however, to point out certain limits and insist on a fundamental principle of interpretation whose neglect causes Us some anxiety.

### **A norm for theological speculation**

Speculation must take as its norm that the literal meaning of scriptural texts, the faith and teaching of the Church, take precedence over a scientific system and theoretical considerations. Science must conform to revelation, not revelation to science. When a philosophical concept distorts the genuine meaning of a revealed truth, it is either inaccurate or being applied incorrectly.

### **The nature of the real presence**

This principle finds application in the doctrine of the real presence. Certain theologians, though they accept the Council's teaching on the real presence and transubstantiation, interpret the words of Christ and those of the Council in such a way that nothing more remains of the presence of Christ than a sort of envelope empty of its natural content.

In their opinion, what the species of bread and wine substantially and actually contain is "the Lord in heaven," with Whom the species have a so-called real and substantial



relation of content and presence. Such a speculative interpretation raises serious objections when presented as one fully adequate, since the Christian sense of the faithful, the constant catechetical teaching of the Church, the terms of the Council, and above all the words of our Lord require that the Eucharist contain the Lord Himself.

The sacramental species are not the Lord, even if they have a so-called essential relation of container and presence contained with the substance of the heavenly Christ. The Lord said: "This is my Body! This is my Blood!" He did not say, "This is something apparent to the senses which signifies the presence of My Body and Blood."

No doubt He could effect that those perceptible signs of a true relation of presence should also be perceptible and efficacious signs of sacramental grace; but there is question here of the essential content of the "eucharistic species," not of their sacramental efficacy. Therefore it cannot be admitted that the theory We have just described gives full satisfaction to the words of Christ; that the presence of Christ in the Eucharist means nothing more; or that this theory is adequate to enable us to say in all truth of the Eucharist: "It is the Lord." (21)

Undoubtedly, the majority of the faithful is unable to grasp the difficult speculative problems and the attempts to explain the nature of Christ's presence. The Roman Catechism, moreover, advises against discussing such questions before the faithful, (22) but it neither mentions nor proposes the theory outlined above. Still less does it affirm that such a theory exhausts the meaning of Christ's words and gives them a full explanation. One can still search for scientific explanations and interpretations, but they must not, so to speak, drive Christ from the Eucharist and leave in the tabernacle only a Eucharistic species retaining a so-called real and essential relation with the true Lord Who is in Heaven.

It is surprising that those who are not satisfied with the theory We have just described should be listed as adversaries, among the non-scientific "physicists," or that there is no hesitation in saying, with regard to the so-called scientific conception of Christ's presence: "This truth is not for the Masses."

### **The tabernacle**

To these considerations We must add some remarks concerning the tabernacle. Just as We said above: "The Lord is somehow greater than the altar and the sacrifice," so now We might say: "Is the tabernacle, where dwells the Lord Who has come down amongst His people, greater than altar and sacrifice?" The altar is more important than the tabernacle, because on it is offered the Lord's sacrifice. No doubt the tabernacle holds the "*Sacramentum permanens*"; but it is not an "*altare permanens*," for the Lord offers Himself in sacrifice only on the altar during the celebration of Holy Mass, not after or outside the Mass.

In the tabernacle, on the other hand, He is present as long as the consecrated species last, yet is not making a permanent sacrificial offering.

### **Sacrifice and adoration**

One has a perfect right to distinguish between the offering or the sacrifice of the Mass and the "*cultus latreuticus*" offered to the God-Man hidden in the Eucharist. A decision of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, dated July 7, 1927, severely limits exposition of the Blessed Sacrament during Mass. (23) But this is easily explained by a concern to keep habitually separate the act of sacrifice and the worship of simple adoration, in order that the faithful may clearly understand the characteristics proper to each.

Still an awareness of their unity is more important than a realization of their



differences. It is one and the same Lord Who is immolated on the altar and honored in the tabernacle, and Who pours out His blessings from the tabernacle.

A person who was thoroughly convinced of this would avoid many difficulties. He would be wary of exaggerating the significance of one to the detriment of the other, and of opposing decisions of the Holy See.

### **Worship of Christ in the Eucharist**

The Council of Trent has explained the disposition of soul required concerning the Blessed Sacrament: *"If anyone says that Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, is not to be adored in the holy sacrament of the Eucharist with the worship of latria, including the external worship, and that the sacrament, therefore, is not to be honored with extraordinary festive celebrations nor solemnly carried from place to place in processions according to the praiseworthy universal rite and custom of the holy Church: or that the sacrament is not to be publicly exposed for the people's adoration, and that those who adore it are idolators: let him be anathema."* (24)

*"If anyone says that it is not permissible to keep the sacred Eucharist in a holy place, but that it must necessarily be distributed immediately after the consecration to those who are present; or that it is not permissible to carry the Eucharist respectfully to the sick: let him be anathema."* (25)

He who clings wholeheartedly to this teaching has no thought of formulating objections against the presence of the tabernacle on the altar.

### **The position of the tabernacle**

In the instruction of the Holy Office, "*De arte sacra*," of June 30, 1952, (26) the Holy See insists, among other things, on this point: *"This Supreme Sacred Congregation strictly commands that the prescriptions of Canons 1268, #2, and 1269 #1, be faithfully observed: 'The Most Blessed Eucharist should be kept in the most distinguished and honorable place in the church, and hence as a rule at the main altar unless some other be considered more convenient and suitable for veneration and worship due to so great a Sacrament... The Most Blessed Sacrament must be kept in an immovable tabernacle set in the middle of the altar.'" (27)*

There is question, not so much of the material presence of the tabernacle on the altar, as of a tendency to which We would like to call your attention, that of a lessening of esteem for the presence and action of Christ in the tabernacle. The sacrifice of the altar is held sufficient, and the importance of Him who accomplishes it is reduced.

### **The person of our Lord**

Yet the person of our Lord must hold the central place in worship, for it is His person that unifies the relations of the altar and the tabernacle and gives them their meaning.

It is through the sacrifice of the altar, first of all, that the Lord becomes present in the Eucharist, and He is in the tabernacle only as a "*memoria sacrificii et passionis suae*."

To separate tabernacle from altar is to separate two things which by their origin and their nature should remain united.

Specialists will offer various opinions for solving the problem of so placing the tabernacle on the altar as not to impede the celebration of Mass when the priest is facing the congregation. The essential point is to understand that it is the same Lord present on the altar and in the tabernacle.

## Pious practices

One might also stress the attitude of the Church regarding certain pious practices: visits to the Blessed Sacrament, which she earnestly recommends, the Forty Hours devotion or “perpetual adoration,” the holy hour, the solemn carrying of Holy Communion to the sick, processions of the Blessed Sacrament. The most enthusiastic and convinced liturgist must be able to understand and appreciate what our Lord in the tabernacle means to the solidly pious faithful, be they unlearned or educated. He is their counselor, their consoler, their strength and refuge, their hope in life and in death.

Not satisfied simply with letting the faithful come to their Lord in the tabernacle, the liturgical movement, then, will strive to draw them even more.

## 3. “*INFINITA ET DIVINA MAIESTAS CHRISTI*”

The third and final point We would like to treat is that of the “*infinita et divina Maiestas*” of Christ, which the words “*Christus Deus*” expresses.

Certainly the Incarnate Word is Lord and Savior of men; but He is and remains the Word, the infinite God. In the Athanasian creed it is said: “*Our Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, is God and Man.*”

### Humanity and divinity of Christ

The humanity of Christ has a right also to the worship of “*latría*” because of its hypostatic union with the Word, but his divinity is the reason and source of this worship. And so, the divinity of Christ cannot remain on the outer edge of liturgical thought.

It is normal to go “*ad Patrem per Christum*,” since Christ is Mediator between God and men. But He is not only Mediator; He is also within the Trinity, equal to the Father and the Holy Spirit. Let it suffice to recall the magnificent prologue of St. John’s Gospel: “The Word was God....All things were made through him, and without him nothing was made that has been made.” (28) Christ is First and Last, Alpha and Omega.

At the end of the world, when all enemies shall have been overcome, and last of all, death itself, Christ, the Word subsisting in human nature, will give over the Kingdom to God His Father, and the Son will subject Himself to Him Who has subjected all to the son, so that “God may be all in all.” (29)

Meditation on the “*infinita, summa, divina Maiestas*” of Christ can surely contribute to a deeper appreciation of the liturgy. That is why We wished to call your attention to this point.

In closing We would like to add two remarks on the “liturgy of the past” and the “liturgy of the present.”

### The immutable and the transitory

*The Liturgy and the Past.* In liturgical matters, as in many other fields, one must avoid two exaggerated viewpoints concerning the past: blind attachment and utter contempt. The liturgy contains immutable elements, a sacred content which transcends time; but changeable, transitory, occasionally even defective, elements are to be found there.

It seems to Us that the present day attitude of liturgical circles toward the past is quite balanced. They seek and study seriously, hold on to what is really worthwhile without,

however, falling into excess. Yet here and there erroneous tendencies appear, resistances, enthusiasms or condemnations, whose concrete manifestations you know well, and which We briefly mentioned above.

### **Progress and conservation**

*The Liturgy and the Present.* The Liturgy stamps a characteristic mark on the life of the Church, even on the whole religious attitude of the day. Especially noteworthy is the active conscientious participation of the faithful at liturgical functions.

From the Church's side, today's liturgy involves a concern for progress, but also for conservation and defense. It returns to the past, but does not slavishly imitate. It creates new elements in the ceremonies themselves, in using the vernacular, in popular chant and in the building of churches.

### **Latin in the liturgy**

Yet it would be superfluous to call once more to mind that the Church has grave motives for firmly insisting that in the Latin rite the priest celebrating Mass has an absolute obligation to use Latin, and also, when Gregorian chant accompanies the Holy Sacrifice, that this be done in the Church's tongue.

### **Response of the faithful**

For their part the faithful are careful to respond to the measures taken by the Church, but adopt divergent attitudes: some manifest promptness and enthusiasm, even at times a too lively fervor which provokes the intervention of authority. Others show indifference and even opposition. Thus are laid bare differences of temperament, and preferences for individual piety or for community worship.

### **Liturgy and the modern world**

Present day liturgy interests itself likewise in many special problems. Among these are the relation of the liturgy to the religious ideas of the world of today, contemporary culture, social questions, depth psychology.

This mere enumeration is enough to show you that the various aspects of today's liturgy not only arouse Our interest, but keep Our vigilance on alert. We sincerely desire the progress of the liturgical movement, and wish to help it, but it is also Our duty to forestall whatever might be a source of error or danger.

It is, however, a consolation and joy for Us to know that in these matters We can rely on your help and understanding.

May these considerations, along with the labors which occupied your attention these past days, produce abundant fruit and contribute to the attainment of the goal towards which the sacred liturgy is striving. In token of divine blessings, which We beg for you and the souls confided to you, We impart to you from Our heart Our Apostolic Benediction.

*\* Reported in Osservatore Romano, September 24, 1956. French text. Translated based on one released by Vatican Press Office. Most of the quotations in this address were cited by the Holy Father in Latin but have been translated here. Latin phrases incorporated directly into the text of the address have been left in that language.*

*This address was delivered to twelve hundred delegates to the International*

***Congress on Pastoral Liturgy who had come to Rome by special train after their four day session at Assisi. About a hundred delegates from the United States were present (p. 274)***

1. *Acta Ap. Sedis*, a. 5, 1913, pp. 449–451.
2. *Acta Ap. Sedis*, a. 39, 1947, pp. 522–595.
3. *Acta Ap. Sedis*, a. 47, 1955, pp. 838–847.
4. *Acta Ap. Sedis*, a. 48, 1956, pp. 5–25 [English translation in *The Pope Speaks*, Vol. 3, pp. 7–23. – Ed.]
5. *Acta Ap. Sedis*, a. 39, 1947, pp. 528–529.
6. I *Cor.* 3, 23.
7. I *Peter.* 5, 2.
8. *Acta Ap. Sedis*, a. 39, 1947, p. 544.
9. *Acta Ap. Sedis*, a. 46, 1954, pp. 313–317; 666–677. [English translation in *The Pope Speaks*, Vol. 1, pp. 153–58; 375–385. – Ed.]
10. *Acta Ap. Sedis*, a. 46, 1954, pp. 668–670. [See footnote 9. – Ed.]
11. *Conc. Trid.*, Sess. XXII, cap. 2.
12. *Acta Ap. Sedis*, 1, c., p. 668. [See footnote 9. – Ed.]
13. *Acta Ap. Sedis*, 1. c., p. 669. [See footnote 9. – Ed.]
14. Cf. *Conc. Trid.*, Sess. XIII, ch. 4 and 3.
15. *Acta Ap. Sedis*, a. 37, 1945, pp. 131–132.
16. *Mt.* 1, 21.
17. *John*, 1, 29.
18. *John*, 3, 14–15.
19. *Luke*, 12, 50.
20. I *Cor.*, 11, 23–25.
21. Cf. *John*, 21, 7.
22. Cf. *Catech. Rom.*, pars II, cap. IV, n. 43, sq.
23. *Acta Ap. Sedis*, a. 19, 1927, pag. 289.
24. *Conc. Trid.*, Sessio XIII, can. 6.
25. *Conc. Trid.*, 1. c., can. 7.
26. *Acta Ap. Sedis*, a 44, 1952, pp. 542–546.
27. *Acta Ap. Sedis*, 1, c., p. 544.
28. *John*, 1, 1–3.
29. I *Cor.*, 15, 28.

Wed Jun 13, 2007 7:27 am

[PROFILE](#)

Vince Sheridan



Pax Christi !

**Joined:** Sat May 20, 2006  
11:46 pm  
**Posts:** 746  
**Location:** Western  
Washington, USA

Mike– Many thanks, I have printed this out.

In Xto,  
Vincent

Thu Jun 14, 2007 4:00 pm

[PROFILE](#)

Mike

**Re: 1956 Address of Pope Pius XII on the Liturgy**

Now posted on the Bellarmine Forums for the benefit of the BF readers.

**Joined:** Wed May 17, 2006  
3:38 pm  
**Posts:** 456  
**Location:** New England

Yours in JMJ,  
Mike