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32. CONSILIUM, Letter *L'heureux développement* of Cardinal G. Lercaro to presidents of the conferences of bishops, on problems in the reform of the liturgy, 25 January 1966: Not 2 (1966) 157–161 (French; issued in six major languages).*

The favorable development of the liturgical reform and of the pastoral movement connected with it continues to have an ever deeper and more beneficial effect on the life of our parish communities. Generous perseverance in this effort, above all if carried out in harmony with the bishops and under their active and watchful guidance, will, one hopes, bear even richer fruits of spiritual renewal.

In view of this progress in the liturgical apostolate, I should like to speak with Your Excellency about some problems that have recently made themselves apparent.

1. RELATIONS BETWEEN HIERARCHIES AND LITURGICAL CENTERS

In his Allocution of 10 November 1965, to those taking part in the “*Conventus de popularibus interpretationibus textuum liturgicorum*,” the Holy Father emphasized that liturgical centers and periodicals of a liturgical nature which are not the direct expression of the episcopal conference or of the national liturgical commission should have a much closer relationship with the episcopal conferences, in such a way that in the same nation directions on liturgical action should be one and the same, and coming directly from the hierarchy. “*Cum sacra Liturgia universa moderationi Hierarchiae sit obnoxia (see Const. de sacra Lit., art. 22, par. 1–2; AAS 56, 1964, 106),*” said the Holy Father, “*omnes, sive singuli, sive coetus, sive praecipue in nationibus instituta rei liturgicae accurandae et provehendae, sive commentarii, quibus idem est propositum, in unaquaque regione plane pendeant ex Hierarchia. Competentis auctoritatis est huiusmodi arctioris necessitudinis vincula definire de iisque statuere. Summo igitur studio est annitendum, ut hac etiam in re omnium sit*

* English text from the Consilium.

una voluntas, una actio, quemadmodum unus est finis, ad quem contenditur, una perfectionis imago, quae mentibus obversatur et ad quam assequendam tot fiunt conatus.”^a

To put the Holy Father’s desire into action, in a meeting of the presidents of the national liturgical commissions, held in the Palace of the Cancellaria Apostolica on 17 November 1965, the following guidelines were put forward to the Fathers assembled there:

a. By “centers” are meant those dealing with the liturgical and pastoral apostolate, and which promote public events in connection with this. Such centers are, for example, those organizing liturgical weeks or directing schools or institutes of liturgy.

b. “Periodicals” here mean those of a pastoral and not purely scientific nature; however, it is for the competent authority to be judge of the character of the various periodicals.

c. The same competent authority will decide how this closer link will best be established. It may well vary according to the place and circumstances: by means of a delegate on the staff or editorial board, or a reviser, or a director designated by the bishops, etc.

What matters is that throughout the region there should be uniform norms and directives, and a single control over the development of the liturgy, namely, control by the bishops. This does not mean that they will stifle those capable of furthering liturgical renewal; rather, it is for the bishops to sustain and protect them, to set them out on new initiatives, so that both clergy and faithful may better understand and take part in the liturgy.

These norms come into effect as from now, and the Consilium would be extremely grateful to know as soon as possible how, in the ambit of Your Excellency’s own conference, these have been applied in practice.

2. MASSES IN LATIN

It is only right that where the use of the vernacular in the liturgy is concerned, one should be guided not only by the spirit of the Liturgy Constitution, but also by an awareness of the given situation in different places. Here and there, in fact, the adoption of the vernacular in the Mass has given rise to some signs of disquiet. It would be good if local Ordinaries were to consider the eventual suitability of preserving in some churches, especially in big cities and in places where there are large influxes of tourists, one, or more if necessary, Mass in Latin. This would be said according to an established and publicized timetable, insofar as and to the extent that it seemed necessary or desirable.

3. THE LANGUAGE IN BILINGUAL REGIONS

In the same pastoral spirit, the Ordinary in bilingual regions will lay down those dispositions which best provide for the needs of the various language groups. The use of Latin for example is one way, or, as is the praiseworthy practice in many places, by arranging that the sacred celebrations should be at different times for people speaking different languages. Every care must be taken that the use of the language adopted in worship should not be a cause of damage to the religious

^a “Moreover, since the whole liturgy is subject to the regulation of the hierarchy (see SC art. 22, §§ 1 and 2 [DOL 1 no. 22]), in every nation the individuals, groups, and especially the principal national institutes for the care and promotion of liturgy, as well as all periodicals having the same purpose, should be wholly dependent on the hierarchy. The competent authority has the right to determine the means and establish rules for this close relationship. Every effort must be made for unity of will and of action in this matter, for we have a single goal to reach and a single ideal of perfection to keep before our minds and to make the aim of all our efforts” [DOL 113 no. 789].

practice of the people, nor should it lessen the harmony and charity of the parish community.

4. CHOIRS

There are some who think that the liturgical revival implies that choirs have had their day, that they have outlasted their usefulness and can quietly be scrapped. As a matter of fact this has already happened in certain cathedrals, colleges, and shrines, where the choir has been suppressed.

The principle upon which such action seeks to rest has no foundation in truth. If it is to be desired that the liturgical assembly be initiated, educated, and guided in its singing, a choir is indispensable. The choir, while adding dignity and solemnity by its own mastery of what it sings, must also undertake the moderating function of leading and sustaining the participation of the faithful in those parts which are proper to them.

5. THE SACRED QUALITY OF CHURCH MUSIC

It is necessary moreover that the principles of sacredness and dignity which distinguish church music, be it for its chant as for its sound,^b should remain intact. All that which is merely secular should be proscribed from the house of God. Jazz, for example, cannot today be part of a musical repertoire designed for worship.

Where musical instruments are concerned, differing mentalities, cultures, and traditions are to be borne in mind, and those instruments which have an entirely secular connotation should not be allowed in church. The Church has immense possibilities for deep, effective and uplifting action, without having recourse to means which are very dubious and even, by common consent, harmful.

6. ALTARS VERSUS POPULUM AND TABERNACLES

I have already spoken about this in my letter of 30 June 1965,^c but by your leave I intend to return briefly to the same subject.

The altar *versus populum*, certainly makes for a celebration of the eucharist which is truer and more communal; it also makes participation easier. Here too, however, prudence should be our guide. Above all because for a living and participated liturgy, it is not indispensable that the altar should be *versus populum*: in the Mass, the entire liturgy of the word is celebrated at the chair, ambo or lectern, and, therefore, facing the assembly; as to the eucharistic liturgy, loudspeaker systems make participation feasible enough. Secondly, hard thought should be given to the artistic and architectural question, this element in many places being protected by rigorous civil laws. It should not be forgotten that many other factors, on the part of the celebrant and on the part of the ministers and surroundings, are required to make the celebration genuinely worthy and meaningful.

Provisional altars, constructed in front of the main altars for celebration *versus populum*, should gradually disappear, giving way to a more permanent arrangement of the place of sacrifice.

In making these necessary arrangements regarding the altar where Mass is normally celebrated on Sundays and feast days, especial care should be taken concerning the positioning of the tabernacle, giving it a place completely worthy of it according to the indications and norms already given by this Consilium. In each and every case where it is intended to put the tabernacle in a place other than on the altar, the Ordinary must judge whether or not all requirements are met in the

^b *Sic.* The French has "in regard both to singing and to musical instruments."

^c See DOL 31 nos. 415–416.

alternative proposal. It is therefore excluded that a decision of this nature be left to the liturgical commissions, national or diocesan, and even less to individual priests.

7. WOMEN SERVING AT THE ALTAR

Finally, there have not been entirely wanting those who, acting on arbitrary interpretations of one or other of the articles in the Constitution, have believed it lawful to allow women and girls to serve at the altar in the sacred ceremonies. A woman has a right and duty to a *munus liturgicum*, and quite how far this goes has yet to be accurately studied, but that under present-day legislation women have no *ministerium* at the altar is certain. The *ministerium* depends upon the will of the Church, and the Church has never extended this liturgical *ministerium* to women. Accordingly, any arbitrary innovation in this field is a grave infraction of church discipline and should be firmly eliminated.

Your Excellency is asked to kindly pass on these points to the bishops, but "only" to the bishops, of your conference. These points have as their aim, the giving of some norms in order that the conference and their excellencies themselves might formulate and communicate concrete directives to the liturgical commissions and clergy of their respective dioceses.

I wish to express my fraternal and earnest thanks for whatever you may be able to do in this regard.