

From 2005–2009, **Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith** served as Secretary of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. **On 8 December 2008, he wrote as follows :**

The *Consilium ad exsequendam Constitutionem de Sacra Liturgia* too was not exempt from being influenced by this overwhelming tidal wave of a so-called desire for “change” and “openness”. Possibly some of the above mentioned relativizing tendencies influenced the liturgy too, undermining the centrality, the sacredness, sense of mystery as well as the value of what the continuous action of the Holy Spirit in the bi-millennial history of the Church had helped ecclesial liturgical life to grow into. An exaggerated sense of antiquarianism, anthropologism, confusion of roles between the ordained and the non-ordained, a limitless provision of space for experimentation – and, indeed, the tendency to look down upon some aspects of the development of the liturgy in the second millennium – were increasingly visible among certain liturgical schools. Liturgists had also tended to pick and choose sections of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* which seemed to be more accommodating to change or novelty while ignoring others. Besides, there was a great sense of hurry to effect and legalize changes. Much space tended to be provided for a rather horizontalist way of looking at the liturgy. Norms of the Council that tended to restrict such creativity or were favorable to “the traditional way” seemed to be ignored. Worse still, some practices which *Sacrosanctum Concilium* had never even contemplated were allowed into the liturgy, like Mass “*versus populum*”, Holy Communion on the hand, altogether giving up on the Latin and Gregorian Chant in favor of the vernacular and songs and hymns without much space for God, and extension beyond any reasonable limits of the faculty to concelebrate at Holy Mass. There was also the gross misinterpretation of the principle of “active participation” (*actuosa participatio*).

All of that had its effect on the work of the Consilium. Those who guided the process of change both within the Consilium and later in the Sacred Congregation of Rites were certainly being influenced by all these novel tendencies. Not everything they introduced was negative. Much of the work done was praiseworthy. But much room was also left for experimentation and arbitrary interpretation. These “freedoms” were exploited to their fullest extent by some liturgical “experts” leading to too much confusion. Cardinal Ratzinger explains how “one shudders at the lackluster face of the post-conciliar liturgy as it has become, or one is bored with its banality and its lack of artistic standards” [*The Feast of Faith*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 1986, p. 100]. This is not to lay the responsibility for what happened solely on the members of the Consilium. But some of their approaches were “weak.” There indeed was a general spirit of uncritical “giving in” on certain matters to the rabble rousing spirit of the era, even within the Church, most visibly in some sectors and geographic regions. Some of those in authority at the level of the Sacred Congregation of Rites too did show signs of weakness in this matter. Too many indults had been given on certain requirements of the norms.