

**HOW SHOULD WE MOVE TOWARDS A MORE AUTHENTIC
IMPLEMENTATION OF SACROSANCTUM CONCILIIUM
TODAY?**

By Robert CARDINAL SARAH

In the light of the fundamental desires of the Council Fathers and of the different situations that we have seen arise following the [Second Vatican] Council, I would like to present some practical considerations on how we can implement *Sacrosanctum Concilium* more faithfully today. Even though I serve as the Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship, I do so in all humility as a priest and a bishop in the hope that they will promote mature reflection and scholarship and good liturgical practice throughout the Church.

It will come as no surprise if I say that first of all we must examine the quality and depth of our liturgical formation, of how we imbue our clergy, religious and lay faithful with the spirit and power of the liturgy. Too often we assume that our candidates for ordination to the priesthood or the permanent diaconate “know” enough about the liturgy. But the Council was not insisting on knowledge here, though, of course, the Constitution stressed the importance of liturgical studies (see: nn. 15-17). No, the liturgical formation that is primary and essential is more one of immersion in the liturgy, in the deep mystery of God our loving Father. It is a question of living the liturgy in all its richness, so that having drunk deeply from its fount we always have a thirst for its delights, its order and beauty, its silence and contemplation, its exultation and adoration, its ability to connect us intimately with He who is at work in and through the Church’s sacred rites.

That is why those “in formation” for pastoral ministry should live the liturgy as fully as is possible in their seminaries or houses of formation. Candidates for the permanent diaconate should have an immersion in an intense liturgical life over a prolonged period also. And, I would add, that the full and rich celebration of the more ancient use of the Roman rite, the *usus antiquior*, should be an important part of liturgical formation for clergy, for how can we begin to comprehend or celebrate the reformed rites with a hermeneutic of continuity if we have never experienced the beauty of the liturgical tradition which the Fathers of the Council themselves knew and which has produced so many saints over the centuries? A wise openness to the mystery of the Church and her rich, centuries-old tradition, and a humble docility to what the Holy Spirit says to the Churches today are real signs that we belong to Jesus Christ: And he said to them, “Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.” (Mt 13:52).

If we attend to this, if our new priests and deacons truly thirst for the liturgy, they will themselves be able to form those entrusted to their care—even if the liturgical circumstances and possibilities of their ecclesial mission are more modest than those of the seminary or of a cathedral. I am aware of many priests in such circumstances who form their people in the spirit and power of the liturgy, and whose parishes are examples of great liturgical beauty. We should remember that dignified simplicity is not the same as reductive minimalism or a negligent and vulgar style. As our Holy Father, Pope Francis, teaches in his Apostolic Exhortation the beauty of the liturgy, which is both a celebration of the task of evangelization and the source of her renewed self-giving.” (n. 24)

Secondly, I think that it is very important that we are clear about the nature of liturgical participation, of the *participatio actuosa* for which the Council called. There has been a lot of confusion here over recent decades. Article 48 of the Constitution states: “The Church...earnestly desires that Christ’s faithful, when present at this mystery of faith, should not be there as strangers or silent spectators; on the contrary, through a good understanding of the rites and prayers they should take part in the sacred action conscious of what they are doing, with devotion and full collaboration.” The Council sees participation as primarily internal, coming about “through a good understanding of the rites and prayers.” The inner life, the life immersed in God and intimately inhabited by God is the indispensable condition for a successful and fruitful participation in the Holy Mysteries that we celebrate in the liturgy. The Eucharistic celebration must be essentially lived internally. It is within us that God wants to meet us. The Fathers called for the faithful to sing, to respond to the priest, to assume liturgical ministries that are rightfully theirs, certainly, but it insists that all should be “conscious of what they are doing, with devotion and full collaboration.”

If we understand the priority of internalising our liturgical participation we will avoid the noisy and dangerous liturgical activism that has been too prominent in recent decades. We do not go to the liturgy so as to perform, to do things for others to see: we go to be connected with Christ’s action through an internalisation of the external liturgical rites, prayers, signs and symbols. It may be that we priests whose vocation is to minister liturgically need to remember this more than others! But we also need to form others, particularly our children and young people, in the true meaning of liturgical participation, in the true way to pray the liturgy.

Thirdly, I have spoken of the fact that some of the reforms introduced following the Council may have been put together according to the spirit of the times and that there has been an increasing amount of critical study by faithful sons and daughters of the Church asking whether what was in fact produced truly implemented the aims of the Constitution, or whether in reality they went beyond them. This discussion sometimes takes place under the title of a “reform of the reform,” and I am aware that Father Thomas Kocik presented a learned study on this question at the *Sacra Liturgia* conference in New York one year ago.

I do not think that we can dismiss the possibility or the desirability of an official reform of the liturgical reform, because its proponents make some important claims in their attempt to be faithful to the Council's insistence in article 23 of the Constitution "that sound tradition...be retained, and yet the way remain open to legitimate progress." It must begin with a careful theological, historical, pastoral study and "there must be no innovations unless the good of the Church genuinely and certainly requires them; and care must be taken that any new forms adopted should in some way grow organically from forms already existing."

Indeed, I can say that when I was received in audience by the Holy Father last April, Pope Francis asked me to study the question of a reform of a reform and the way in which the two forms of the Roman rite could enrich each other. This will be a long and delicate work and I ask for your patience and prayers. But if we are to implement Sacrosanctum Concilium more faithfully, if we are to achieve what the Council desired, this is a serious question which must be carefully studied and acted on with the necessary clarity and prudence in prayer and total submission to God.

We priests, we bishops bear a great responsibility. How our good example builds up good liturgical practice; how our carelessness, our routine or wrongdoing harms the Church and her Sacred Liturgy!

We priests must be worshippers first and foremost. Our people can see the difference between a priest who celebrates with faith and one who celebrates in a hurry, frequently looking at his watch, almost so as to say that he wants to get back to his pastoral work or to other engagements or to go to view his television as quickly as possible! Fathers, we can do no more important thing than celebrate the sacred mysteries: let us beware of the temptation of liturgical sloth or lukewarmness, because it is a temptation of the devil.

We must remember that we are not the authors of the liturgy, we are its humble ministers, subject to its discipline and laws. We are also responsible to form those who assist us in liturgical ministries in both the spirit and power of the liturgy and indeed its regulations. Sometimes I have seen priests step aside to allow extraordinary ministers distribute Holy Communion: this is wrong, it is a denial of the priestly ministry as well as a clericalisation of the laity. When this happens it is a sign that formation has gone very wrong, and that it needs to be corrected. (see: Mt 14:18-21). "Then, taking the five loaves... gave them to his disciples to set before the people... Those who ate of the loaves were five thousand men (Mk 6:30-44; Mt 14:18-21).

I have also seen priests, and bishops, vested to celebrate Holy Mass, take out telephones and cameras and use them in the Sacred Liturgy. This is a terrible indictment of what they believe to be the mission they assume when they put on the liturgical vestments, which clothe and transform us as an alter Christus—and much more, as ipse Christus, as Christ himself. To do this is a sacrilege. No bishop, priest or deacon vested for liturgical ministry or present in the sanctuary should be taking photographs, even at large-scale concelebrated Masses. That priests sadly often do this at such Masses, or talk with each other and sit casually, is a sign, I think, that we need urgently to rethink the appropriateness of these immense concelebrations,

especially if they lead priests into this sort of scandalous behaviour that is so unworthy of the mystery being celebrated, or if the sheer size of these concelebrations leads to a risk of the profanation of the Blessed Eucharist.

It is equally a scandal and profanation for the lay faithful to take photographs during the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. They should participate through prayer and not by spending their time taking photos!

I want to make an appeal to all priests. You may have read my article in *L'Osservatore Romano* one year ago (12 June 2015) or my interview with the journal *Famille Chrétienne* in May of this year. On both occasions I said that I believe that it is very important that we return as soon as possible to a common orientation, of priests and the faithful turned together in the same direction—Eastwards or at least towards the apse—to the Lord who comes, in those parts of the liturgical rites when we are addressing God. This practice is permitted by current liturgical legislation. It is perfectly legitimate in the modern rite. Indeed, I think it is a very important step in ensuring that in our celebrations the Lord is truly at the centre.

And so, dear Fathers, I humbly and fraternally ask you to implement this practice wherever possible, with prudence and with the necessary catechesis, certainly, but also with a pastor's confidence that this is something good for the Church, something good for our people. Your own pastoral judgement will determine how and when this is possible, but perhaps beginning this on the first Sunday of Advent this year, when we attend 'the Lord who will come' and 'who will not delay' (see: Introit, Mass of Wednesday of the first week of Advent) may be a very good time to do this. Dear Fathers, we should listen again to the lament of God proclaimed by the prophet Jeremiah: "they have turned their backs to me and not their faces" (2:27). Let us turn again towards the Lord! Since the day of his Baptism, the Christian knows only one direction: the Orient. "You entered to confront your enemy, for you intended to renounce him to his face. You turned toward the East (ad Orientem), for one who renounces the devil turns towards Christ and fixes his gaze directly on Him" (From the beginning of the Treatise on the Mysteries by Saint Ambrose, Bishop of Milan).

I very humbly and fraternally would like to appeal also to my brother bishops: please lead your priests and people towards the Lord in this way, particularly at large celebrations in your dioceses and in your cathedral. Please form your seminarians in the reality that we are not called to the priesthood to be at the centre of liturgical worship ourselves, but to lead Christ's faithful to him as fellow worshippers united in the one same act of adoration. Please facilitate this simple but profound reform in your dioceses, your cathedrals, your parishes and your seminaries.

We bishops have a great responsibility, and one day we shall have to answer to the Lord for our stewardship. We are the owners of nothing! Nothing belongs to us! As St Paul teaches, we are merely "the servants of Christ and the stewards of the mysteries of God. Now it is of course required of stewards that they be found trustworthy" (1 Cor. 4:1-2). We are responsible to ensure that the sacred realities of the liturgy are respected in our dioceses and that our priests and deacons not only observe the liturgical laws, but know the spirit and power of the liturgy

from which they emerge. I was very encouraged to read the presentation on "The Bishop: Governor, Promoter and Guardian of the Liturgical Life of the Diocese" made to the 2013 Sacra Liturgia conference in Rome by Archbishop Alexander Sample of Portland in Oregon in the USA, and I fraternally encourage my brother bishops to study his considerations carefully.

All liturgical ministers should make an examination of conscience periodically. For this I recommend part II of the Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* of Benedict XVI (22 February 2007), "The Eucharist, a Mystery to be Celebrated." It is almost ten years since this Exhortation was published as the collegial fruit of the 2005 Synod of Bishops. How much progress have we made in that time? What more do we need to do? We must ask ourselves these questions before the Lord, each of us according to our responsibility, and then do what we can and what we must to achieve the vision outlined by Pope Benedict.

At this point I repeat what I have said elsewhere, that Pope Francis has asked me to continue the extraordinary liturgical work Pope Benedict began (see: Message to Sacra Liturgia USA 2015, New York City). Just because we have a new pope does not mean that his predecessor's vision is now invalid. On the contrary, as we know, our Holy Father Pope Francis has the greatest respect for the liturgical vision and measures Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI implemented in utter fidelity to the intentions and aims of the Council Fathers.

Before I conclude, please permit me to mention some other small ways which can also contribute to a more faithful implementation of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. One is that we must sing the liturgy, we must sing the liturgical texts, respecting the liturgical traditions of the Church and rejoicing in the treasury of sacred music that is ours, most especially that music proper to the Roman rite, Gregorian chant. We must sing sacred liturgical music not merely religious music, or worse, profane songs.

We must get the right balance between the vernacular languages and the use of Latin in the liturgy. The Council never intended to insinuate that the Roman rite be exclusively celebrated in the vernacular. But it did intend to allow its increased use, particularly for the readings.

Today it should be possible, especially with modern means of printing, to facilitate comprehension by all when Latin is used, perhaps for the liturgy of the Eucharist, and of course this is particularly appropriate at international gatherings where the local vernacular is not understood by many. And naturally, when the vernacular is used, it must be a faithful translation of the original Latin, as Pope Francis recently affirmed to me.

We must ensure that adoration is at the heart of our liturgical celebrations. The heart of our liturgy is the adoration of God. Too often we do not move from celebration to adoration, but if we do not do that I worry that we may not have always participated in the liturgy fully, internally. Two bodily dispositions are helpful, indeed indispensable here. The first is silence. If I am never silent, if the liturgy gives me no space for silent prayer and contemplation, how can I adore Christ, how can I connect with him in my heart and soul? Silence is very important, and not only before and after the liturgy. It is the foundation of any deep spiritual life.

So too kneeling at the consecration (unless I am sick) is essential. In the West this is an act of bodily adoration that humbles us before our Lord and God. It is itself an act of prayer. Where kneeling and genuflection have disappeared from the liturgy, they need to be restored, in particular for our reception of our Blessed Lord in Holy Communion. Dear Fathers, where possible and with the pastoral prudence of which I spoke earlier, form your people in this beautiful act of worship and love. Let us kneel in adoration and love before the Eucharistic Lord once again! "Man is not fully man unless he falls on his knees before God to adore Him, to contemplate his dazzling sanctity and let himself be remodelled in his image and likeness" (R. Sarah, *On the Road to Ninive*, Paulines Publications Africa 2012, p.199).

In speaking of the reception of Holy Communion kneeling I would like to recall the 2002 letter of the Congregation of Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments which clarifies that "any refusal of Holy Communion to a member of the faithful on the basis of his or her kneeling posture [is] a grave violation of one of the most basic rights of the Christian faithful" (Letter, 1 July 2002, *Notitiae*, n. 436, Nov-Dec 2002, p. 583).

Correctly vesting all the liturgical ministers in the sanctuary, including lectors, is also very important if such ministries are to be considered authentic and if they are to be exercised with the decorum due to the Sacred Liturgy—also if the ministers themselves are to show the correct reverence for God and for the mysteries they minister.

These are some suggestions: I am sure that many others could be made. I put them before you as possible ways of moving towards "the right way of celebrating the liturgy inwardly and outwardly," which was of course the desire expressed by Cardinal Ratzinger at the beginning of his great work, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*. (Joseph Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy*, Collected Works vol. 11, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 2014, p. 4). I encourage you to do all that you can to realise this goal, which is utterly consistent with that of the Second Vatican Council's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy.



**LIFE IS FRAGILE
HANDLE IT WITH
PRAYER.**



Registration Information

CCD EARLY REGISTRATION

REGISTER EARLY !!!!!

Please take the opportunity to register for CCD, RCIA, Confirmation and Youth Group. Lora Rodriguez, our Director of Religious Education will be taking registrations in the school building after the 10:30am every Sunday in the month July. Additional dates and times are as follows:

- **Wednesday, August 3rd from—11:30 am—1:30pm**

Please bring a copy of their Baptismal and First Holy Communion Certificates if you did not bring them last year. The cost will be \$25 per family.

If you have any questions, you may contact Lora Rodriguez at (575) 309-8130.



RCIA REGISTRATION

Have you been Baptized? Have you made your First Holy Communion? Have you made your Confirmation? Are you thinking of becoming Catholic? This is the time where you can complete your sacraments or learn more about our Catholic faith. Classes are beginning soon so register early. Registration will be taking place **Wednesday, August 3rd from 11:30 am—1:30 pm**. Please follow CCD early Registration schedule for additional dates and times. If you have any questions, please call Lora Rodriguez at (575) 309-8130.

CCD Religious Education



INFORMATION

Pre-K (age 3-4) - 5th Grade

CCD starts Wednesday, August 17th, at 6:00PM and will meet every Wednesday evening.

RCIA

Starts Monday, August 22nd and will meet on Monday evenings at 7:00PM.

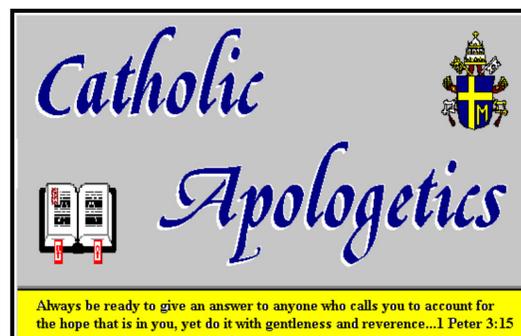
6th & 7th Grade/Confirmation 1 & 2/ Youth Group & Apologetics

Starts Sunday, August 21st at 4:30PM and will meet every Sunday.

Adults

Starts Wednesday, August 17th, at 6:30PM and will meet every Wednesday in the Church.

This a new and wonderful thing we are having this year: we will be having class also for adults and all the parents on Wednesday nights. Just as there is something great for children there will be something great for adults as well while CCD is going on. Attendance will be taken for all those who have children in CCD, just like it is taken for the kids.



Early registration is taking place for Apologetics. This class is for young adults who have made their Confirmation and is also open to **all adults** who want to learn more about our Catholic faith. Please follow CCD early registration times and dates.