

Preamble

1. When he was about to celebrate with his disciples the Passover meal in which he instituted the sacrifice of his Body and Blood, Christ the Lord gave instructions that a large, furnished upper room should be prepared (Lk 22:12). The Church has always regarded this command as applying also to herself when she gives directions about the preparation of people's hearts and minds, and of the places, rites, and texts for the celebration of the Most Holy Eucharist. The current norms, prescribed in keeping with the will of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, and the new Missal that the Church of the Roman Rite is to use from now on in the celebration of Mass are also evidence of the great concern of the Church, of her faith, and of her unchanged love for the great mystery of the Eucharist. They likewise bear witness to the Church's continuous and unbroken tradition, irrespective of the introduction of certain new features.

A Witness to Unchanged Faith

2. The sacrificial nature of the Mass, solemnly asserted by the Council of Trent in accordance with the Church's universal tradition,¹ was reaffirmed by the Second Vatican Council, which offered these significant words about the Mass: "At the Last Supper our Savior instituted the Eucharistic Sacrifice of his Body and Blood, by which he would perpetuate the Sacrifice of the Cross throughout the centuries until he should come again, thus entrusting to the Church, his beloved Bride, the memorial of his death and resurrection."²

What the Council thus teaches is expressed constantly in the formulas of the Mass. This teaching, which is concisely expressed in the statement already contained in the ancient Sacramentary commonly known as the Leonine—"As often as the commemoration of this sacrifice is celebrated, the work of our redemption is carried out"³—is aptly and accurately developed in the Eucharistic Prayers. For in these prayers the priest, while he performs the commemoration, turns towards God, even in the name of the whole people, renders him thanks, and offers the living and holy Sacrifice:, namely, the Church's offering and the Victim by whose immolation God willed to be appeased;⁴ and he prays that the Body and Blood of Christ may be a sacrifice acceptable to the Father and salvific for the whole world.⁵

In this new Missal, then, the Church's rule of prayer (*lex orandi*) corresponds to her perennial rule of belief (*lex credendi*), by which namely we are taught that the Sacrifice of the Cross and its sacramental renewal in the Mass, which Christ the Lord instituted at the Last Supper and commanded the Apostles to do in his memory, are one and the same, differing only in the manner of offering, and that consequently the Mass is at once a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, of propitiation and satisfaction.

3. Moreover, the wondrous mystery of the Lord's real presence under the eucharistic

species, reaffirmed by the Second Vatican Council⁶ and other documents of the Church's Magisterium⁷ in the same sense and with the same words that the Council of Trent had proposed as a matter of faith,⁸ is proclaimed in the celebration of Mass not only by means of the very words of consecration, by which Christ becomes present through transubstantiation, but also by that interior disposition and outward expression of supreme reverence and adoration in which the Eucharistic Liturgy is carried out. For the same reason the Christian people is drawn on Holy Thursday of the Lord's Supper, and on the solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, to venerate this wonderful Sacrament by a special form of adoration.

4. Further, the nature of the ministerial priesthood proper to a Bishop and a priest, who offer the Sacrifice in the person of Christ and who preside over the gathering of the holy people, is evident in the form of the rite itself, by reason of the more prominent place and office of the priest. The meaning of this office is enunciated and explained clearly and at greater length, in the Preface for the Chrism Mass on Holy Thursday, the day commemorating the institution of the priesthood. The Preface brings to light the conferral of the priestly power accomplished through the laying on of hands; and, by listing the various duties, it describes that power, which is the continuation of the power of Christ the High Priest of the New Testament.

5. In addition, the nature of the ministerial priesthood also puts into its proper light another reality, which must indeed be highly regarded, namely, the royal priesthood of the faithful, whose spiritual sacrifice is brought to completeness through the ministry of the Bishop and the priests in union with the sacrifice of Christ, the one and only Mediator.⁹ For the celebration of the Eucharist is an action of the whole Church, and in it each one should carry out solely but completely that which pertains to him or her, in virtue of the rank of each within the People of God. In this way greater consideration will also be given to some aspects of the celebration that have sometimes been accorded less attention in the course of time. For this people is the People of God, purchased by Christ's Blood, gathered together by the Lord, nourished by his word. It is a people called to bring to God the prayers of the entire human family, a people giving thanks in Christ for the mystery of salvation by offering his Sacrifice. Finally, it is a people made one by sharing in the Communion of Christ's Body and Blood. Though holy in its origin, this people nevertheless grows continually in holiness by its conscious, active, and fruitful participation in the mystery of the Eucharist.¹⁰

A Witness to Unbroken Tradition

6. In setting forth its instructions for the revision of the Order of Mass, the Second Vatican Council, using the same words as did Saint Pius V in the Apostolic Constitution *Quo primum*, by which the Missal of Trent was promulgated in 1570, also ordered, among other things, that some rites be restored "to the original norm of the holy Fathers."¹¹ From the fact that the same words are used it can be seen how both Roman Missals, although separated by four centuries, embrace one and the same tradition. Furthermore, if the inner elements of this tradition are reflected upon, it also becomes clear how outstandingly and felicitously the older Roman Missal is brought to fulfillment

in the new.

7. In a difficult period when the Catholic faith on the sacrificial nature of the Mass, the ministerial priesthood, and the real and permanent presence of Christ under the eucharistic species were placed at risk, Saint Pius V was especially concerned with preserving the more recent tradition then unjustly being assailed, introducing only very slight changes into the sacred rite. In fact, the Missal of 1570 differs very little from the very first printed edition of 1474, which in turn faithfully follows the Missal used at the time of Pope Innocent III. Moreover, even though manuscripts in the Vatican Library provided material for the emendation of some expressions, they by no means made it possible to inquire into "ancient and approved authors" farther back than the liturgical commentaries of the Middle Ages.

8. Today, on the other hand, countless learned studies have shed light on the "norm of the holy Fathers" which the revisers of the Missal of Saint Pius V followed. For following the publication first of the Sacramentary known as the Gregorian in 1571, critical editions of other ancient Roman and Ambrosian Sacramentaries were published, often in book form, as were ancient Hispanic and Gallican liturgical books which brought to light numerous prayers of no slight spiritual excellence that had previously been unknown.

In a similar fashion, traditions dating back to the first centuries, before the formation of the rites of East and West, are better known today because of the discovery of so many liturgical documents.

Moreover, continuing progress in the study of the holy Fathers has also shed light upon the theology of the mystery of the Eucharist through the teachings of such illustrious Fathers of Christian antiquity as Saint Irenaeus, Saint Ambrose, Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, and Saint John Chrysostom.

9. For this reason, the "norm of the holy Fathers" requires not only the preservation of what our immediate forebears have passed on to us, but also an understanding and a more profound study of the Church's entire past and of all the ways in which her one and only faith has been set forth in the quite diverse human and social forms prevailing in the Semitic, Greek, and Latin areas. Moreover, this broader view allows us to see how the Holy Spirit endows the People of God with a marvelous fidelity in preserving the unalterable deposit of faith, even amid a very great variety of prayers and rites.

Accommodation to New Conditions

10. The new Missal, therefore, while bearing witness to the Roman Church's rule of prayer (*lex orandi*), also safeguards the deposit of faith handed down by the more recent Councils, and marks in its own right a step of great importance in liturgical tradition.

Indeed, when the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council reaffirmed the dogmatic pronouncements of the Council of Trent, they spoke at a far different time in world

history, so that they were able to bring forward proposals and measures of a pastoral nature that could not have even been foreseen four centuries earlier.

11. The Council of Trent already recognized the great catechetical value contained in the celebration of Mass but was unable to bring out all its consequences in regard to actual practice. In fact, many were pressing for permission to use the vernacular in celebrating the eucharistic Sacrifice,; but the Council, weighing the conditions of that age, considered it a duty to answer this request with a reaffirmation of the Church's traditional teaching, according to which the Eucharistic Sacrifice is, first and foremost, the action of Christ himself, and therefore that its proper efficacy is unaffected by the manner in which the faithful take part in it. The Council for this reason stated in firm but measured words:; "Although the Mass contains much instruction for people of faith, nevertheless it did not seem expedient to the Fathers that it be celebrated everywhere in the vernacular."¹² The Council accordingly anathematized anyone maintaining that "the rite of the Roman Church, in which part of the Canon and the words of consecration are spoken in a low voice, is to be condemned, or that the Mass must be celebrated only in the vernacular."¹³ Although on the one hand it prohibited the use of the vernacular in the Mass, nevertheless, on the other hand, the Council did direct pastors of souls to put appropriate catechesis in its place: "Lest Christ's flock go hungry . . . the Holy Synod commands pastors and all others having the care of souls to give frequent instructions during the celebration of Mass, either personally or through others, concerning what is read at Mass; among other things, they should include some explanation of the mystery of this most holy Sacrifice, especially on Sundays and holy days."¹⁴

12. Therefore, when the Second Vatican Council convened in order to accommodate the Church to the requirements of her proper apostolic office precisely in these times, it examined thoroughly, as had Trent, the instructive and pastoral character of the Sacred Liturgy.¹⁵ Since no Catholic would now deny the lawfulness and efficacy of a sacred rite celebrated in Latin, the Council was also able to grant that "the use of the vernacular language may frequently be of great advantage to the people" and gave the faculty for its use.¹⁶ The enthusiasm in response to this measure has been so great everywhere that it has led, under the leadership of the Bishops and the Apostolic See itself, to permission for all liturgical celebrations in which the people participate to be in the vernacular, for the sake of a better comprehension of the mystery being celebrated.

13. Indeed, since the use of the vernacular in the Sacred Liturgy may certainly be considered an important means for presenting more clearly the catechesis regarding the mystery that is inherent in the celebration itself, the Second Vatican Council also ordered that certain prescriptions of the Council of Trent that had not been followed everywhere be brought to fruition, such as the homily to be given on Sundays and holy days¹⁷ and the faculty to interject certain explanations during the sacred rites themselves.¹⁸

Above all, the Second Vatican Council, which urged "that more perfect form of participation in the Mass by which the faithful, after the priest's Communion, receive the Lord's Body from the same Sacrifice,"¹⁹ called for another desire of the Fathers of Trent to be realized, namely that for the sake of a fuller participation in the holy Eucharist "the

faithful present at each Mass should communicate not only by spiritual desire but also by sacramental reception of the Eucharist."²⁰

14. Moved by the same desire and pastoral concern, the Second Vatican Council was able to give renewed consideration to what was established by Trent on Communion under both kinds. And indeed, since no one today calls into doubt in any way the doctrinal principles on the complete efficacy of eucharistic Communion under the species of bread alone, the Council thus gave permission for the reception of Communion under both kinds on some occasions, because this clearer form of the sacramental sign offers a particular opportunity of deepening the understanding of the mystery in which the faithful take part.²¹

15. In this manner the Church, while remaining faithful to her office as teacher of truth safeguarding "things old," that is, the deposit of tradition, fulfills at the same time another duty, that of examining and prudently bringing forth "things new" (cf. Mt 13:52).

Accordingly, a part of the new Missal directs the prayers of the Church in a more open way to the needs of our times, which is above all true of the Ritual Masses and the Masses for Various Needs, in which tradition and new elements are appropriately harmonized. Thus, while many expressions, drawn from the Church's most ancient tradition and familiar through the many editions of the Roman Missal, have remained unchanged, many other expressions have been accommodated to today's needs and circumstances. Still others, such as the prayers for the Church, the laity, the sanctification of human work, the community of all peoples, and certain needs proper to our era, have been newly composed, drawing on the thoughts and often the very phrasing of the recent documents of the Council.

Moreover, on account of the same attitude toward the new state of the present world, it seemed that in the use of texts from the most ancient tradition, so revered a treasure would in no way be harmed if some phrases were changed so that the style of language would be more in accord with the language of modern theology and would truly reflect the current discipline of the Church. Thus, not a few expressions bearing on the evaluation and use of the earthly goods of the earth have been changed, as have also not a few allusions to a certain form of outward penance belonging to past ages of the Church.

Finally, in this manner the liturgical norms of the Council of Trent have certainly been completed and perfected in many respects by those of the Second Vatican Council, which has brought to realization the efforts of the last four hundred years to bring the faithful closer to the Sacred Liturgy especially in recent times, and above all the zeal for the Liturgy promoted by Saint Pius X and his successors.

Endnotes

1. Ecumenical Council of Trent, Session 22, *Doctrina de ss. Missae sacrificio*, 17 September 1562 : *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, H. Denzinger and A. Schönmetzer, editors (editio XXXIII, Freiburg: Herder, 1965; hereafter, Denz-Schön), 1738-1759.

2. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 47; cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium*, nos. 3, 28; Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, *Presbyterorum ordinis*, nos. 2, 4, 5.
3. Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper, prayer over the offerings. Cf. *Sacramentarium Veronense*, L.C. Mohlberg et al., editors, (3rd edition, Rome, 1978), section I, no. 93.
4. Cf. Eucharistic Prayer III.
5. Cf. Eucharistic Prayer IV.
6. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, nos. 7, 47; Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, *Presbyterorum ordinis*, nos. 5, 18.
7. Cf. Pius XII, Encyclical Letter *Humani generis*, 12 August 1950: *Acta Apostolicae Sedis, Commentarium Officiale* (Vatican City; hereafter, AAS), 42 (1950), pp. 570-571; Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Mysterium fidei*, On the doctrine and worship of the Eucharist, 3 September 1965 : AAS 57(1965), pp. 762-769; Paul VI, Solemn Profession of Faith, 30 June 1968 , nos. 24-26: AAS 60 (1968), pp. 442-443; Sacred Congregation of Rites, Instruction *Eucharisticum mysterium*, On the worship of the Eucharist, 25 May 1967 , nos. 3f, 9: AAS 59 (1967), pp. 543, 547.
8. Cf. Council of Trent, session 13, *Decretum de ss. Eucharistia*, 11 October 1551: Denz-Schön, 1635-1661.
9. Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, *Presbyterorum ordinis*, no. 2.
10. Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 11.
11. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 50.
12. Ecumenical Council of Trent, Session 22, *Doctrina de ss. Missae sacrificio*, 17 September 1562, chapter 8: Denz-Schön, 1749.
13. Ecumenical Council of Trent, Session 22, *Doctrina de ss. Missae sacrificio*, 17 September 1562, chapter 9: Denz-Schön, 1759.
14. Ecumenical Council of Trent, Session 22, *Doctrina de ss. Missae sacrificio*, 17 September 1562, chapter 8: Denz-Schön, 1749.

15. Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 33.

16. Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 36.

17. Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 52.

18. Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 35:3.

19. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 55.

20. Ecumenical Council of Trent, Session 22, *Doctrina de ss. Missae sacrificio*, 17 September 1562, chapter 6: Denz-Schön, 1747.

21. Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 55.