



THE SACRED LITURGY **OF THE CHURCH** **Texts from the** ***Catechism of the Catholic Church***

WHAT IS LITURGY?

The Plan of Salvation - the Paschal Mystery and the Liturgy

The wonderful works of God among the people of the Old Testament were but a prelude to the work of Christ the Lord in redeeming mankind and giving perfect glory to God. He accomplished this work principally in the Paschal Mystery of his blessed Passion, Resurrection from the dead and glorious Ascension, whereby “dying he destroyed our death, rising he restored our life”. For it was from the side of Christ as he slept the sleep of death upon the cross that there came forth the “wondrous sacrament of the whole Church”. For this reason, the Church celebrates in the liturgy above all the Paschal mystery by which Christ accomplished the work of our salvation. (1067).

What does liturgy mean?

The word ‘liturgy’ originally meant a ‘public work’ or a ‘service in the name of, or on behalf of, the people’. In Christian tradition it means the participation of the People of God in the ‘work of God’. Through the liturgy, Christ, our Redeemer and high priest, continues the work of our redemption in, with and through his Church. (1069)

An exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ

“The liturgy then is rightly seen as *an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ*. It involves the presentation of man’s sanctification under the guise of signs perceptible by the senses, and its accomplishment in ways appropriate to each of these signs. In its full public worship is performed by the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, that is by the Head and his members. From this it follows that every liturgical celebration, because it is an action of Christ the priest and of his Body which is the Church, is a sacred action surpassing all others. No other action of the Church can equal its efficacy by the same title and to the same degree.” (Vatican II, the Sacred Liturgy) (1070)

The visible sign of communion in Christ between God and men

As the work of Christ liturgy is also an action of his *Church*. It makes the Church present and manifests her as the visible sign of the communion in Christ between God and men. (1071)

The liturgy is also a participation in Christ’s own prayer addressed to the Father in the Holy Spirit. In the liturgy, all Christian prayer finds its source and goal. (1073)

“The liturgy is the summit towards which the activity of the Church is directed; it is also the fount from which all her power flows” (Vatican II, the Sacred Liturgy). ... “It is in the sacraments especially in the Eucharist that Christ Jesus works in fullness for the transformation of men” (Pope John Paul II). (1074)

THE LITURGY - WORK OF THE HOLY TRINITY

The Father - Source and Goal of the Liturgy

In the Church’s liturgy the divine blessing is fully revealed and communicated. The Father is acknowledged and adored as the source and end of all the blessings of creation and salvation. In his Word who became incarnate, died and rose for us, he fills us with his blessings. Through his Word, he pours into our hearts the Gift that contains all gifts, the Holy Spirit. (1082)

Christ’s sacramental work in the Liturgy

The sacraments are perceptible signs (words and actions) accessible to our human nature. By the action of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit they make present efficaciously the grace they signify. (1084)

Christ’s Paschal Mystery in the Liturgy

[Christ’s] Paschal Mystery is a real event that occurred in our history, but it is unique: all other historical events happen once, and then they pass away, swallowed up in the past. The Paschal Mystery of Christ, by contrast, cannot remain only in the past, because by his death he destroyed death, and all that Christ is - all that he did and suffered for all men - participates in the divine eternity, and so transcends all times while being made present in them all. The event of the Cross and Resurrection *abides* and draws everything toward life. (1085)

The sacrifice and sacraments around which the entire liturgical life revolves

[Christ] also willed that the work of salvation which [the apostles] preached should be set in train through the sacrifice and the sacraments, around which the entire liturgical life revolves. (1086)

The risen Christ, by giving the Holy Spirit to the apostles, entrusted to them his power of sanctifying: they became sacramental signs of Christ... This ‘apostolic succession’ structures the whole liturgical life of the Church and is itself sacramental, handed on by the sacrament of Holy Orders. (1087)

Christ is present in the earthly liturgy

Christ is always present in his Church, especially in her liturgical celebrations. He is present in the Sacrifice of the Mass not only in the person of his minister, “the same now offering, through the ministry of priests, who formerly offered himself on the cross”, but especially in the Eucharistic species. By his power he is present in the sacraments so that when anybody baptises it is really Christ himself who baptises. He is present in his word since it is he himself who speaks when the holy Scriptures are read in the Church. Lastly, he is present when the Church prays and sings, for he has promised “where two or three are gathered in my name there am I in the midst of them” (Mt 18:20). (1088)

...which participates in the liturgy of heaven

In the earthly liturgy we share in a foretaste of that heavenly liturgy which is celebrated in the Holy City of Jerusalem towards which we journey as pilgrims, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle. With all the warriors of the heavenly army, we sing a hymn of glory to the Lord; venerating the memory of the saints, we hope for some part and fellowship with them; we eagerly await the Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ, until he, our life shall appear and we too will appear with him in glory. (1090)

The communion of the Holy Spirit

In every liturgical action the Holy Spirit is sent in order to bring us into communion with Christ and to form his Body. ...The most intimate co-operation of the Holy Spirit and the Church is achieved in the liturgy. The Spirit, who is the Spirit of communion, abides indefectibly in the Church. For this reason the Church is the great sacrament of divine communion which gathers God’s scattered children together. Communion with the Holy Trinity and fraternal communion are inseparably the fruit of the Spirit and the liturgy. (1108)

IN BRIEF

- **In the liturgy of the Church, God the Father is blessed and adored as the source of all blessings of creation and salvation with which he has blessed us in his Son, in order to give us the Spirit of filial adoption. (1110)**
- **Christ’s work in the liturgy is sacramental: because his mystery of salvation is made present there by the power of his Holy Spirit; because his Body, which is the Church, is like a sacrament (sign and instrument) in which the Holy Spirit dispenses the mystery of salvation; and because through her liturgical actions the pilgrim Church already participates, as by a foretaste, in the heavenly liturgy. (1111)**
- **The mission of the Holy Spirit in the liturgy of the Church is to prepare the assembly to encounter Christ; to recall and manifest Christ to the faith of the assembly; to make the saving work of Christ present and active by his transforming power; and to make the gift of communion bear fruit in the Church. (1112)**
- **The liturgy is the work of the whole Christ, head and body. Our high priest celebrates it unceasingly in the heavenly liturgy, with the holy Mother of God, the apostles, all the saints and the multitude of those who have already entered the kingdom. (1187)**
- **The liturgical celebration involves signs and symbols relating to creation (candles, water, fire), human life (washing, anointing, breaking bread) and the history of salvation (the rites of Passover). Integrated into the world of faith and taken up by the power of the Holy Spirit, these cosmic elements, human rituals, and gestures of remembrance of God become bearers of the saving and sanctifying action of Christ. (1189)**
- **Sunday, the ‘Lord’s Day’, is the principal day for the celebration of the Eucharist because it is the day of the Resurrection. It is the pre-eminent day of the liturgical assembly, the day of the Christian family, and the day of joy and rest from work. Sunday is the ‘foundation and kernel of the whole liturgical year’. (1193)**
- **The Church, ‘in the course of the year,...unfolds the whole mystery of Christ from his Incarnation and Nativity through his Ascension, to Pentecost and the expectation of the blessed hope of the coming of the Lord.’ (1194)**
- **By keeping the memorials of the saints - first of all the holy Mother of God, then the apostles, the martyrs and other saints - on fixed days of the liturgical year, the Church on earth shows that she is united with the liturgy of heaven. She gives glory to Christ for having accomplished his salvation in his glorified members; their example encourages her on her way to the Father. (1195)**
- **In her earthly state the Church needs places where the community can gather together. Our visible churches, holy places, are images of the holy city, the heavenly Jerusalem, towards which we are making our way on pilgrimage. (1198)**
- **It is in these churches that the Church celebrates public worship to the glory of the Holy Trinity, hears the word of God and sings his praise, lifts up her prayer, and offers the sacrifice of Christ present in the midst of the assembly. These churches are also places of recollection and personal prayer. (1199)**
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