

Vatican II Renewal of the Sacraments

1. Liturgical Renewal

- Goal of Vatican II liturgy reform: full, conscious, active participation by assembly

“In the restoration and promotion of the sacred liturgy, **this full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before all else**; for it is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit.” CSL 14

- Why participation? Liturgy is an act of Christ, something Christ does.

“[T]he liturgy is considered as an **exercise** of the priestly office of Jesus Christ.” CSL 7

“To accomplish so great a work, Christ is always present in His Church, especially in her liturgical celebrations. ... By His power He is present in the sacraments, so that when a man baptizes it is **really Christ Himself who baptizes.**” CSL 7



- Christ acts through his Body, the Church. Invisible Christ acts through the visible acts of the Church.

“[I]n the liturgy the whole public worship is performed by the Mystical **Body of Jesus Christ**, that is, **by the Head and His members.**” CSL 7

“[E]very liturgical celebration ... **is an action of Christ the priest and of His Body which is the Church.**” CSL 7

- So liturgy (all sacraments are liturgy) must be an act done by the whole Church community. This is participation. Participation is about who does the liturgy, the sacrament. Christ does, thru the Church.
 - Christ is present in liturgy/sacraments through visible signs, especially in & through the assembly.
 - Every sacrament is an act of the assembly, the gathered Church, who is the Body of Christ.

2. A Key Insight from Vatican II about God: Revelation is about Relationship

- Pre-Vatican II

- God reveals truths, doctrinal statements of belief.
- Revelation = collection of distinct truth statements, a list of propositions.
- Faith = intellectual assent to propositions or statements.

- Vatican Council II

Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, 1965

- God invites people to relationship, to encounter, to personal dialogue.
- Revelation = God's very self, esp in person of Jesus. Not just a collection of information.
- Faith = a relationship, of trust in God, interacting with God. Not just assent to propositions.

- Vatican II Sacraments – about our relationship with God, and with the Church.

- Sacraments —not mechanical, not functional, but engaging in an encounter with God.
- Sacraments —personal interaction with God, mediated through visible signs.
- Liturgy of Word now part of every sacrament. God calling, initiating dialogue.

3. A Key Insight from Vatican II about People: Universal Call to Holiness

- Pre-Vatican II
 - “There are two kinds of Christians, clerics and lay people.” (Gratian, 12th c; also Pius X in 1906)
 - For many Catholics, “Church” = hierarchy.
 - Laity have one duty, to obediently listen to and follow their pastor.
- Vatican Council II
 - Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, Decree on Laity
 - Church is people of God, not just hierarchy. Importance of Baptism.
 - All the baptized are called to holiness, not just priests and nuns.
 - All offer sacrifice of their lives.
 - Priesthood of the faithful. All baptized share in priesthood of Christ.
 - Ministerial priesthood placed in context of common dignity of all the baptized, to serve.



4. Return to What was Lost

- “Return to the sources” (Bible & early church) – attitude in renewed 20th c theology (“ressourcement”)
- Liturgical renewal = “whether we shall relearn a forgotten way of doing things and recapture lost attitudes.” (R. Guardini, 1964)
- Constitution on Sacred Liturgy – to promote and “restore” the liturgy
 - “With the **passage of time**, however, there have crept into the rites of the sacraments and sacramentals certain features which have rendered their **nature and purpose far from clear** to the people of today; hence some **changes have become necessary** to adapt them to the needs of our own times. For this reason the sacred Council decrees ... their **revision**.” CSL 62

5. Reforms for Each Sacrament

- All: Liturgy of Word, preaching, words & actions for laity, priest prays in name of all, lay ministers...
 - “It is to be stressed that whenever rites ... make provision for **communal celebration** involving the presence and active participation of the faithful, this way of celebrating them is to be **preferred**, so far as possible, to a celebration that is individual and quasi-private. This applies with especial force to the celebration of **Mass** and the administration of the **sacraments**...” CSL 27
- Eucharist
 - Restore: Bible readings, homily, prayer of faithful, sign of peace, both kinds, frequent communion, sacrifice of all, etc.
- Baptism
 - Revive catechumenate for adults. Gradual formation in all aspects of Christian life. CSL 64
 - Renewed rite re-unites baptism with confirmation and eucharist, for adults & older children.
 - Adapt baptism rite for infants. Clearer role for parents and godparents. CSL 67
- Confirmation
 - Show connection of confirmation with initiation, include renewal of baptism promises. CSL 71
- Penance
 - Penance entails reconciliation (relationship) with God *and* with church. Renews baptism.
- Anointing of the Sick
 - Change name from Extreme Unction, use at beginning of serious illness. CSL 73
- Ordination
 - Bishops not just agents of pope. Priests do more than sacraments. Diaconate re-instated.
- Marriage
 - Weddings *within* Mass. Blessing to include groom. Local customs permitted. CSL 77-78

See other handout with quotes from the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy