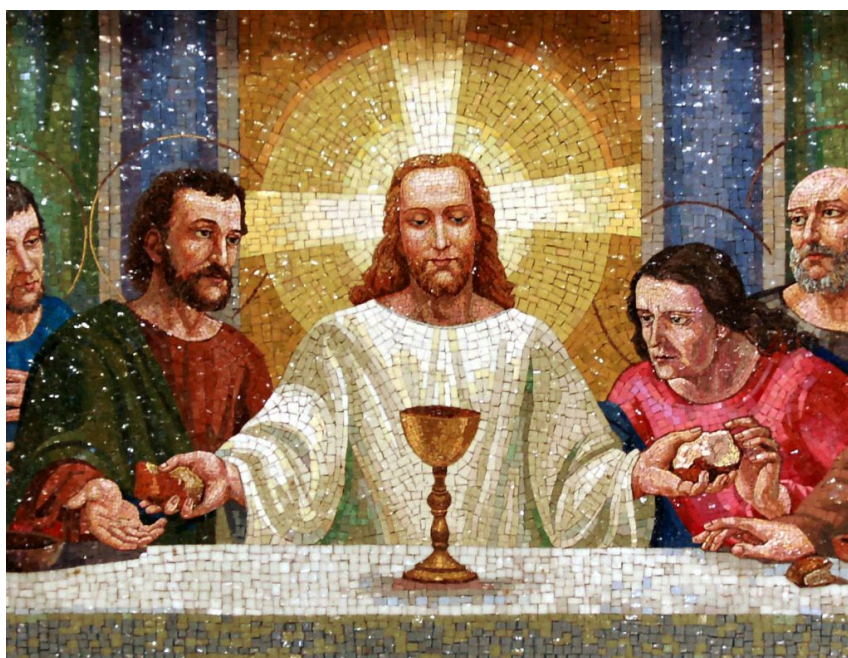


“DO THIS AS A MEMORIAL OF ME” (1 Cor.11:24,25)



“I have longed to eat this Passover with you...” (Luke 22:15)

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Abbreviations:

- SC = Const. on the Sacred Liturgy, Second Vatican Council,
- GIRM = General Instruction of the Roman Missal;
- CCC = Catechism of the Catholic Church
- EP = Eucharistic Prayer

INTRODUCTION

Those of us who have grown up with the Mass experience a strong sense of ‘belonging’ associated with it. This experience is subconscious even more than it is conscious. The community, the routines, distinctive sights and sounds, and even the furnishings, enter into this. And when those circumstances change because we are ‘at Mass’ in some other place, it is the Mass itself that still connects with us. This sense of belonging is felt also by those who are returning after some time out.

However, we must also reckon with the fact that many have stopped coming, some feeling alienated. So, we need to ask: do our celebrations of the Eucharist help us all to love the Mass, and want to be part of it? Does being with Jesus in this way mean to us what being with Jesus meant to Peter, Mary Magdalene, Lazarus, John... since his presence in the celebration of Eucharist is just as real?

This brief catechesis is intended to be *a letter of appreciation and encouragement* for all whose special roles impact on how we experience the Mass, and support for those whose teaching roles affect people’s understanding of the Mass. Catechesis won’t solve all our problems; but nor will we resolve them without it.

There is good reason for on-going catechesis. Up until the Second Vatican Council, “liturgy” was thought of mainly as ceremonies that priests were to carry out correctly, and that the congregations ‘attended’. Pope Pius XII had already reproved this prevailing but mistaken understanding of liturgy; (*Mediator Dei*, 1947). We have transitioned to understanding liturgy as our participation in the events of our salvation. In the liturgy, those events enter our lives, which is why Pope Francis could say that liturgy is “the ‘today’ of salvation history”.

That is also why liturgy is not only about ‘what happens in church’; liturgy, by definition, flows into the rest of life. “Salvation history” takes place in the midst of ordinary history.

FORMATION

In 1988, Pope John Paul II issued an Apostolic Letter calling for liturgy formation *based on the GIRM and on the underlying principles on which the Second Vatican Council based its liturgical renewal*. In (2022, Pope Francis issued an Apostolic Letter calling for a renewed liturgy formation for all – priests and people. Such formation was to be “for” the liturgy (by making the work of academics and the Council more accessible to everyone), and formation “by” the liturgy, (by doing what the liturgy says we are doing, and becoming what it does for us.)

Formation based on those sources takes precedence over personal preferences and old habits. Even apart from liturgy, there is an obligation on all Catholics to continue their formation in the faith. The *General Catechetical Directory* promulgated by Pope John Paul II reminds us that catechesis is for adults even more than it is for children. On-going formation should be common ground for all of us.

REAL DRAMA

Something very dramatic happens in the celebration of Eucharist – and it's not just the change from bread and wine! It is implied in Jesus' words: "do this as a memorial of me." "Memorial" in a biblical sense means so much more than what we mean by remembering.

It was foreshadowed by the Hebrew celebration of the Passover. That celebration gave succeeding generations a way of personally sharing in what had happened at the time of the exodus – at that time the people had passed out of slavery into freedom. The annual Passover gave people of later generations a way of stepping forward to personally participate in what God had done. The exodus was a once-for-all event, but the freedom it brought was meant for those who came after as well. Through the ritual of memorial, they participated in what God was doing in human history.

So too, through the ritual of memorial, Christians of succeeding generations step forward to personally pass with Jesus from death to life. In this way we become participants in what God is doing in human history.

Through baptism into his death we were buried with Christ, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live a new life (St Paul, Romans 6:4)

That new life is lived in every area of our life in the world. But its summit, and source of on-going renewal, is in the celebration of Eucharist, where our union with the Risen Jesus comes about through the power of the Holy Spirit. "In every liturgical action, the Holy Spirit is sent in order to bring us into communion with Christ and so form his body." (CCC 1108).



BACKGROUND TO RENEWAL

In his Apostolic Constitution introducing the Roman Missal - revised according to the requirements of the Second Vatican Council - Pope Paul VI noted that Pope Pius XII had already taken the first steps in revising it, and then he briefly outlined the reasons why the Second Vatican Council wanted this work to continue:

- "... the Order of Mass should be revised in such a way that it may be easier to see the meaning of the individual parts, and the connection between them, and that devout and active participation by the faithful may be facilitated";
- "the treasures of the Bible be opened up more abundantly so that richer fare may be spread before the faithful at the table of God's word".
- "there have been restored various elements which have suffered injury through the accidents of history, e.g. the Homily, the Universal Prayer of the faithful, and the Penitential Rite ..."

The Council's decisions were based on sound scholarship, pastoral responsibility and faithfulness to the Church's tradition.

Renewal of the liturgy is not unprecedented. We have only to read St Justin's beautiful description of the Mass dating from c. 155 AD to realise that the form of the Mass does change. The Mass St Justin knew would eventually live on in later forms - e.g. the revised Missal which Pope Pius V promulgated after the Council of Trent; (the "Traditional Latin Mass"). And now that Mass lives on in the revised Missal promulgated by Pope Paul VI after the Second Vatican Council. Both Missals have resulted from revisions of previous texts. That is the sense in which we can speak of "the Mass of the ages". And that is the sense in which Tradition lives on, even as small traditions come and go.

The need for renewal was serious. Latin in the Mass of the Roman rite continued to be used long after it was no longer the language of the people. This diminished people's ability to participate. The priest prayed the eucharistic prayer quietly, in Latin, and with his back to the people. This led to the general impression that it was the priest who "celebrated" the Mass, which the people only "attended".

This mistaken view was also reflected in architecture which distanced the priest from the people; altar rails which closed off the sanctuary, and restrictions on who was allowed or not allowed to enter the sanctuary etc. In this context, people resorted to prayers and devotions they could carry out individually and privately.

To correct this long-standing distortion of the liturgy, the Council emphasised that people's right to participate fully, with understanding, and actively belongs to *the very nature of liturgy*. (SC 14).

The return to how things should be is now reflected in a variety of ways: e.g. the use of people's own languages; a wider selection of the scriptures; the design of new churches and refurbishment of older churches to create a sense of the whole congregation being around the altar; etc The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that it is the *whole assembly that celebrates the Eucharist* (CCC 1140).

Within the gathering, the liturgy is led by the ordained minister (priest) whose *special role* is to give *visibility to what Christ himself is doing* – Christ being our only Priest and Mediator (CCC 1142). The "art of celebrating" is not the prerogative of priests – it is for all who are entitled to celebrate "fully, with understanding, and actively".

OF SEASONS AND SAINTS

In liturgy - the 'today of salvation' - we enter into the saving events of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. Some of the language we need for this comes from the yesterdays of salvation history – how those events were experienced by others who lived before us. The "language of the liturgy" takes some of its colours from them.

During Advent we draw on the prophecies and the poetry of the Hebrew scriptures to get a feel for what it was like waiting and longing for the One whom God would send. And knowing that He has now come, we see ourselves as people awaiting his second coming. The first Christian communities looked forward to His coming again enthusiastically.

At Christmas we allow ourselves to be in awe of what was happening when Mary cooperated with God's plan to enter our lives as one of us. The God who did not even need to create in the first place chose to be part of this creation, and came in the lowliest of circumstances. The incarnation was not an after-thought; it was God's plan from the beginning.

During Holy Week we go in slow motion through Jesus' last days. His agony didn't start the night before He died; He knew the prophecies and what lay ahead of him. We allow ourselves to wonder how he coped with that as he faced each new day, or when he awoke during the night. (We can offer our rising to face a difficult day as a small 'thank you' to him.) How did he prepare his mother for what was going to happen? The only reason why his fears did not cripple his ministry was because his trust in the Father was greater than everything else.

Jesus' resurrection and the Easter season stand for the victory of love, joy and life over sin, suffering and death. This is what he "longed for" for us. But have we thought about what his resurrection must have felt like for Jesus personally?

At Pentecost, we commemorate the coming of the Holy Spirit who accompanies us also through the "ordinary time" of our lives. It should be a normal part of our lives to look into the gospels from time to time to see what Jesus' presence did for those who loved his company. What the gospels record are pictures of what He can mean for those who keep his company now.

The liturgical year gets further colour from the feasts of the saints; we recall that they also passed this way - where we are now; and where they are now, we shall be. The Eastern Churches have a strong sense of liturgy being celebrated simultaneously in Heaven and on earth; (witness their priests' coming and going through openings in the iconostasis.) This sense of the liturgy taking place simultaneously in Heaven and on earth is also echoed in the Preface of our Masses.

On the saints' feast days, reference is made to them, but the prayers are not addressed to them. The prayers of the Eucharist, being the enactment of Christ's sacrifice, are always addressed to the Father.¹

¹ The same applies to the Prayers of Intercession. The intercession of Mary or other saints may be sought, but in prayers that are addressed to God. The leader, however, is not addressing God, but is addressing the assembly - naming the intentions, for which the assembly will pray – to the Father.

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

We have come a long way since the liturgy of the word was that part of the Mass we could miss and still fulfil our Sunday obligation! Which was not a very generous way of thinking about of the Mass – the commemoration of what Jesus did for us! The renewal called for by the Council was badly needed.

But nearly 60 years after the Second Vatican Council, have we fully taken on board its teaching that “when the scriptures are proclaimed in the assembly, Christ is speaking to his people” (SC.7) Would I be looking around for a seat during the readings if I really believed Christ was speaking to me? Wouldn’t that stop me in my tracks?

The celebration of Eucharist is a meeting with Christ in both word and sacrament: “... as once for his disciples, so now for us, He opens the scriptures and breaks the bread” (EP, Various Needs, 4).

There is a paradigm for this in St Luke’s Easter story about the two disciples “on the road” who were “talking about all that had happened” and were “down-hearted”, (Lk 24:13-35). Then Jesus “drew near” – his presence was real, but seeing him was different now: “something prevented them from recognizing him”. Then “He explained the meaning of the scriptures to them.” Later, they would say “were not our hearts burning within us as He talked to us on the road”. But that was after “their eyes were opened and they recognised him.... in the breaking of the bread”. Through word and sacrament, they discovered He was alive and present to them. That is the discovery his disciples today need to make. So how can we make our liturgy of the word more like the discussion on the road in which He drew near and explained, and they knew He was there with them?

A difficulty arises partly due to the way the scriptures are presented as a set of “readings” – about other people. They can seem unfamiliar, not quite ‘us’. Even the Gospel comes across as another “reading” about what happened a long time ago.

But the scriptures are not just a record of things said and done in the past; through what was said done then, “Christ is speaking to us” (SC.7) = present tense. It helps when ministers of the word can bring the scriptures to life - engaging those listening, and drawing them into the scenes depicted in the readings. It requires of readers a sense of wonder at the drama of God among us.

A previous mis-translation told readers to say at the end of their reading: “This is the word of the Lord” (which could mean a record of what He has said - past tense). The current translation requires them, after pausing long enough to get attention, to say: “The word of the Lord!” (i.e. hark! It’s the Lord who speaks to us – present tense). Our response – “thanks be to God” - affirms our faith that it is “the word of the Lord”. This parallels our response when receiving Holy Communion where our “Amen” means ‘yes, it is “the body of Christ”’. We acknowledge His presence in both word and sacrament.

The scriptures reveal to us the ways God has been present in other people’s lives – in their joys and sorrows, hopes and disappointments, turning ordinary human history into salvation history. It is where we learn God’s ‘style,’ making it easier to recognise God’s presence in our own lives. That is what the homily points to, based on the scriptures of the day - salvation history continued. A homily is mainly of what *God* is doing - with related catechesis. A sermon is predominantly about what *we* should be doing, Too much moralising (sermons) can, over time, weigh people down. But hearing instead of how God is with them through thick and thin can give a hope that is greater than every set-back.

The Church also encourages other forms of preaching, including lay preaching (canon 766). Because the homily is part of the Mass itself, it should not be omitted on Sundays or other holy days unless there is a good reason. But good reasons can and do arise. The priority of communicating God's word effectively sometimes justifies replacing the homily by other forms of reflection, or catechesis, which someone other than the priest can lead, when this helps to better communicate with "this gathering of people" (see p 15). An obvious time for silent reflection instead of a homily is after the reading of the passion on Good Friday.

Sacraments, too, are God's saving word – they are God's word at that point where there is simply no gap between what God says and what God does. When Christ says, through someone authorized to speak in his name: "your sins are forgiven", they are.



A DECISIVE DIFFERENCE

Many of us grew up without a good understanding of the difference between devotions and liturgy. Devotions, spiritual exercises and ascetic practices all play an important part in intensifying our relationship with God. Devotions give particular scope for personal preferences, styles and agendas. Liturgy takes us beyond the narrow limits of our own concerns, preferences and comfort zones. It draws us into a bigger Prayer than our own prayers, and a bigger Plan than our own plans.

After commending approved devotions, the Council went on to say that "... liturgy by its very nature far surpasses them all" (SC 13). And we have no right to blur the difference.

Devotions tend to focus on our ways of reaching out to God. Ultimately, of course, salvation is out of our reach. Liturgy is emphatically about what God has done and is doing, reaching out to us. As Pope Francis said, "liturgy is the 'today' of salvation history" – it is where our lives connect with the events of our salvation.

In the celebration of Eucharist, Christ's presence in the Sacrament is real, which we acknowledge by special signs of adoration. But adoring Our Lord is *not the main purpose of the Mass*. Throughout the Eucharistic Prayer, we are being drawn by the Holy Spirit into union with the Risen Christ, so that "through Him and with Him and in Him" we are able to give "God, Almighty Father, all glory and honour for ever and ever," which we endorse in our "Great Amen." United with his offering of himself on Calvary, we are able to give God the glory and honour we could not otherwise give! That is the *purpose of Christ's presence*. It is the *purpose* of his presence that gives us the *meaning of the Mass*.

The rubrics depict a crescendo: at the preparation of the gifts the priest "takes the paten with the bread and holds it slightly raised... saying in a *low voice*..." At the consecration the priest "shows the consecrated host/chalice to the people." It is when the Eucharistic Prayer climaxes with the doxology that the priest "raises both" high.²

For that reason, to feature the consecration as if it were the climax of the celebration is not only wrong, it can inhibit people's correct understanding, which is what we express in the doxology at the end of the Eucharistic Prayer.

For the same reason, it is not appropriate to place the Reserved Sacrament where it competes for people's attention during the celebration of Eucharist. It is not part of the Mass. Prayer before the Blessed Sacrament and the celebration of Eucharist are two different activities, each requiring its own kind of space and separation between them:

The place in a church or oratory where the Eucharist is reserved in a tabernacle should be truly a place of honour. It should also be suited to private prayer so that the faithful... (can) continue to honour the Lord in this sacrament by private worship. Therefore, it is recommended that as far as possible the tabernacle be placed in a chapel set apart from the main body of the church, especially in churches where there are frequently marriages and funerals...(Instruction on the Eucharistic Ministry, 1967, n.53; GIRM, 315)

It is the altar that the ministers "reverence with a profound bow" when they arrive (GIRM 49), the altar being a "symbol of Christ;" (CCC, 1383).

REVERENCE

The Council teaches that there are *four ways Christ is really present* in our celebration of Mass: in the ministry of the priest, in the word, in the assembly ("where two or three are gathered in my name, I shall be there with them" (Mathew 18:20), and especially in the Sacrament. (SC 7)

² The rubrics of the Missal allow for "a small bell" to be rung, "if appropriate," "as a signal to the faithful" (150). It used to be appropriate at every Mass because *its purpose, as a signal*, was to let the congregation know where the priest was 'up to'. They had no other way of knowing, because the priest spoke the words "quietly," in Latin, and with his back to the congregation. Often, they could not even see the elevation of host and chalice at the consecration. It was rung again to alert the congregation that it was time for Holy Communion. Today, there may be times when the congregation, or parts of the congregation, cannot see or hear, making this signal "appropriate." It has no other purpose. It is *not part of the ritual* of the Mass. Our adoration at the time of the consecration is best supported by deep silence as we watch and listen. A bell or gong at that time can shatter that silence.

Christ's presence *in each of the ways* named by the Council is real, and calls for reverence, whether we are expressing it in song or silence, responding or listening, standing or kneeling... We cannot afford to compromise the sacredness of any of these encounters with Christ by making it seem that kneeling is the only way of being truly reverent. The way reverence is expressed in liturgy needs to *correspond to "the meaning and the character of each part of the celebration"* (GIRM, 1975, n 21; 2002 [ICEL] n 43). We should also expect that the reverence shown by a congregation will be different from the reverence we show when acting on our own. In the liturgy, we are acting as "one body, one spirit, in Christ." (Eucharistic Prayers)

Being aware of the great mystery in which we participate, we rightly adorn the environment in which we celebrate it, and add solemnity to our actions. But our adornments and behaviours need to stop short of turning the event into a "ceremony." A ceremony unfolds before us; we watch it taking place. "Ritual" draws us into what is happening; we actively participate in it.

"Ceremony" can create a sense of 'mystery' in which we feel the need to pray. But they are our own prayers; in this way ceremony tends towards individualism and the privatisation of prayer. Ritual, instead, draws us into the community's prayer.

"Mystery" in the proper sense is what God is doing in this "today of salvation history". Our participation is not just 'doing things.' It is first of all allowing ourselves to be in awe of what God is doing, and being "taken up" into it. This is essentially a contemplative disposition. We marvel at the mystery of God's love for us, surrendering ourselves to worship and thanksgiving.³

We can be grateful for the way His presence in the Blessed Sacrament has reached deep into Catholic thinking and practice. But our reverence before His presence in the Sacrament is not meant to inhibit our expression of reverence towards Christ in the other three ways He is present.

That one-sided understanding of his real presence unthinkingly lingers on in Catholics who walk around looking for a seat while Christ is actually "speaking" to them – present tense – "when the scriptures are being proclaimed in the assembly" (SC 7). It lingers on in those who feel that Pacifica peoples' way of singing and dancing as the book of the gospels is processed into the assembly is a "distraction". It lingers on in those who would place the tabernacle in line with the altar as a tool for imposing silence before the reserved Sacrament, even though there are greetings and courtesies that properly belong when people are gathering to worship *as a community*. For Māori especially, to gather without proper greetings is un-thinkable. Understanding the difference between devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, and the liturgy of celebrating Eucharist, is one of the lynchpins of liturgy renewal and liturgy formation.

Of course, "sacred silence is also part of the celebration" (GIRM 45). (Perhaps nothing 'kills' the liturgy more than wordiness):

"If the words and symbols of the liturgy are to penetrate the depths of our consciousness, we need silence; if God is to speak to our hearts and transform our lives, we need silence. If we are to be deeply aware of those around us as brothers and sisters, we need silence. (*Exploring the Liturgy*, NZ Catholic Bishops, Module One, p 8).

³ As early as the 1960's we discovered that the multiple voices of concelebrants, and even changes of voice, and especially the moving about of the concelebrants, all became a distraction for the congregation. The voice of just one of the presiding celebrants for the whole Eucharistic Prayer best ensures the intent of this rubric. (Not all rubrics are prescriptive; some are only descriptive.)

The nature of the silence differs according to the different parts of the Mass where it is needed; (GIRM 45). We should feel the need for it especially before the celebration (after the appropriate greetings); after each reading, after the homily, and after Holy Communion - but “not as an inner haven in which to hide oneself in some sort of intimate isolation, as if leaving the ritual behind or as a distraction.... . It constitutes a point of arrival within [the liturgy]” (Pope Francis, *Desiderio Desideravi*, 52.) Liturgy is personal, but not private.

RITUAL, POSTURES & MUSIC

Symbols “reveal” to us more than meets the eye. Ritual is symbols in action, and says more than words can say. That is why wordy introductions and explanations during liturgy take away from the power of symbols to speak for themselves, and reduce their meaning to what can be seen and said.

The “language” of the liturgy impacts on our senses, memory, mind and heart, drawing us in. These include postures and gestures, which are ways of saying – with our whole self – what we believe and what we are doing. They em-body and en-act our inner dispositions, and deepen them. Posture and gestures also help the congregation to act as one body. And they form us – we become as we do.

A fundamental principle of liturgy is that the gestures and postures of priests and people “must be conducive to making the entire celebration resplendent with beauty and noble simplicity, and to making clear the true and full meaning of its different parts, and to fostering the participation of all” (GIRM 42).

We stand to greet and to honour, or show readiness for action. For example: the presence of Christ is beautifully acknowledged when the book of the Gospels, symbolising Christ, is brought into the assembly, accompanied by song (and in some cultures, dance), and the congregation rises to its feet. Kneeling is what we do to express repentance, or adoration, depending on what the liturgy itself is “saying” at a particular moment. Open hands are a sign of reverent asking and receiving.

At Benediction, we are adoring Christ, for which the appropriate body-language is “down in adoration falling...” That is not mainly what we are doing during the Eucharistic Prayer, which is *addressed to the Father*. The appropriate body-language is that which best corresponds to what the Eucharistic Prayer is saying. For those early Christians, standing was body-language for acknowledging that in Christ we have been raised up.

It is good for us to remember both that we have fallen in sin and that we have risen by the grace of Christ. We therefore kneel on six days for prayer, as a sign of our fallen state. But on the Lord’s day we do not kneel, as a sign of the resurrection through which by the grace of Christ we have been freed from sin and from death. This custom had its origin in apostolic times as the blessed Irenaeus bishop and martyr of Lyons says in his book *De Paschate*, in which he reminds us that we are not to kneel during Pentecost since it is of the same importance as the Lord’s day”. (Pseudo-Justin, *Quaestiones ad Orthodoxos*, q.115)

Since there are some persons who kneel on the Lord’s Day and in the days of Pentecost: in order that all things may be observed in like manner in every church, the holy synod has decreed that all should at those times offer up their prayers to God standing. (Council of Nicea, AD 325)

The 50 days that are celebrated after the resurrection of the Lord are already the image not of labour but of peace and joy; because during this time the fast is relaxed and we pray standing, which is the image of the resurrection (St Augustine, Letter 55 to Januarius, 15:28).

This tradition is echoed in the Latin text of Eucharistic Prayers 1 and 2 which still describe the congregation as standing. Eucharistic Prayer I, originating around the year 375, refers to the congregation “*standing around*” (“*circum-stantes*” - currently translated as “gathered here”). The even older Eucharistic Prayer II, originating in the 3rd century, declares that we have been “*counted worthy to stand in Your presence*” – not just “to be” in God’s presence (current English translation). The Eucharistic Prayers are highlighting our status as a redeemed people, a priestly people.

The later custom of kneeling which developed in some parts of the world was not recognised in the GIRM until its revision in 2002. It now describes this practice as “laudably retained”, but does not require it, having just said that where the faithful stand “from the prayer over the offerings to the end of the Mass, [they].... should kneel at the consecration unless prevented by lack of space or other reasonable cause” (GIRM 1975, n 21) It goes on to allow Bishops’ Conferences to adapt the actions and postures, but these adaptations must “always correspond to the character and meaning of each part of the celebration” (GIRM, 2002 [ICEL] n 43).

Adaptation by the New Zealand Bishops’ Conference provides for kneeling “after the completion of the ‘holy, holy’, until after the ‘Amen’ of the Eucharistic Prayer, except when prevented on occasion by ill-health, or lack of space, or the large number of people present, or other reasonable cause.” (GIRM 2002, n. 43). Standing is still the posture in the Eastern Churches.⁴

Where the custom of kneeling is retained, care should be taken not to reinforce the previous mistake of thinking it was the priest who celebrated the Mass, which the people only “attended”.

The liturgy is also “spoken” through music, which is why its songs should be the songs *of the liturgy* – rather than other songs *at the liturgy*. In this way the congregation is able to put itself more fully into its responses. The words should be either the words of the liturgy itself, or words that express what is happening at that part of the liturgy, or liturgical season or feast. Other hymns have their rightful place in various kinds of devotion. Music also helps to make our celebrations more memorable and more easily carried over into our lives. So, it needs to be music that people can sing and like to sing.

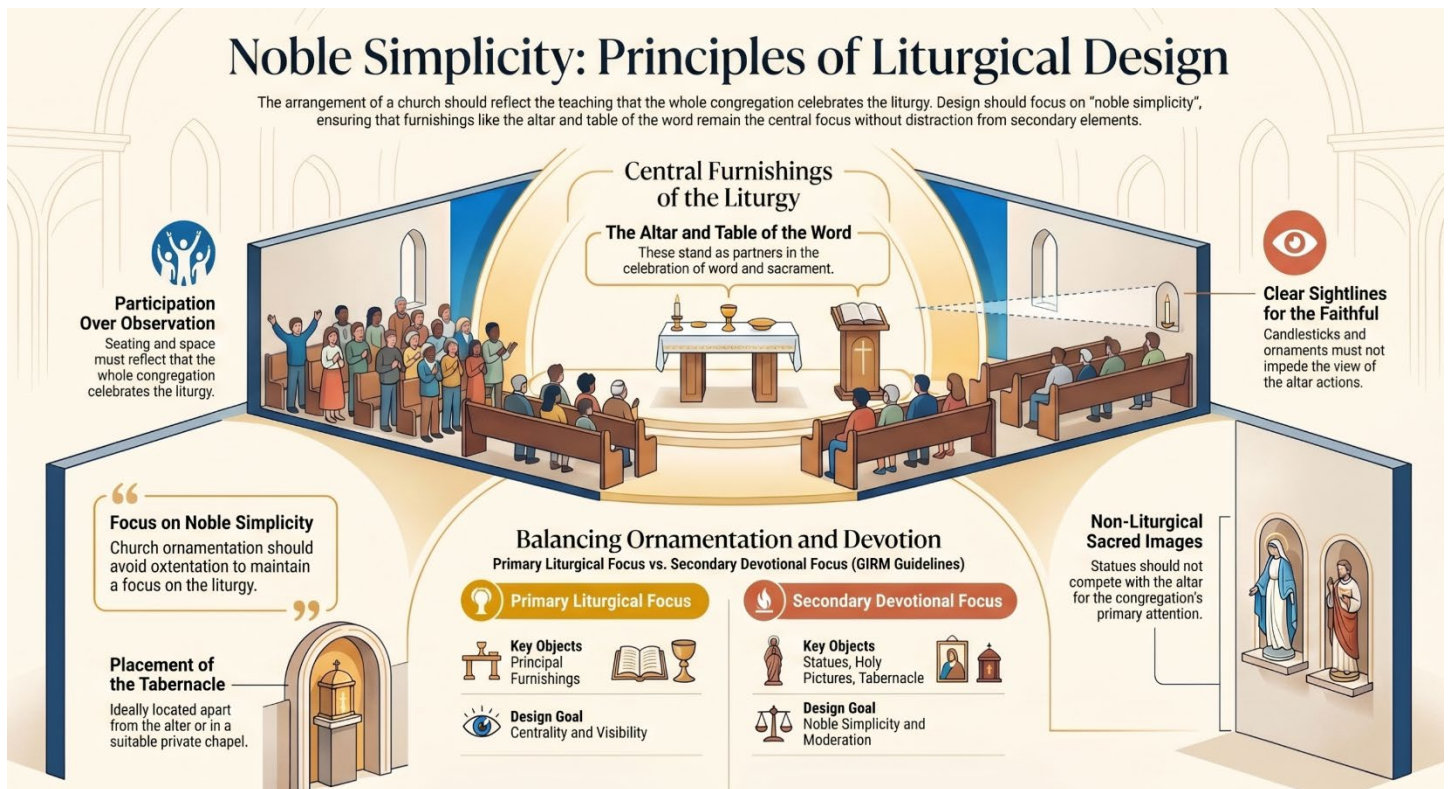
As far back as 1903, Pope Pius X insisted that choirs were not to deprive the congregation of participating in parts that properly belong to the whole assembly. Apart from that, special motifs sung by a choir, at appropriate times, can help to create the atmosphere that heightens our awareness of the mystery of God’s presence among us.

The General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM) specifies that

in the design of each church, the music group should be so located that its character as truly part of the gathered community of the faithful, with a special function to carry out, stands out clearly. The location should also assist the choir to exercise its function... (n 312).

⁴ People ask how the practice of standing during the Eucharistic Prayer came about in the Diocese of Palmerston North. At their meeting in May 2001, the NZ bishops had agreed to promote “intensive liturgical catechesis” in their dioceses. Such catechesis was carried out in the Diocese of Palmerston North and some parishes in the other dioceses, based on sources that were also agreed upon by the NZCBC. This led many to believe that standing corresponds better to “the character and meaning of (this) part of the celebration”, i.e. embodies our belief that with Christ we are going to the Father. It is not just a posture of convenience. By standing, we do what the Eucharistic Prayers say we are doing. The position of the DPN was being allowed for when we wrote the New Zealand version of the GIRM, which was confirmed by the Holy See. Echoing the GIRM, we stipulated that those who are standing, for whatever good reason, should kneel or make a profound bow at the consecration. Priests were asked not to require standing of those who preferred to kneel.

ARCHITECTURE AND FURNISHINGS



The church's furnishings also "speak" to us about the ways Christ is present. The main furnishings are the table of the word and the altar, which stand as partners in our celebration of word and sacrament. Because they focus our attention on what is central to the Church's liturgy, they should not have to compete with statues and holy pictures or the tabernacle for our attention. These all have their own rightful places within the church. It is just that they are not part of the liturgy.

The space in which we gather can help or hinder the understanding which the liturgy renewal is meant to bring about. Does it make us feel like participants or observers? Increasingly, new churches and the renovation of older churches arrange the space and the seating to reflect the Church's teaching that it is the whole congregation that celebrates the liturgy.⁵

"For the proper construction, restoration and arrangement of sacred buildings, all those involved should consult the diocesan commission for the sacred liturgy and sacred art." (GIRM 291)

"The ornamentation of a church should contribute towards its noble simplicity rather than ostentation" (GIRM 292)

"Moderation should be observed in the decoration of the altar" (GIRM 305); "The candlesticks... should be appropriately placed either on or around it...(and so that) the faithful may not be impeded from a clear view of what takes place at the altar or what is placed upon it." (GIRM 307).

⁵ The cathedral of the Holy Spirit, Palmerston North was renovated to reflect this teaching of the Church, and dedicated to the Holy Spirit, in 1988. The architect, Mr Brian Elliott won a national award for this work. In 1990 the renovated cathedral was given Category One heritage status, and in 2002 the interior appeared as a \$1.30 Christmas stamp.

“Sacred images ... should be so arranged so as not to draw attention to themselves and away from the celebration itself” (GIRM 318)

“It is preferable that the tabernacle be located, according to the judgement of the diocesan bishop:

- a) either in the sanctuary apart from the altar of celebration...
- b) or even in some chapel suitable for the private adoration and prayers of the faithful...” GIRM 315)

INCULTURATION

Speaking to a gathering of Traditionalists in Rome, in October 1998, Cardinal Ratzinger said, “It must be admitted that the celebration of the old liturgy had strayed too far into private individualism...” Individualism obscures the nature of liturgy as community worship, and it hinders liturgy’s carry-over into mission, which is essentially a social responsibility.

But this individualism is a feature of Western societies, and not of Māori culture. The privatisation of prayer during liturgy which results from individualism is alien to Māori spirituality. And the split between religious faith and daily life which is a feature of Western societies is alien to Māori.

For years, the Church in our country provided a separate “Māori Mission” which ran in parallel with the parishes. As well as the great benefits of this, it had unfortunate side effects: diocesan priests were not trained for ministry to Māori, and there was no felt need for inculturation in our parishes or liturgies. As a result, it is difficult, even today, for many practising Catholic Māori, to feel truly “at home” in most of our Sunday congregations and parish activities. For them, it can feel like being at someone else’s place. We need to take seriously Pope John Paul II’s words to the Churches of Oceania:

Adequate translations of liturgical texts and appropriate use of symbols drawn from local cultures can avert the cultural alienation of indigenous people when they approach the Church’s worship. The words and signs of the liturgy will be the words and signs of their soul. (Pope John Paul II, Letter to the Church in Oceania, n.39)

Fortunately, many of our parishes now at least open the Mass with the sign of the cross in Māori, and end with the blessing in Māori, and provide for Māori art in the churches. Some parishes celebrate scheduled parish Masses in te reo once a month.



ADAPTATIONS AND ACCOMODATIONS

Like inculturation, appropriate adaptations are also part of the “language” of the liturgy. Adaptations that better *bring out its meaning* actually help to fulfil the purpose intended by the rubrics. Changes that deflect from the meaning of a given part of the Mass are aberrations and not acceptable.

The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* requires that “accommodations and adaptations” should “correspond to the meaning and character of each part of the celebration”. In response to a query about whether bishops or Bishops’ Conferences can impose one option for the sake of uniformity where the liturgy allows several options, the Consilium for the Implementation of the Constitution on the Liturgy replied:

Strictly speaking, this is lawful. But always to be kept in mind is the preservation of that freedom, envisaged by the new rubrics, to adapt the celebration *in an intelligent way* to the particular church, and assembly of the faithful, in such a way that the universal rite is a living reality for this gathering of people. (*Notitiae* 1, (1965) 254, n.76; cf *Documents of the Liturgy*, p. 93).

Smaller accommodations are made by the priest so that the prayer of the Church can become the prayer of the people who are present. In this way he is being faithful to his ministry. The Council said that in facilitating people’s participation,

...the age and condition of the people, their way of life, and degree of religious culture (i.e. religious formation, faith-practice etc) should be taken into account. By doing so, pastors will be fulfilling one of the chief duties of a faithful dispenser of the mysteries of God...” (SC, 19)

Making these kinds of adaptations should be as natural as the way we adapt our vocabulary when speaking now to adults, now to children. Changing non-inclusive to inclusive language is a case in point. A slavish adherence to the liturgical text, or to the rubrics, and an unadaptable way of presiding, are not ways of being faithful to the priest’s ministry and to his people.

When Pope Paul VI commissioned the group charged with revising the Code of Canon Law, he said what was needed was not just new laws, but “a new way of thinking about law”. Canon lawyers make an important distinction between canon law and liturgical norms:

The sharp distinction between canon law and liturgical norms follows from the natural difference between the external structures of the Church, and its intimate life of worship. Each needs to be ordered and regulated, but in different ways. The main *purpose of the canons* is to build, to support, and to safeguard the necessary societal structures. The *aim of liturgical norms* is to help the community to recall God’s mighty deeds and to experience God’s presence through the celebration of the mysteries. In this difference of intent there is an important clue regarding the interpretation of each set of norms.

There should be stability in the external order; hence, exceptions from structural and disciplinary laws should not be easily granted. There should be flexibility in worship according to the spiritual needs of the people: hence, adaptations should be more easily forthcoming. (*The Code of Canon Law; Text and Commentary*, Ed. James Coriden, 1985, p 26)

In similar vein, Pope John Paul II speaks of how the renewed liturgy allows for both safeguarding the “identity and decorum” of the liturgy, and appropriate “creativity and adaptation” respecting different situations and cultures; (see *The Spirit and the Bride*, 2003, n 15).

Sometimes it is a departure from an existing law that eventually becomes a change in the law. By definition, a “contrary custom” develops before it is officially sanctioned. Up until the 16th century, liturgical changes developed mainly in this way. Recent examples of what the rubrics previously did not allow but later became approved include allowing altar girls, allowing women to read from within the sanctuary, allowing women to have their feet washed on Holy Thursday... These examples are given here only to explain why we should not be too quick to decide what is an abuse – nor conclude that there won’t be further examples.

HOLY COMMUNION AND BEING SENT

Like a tide that faithfully comes in and goes out, the liturgy constantly gathers us in and sends us out. We are gathered into union with Christ, and union with one another. “... though there are many of us, we form a single body because we have a share in this one loaf”. (1 Cor. 10:17)

But it doesn’t stop with ourselves: “we become what we receive” (St. Augustine). What we receive is ‘the body broken and given up for others’ and the ‘blood (life) poured out for others’. Being “for others” is what we commit ourselves to when we respond “Amen”.

When Jesus speaks of giving us his “body” and “blood” He is saying “it is my very self that comes to you”. In the Hebrew idiom, “body” stood for the whole person, and “blood” signified life. So, the words “body and blood” stand for the person of the risen and living Christ. They do not mean flesh and blood in the way we know them in this life; nor is this the way he is present in the Sacrament.

Reference to his “body ... *given up*” and his “blood ... *poured out*” was reference to the offering of his life and death for us. By telling us to “take ... eat” and “take ... drink”, he was inviting us to participate in the sacrifice He was making, in the customary way that people participated in sacrifices, i.e. through the meal that was part of the ritual. (Meal and sacrifice are not competing concepts.)

MISSION

The early Christians’ care for the poor was a distinguishing feature of Christian identity and practice, and a cause of attraction to the Gospel and Christian community. 1900 years later, a whole city lined the streets of Wellington to farewell Susan Aubert, foundress of the Sisters of Compassion. The Church’s works of mercy and “preferential option for the poor” continue to evangelise “by attraction”.

But it is not enough to help the victims of misfortune and injustice. Catholic Social Teaching requires that we address the causes and structures of injustice.

“the split between the faith which many profess and their daily lives deserves to be counted among the more serious errors of our age” (2nd Vat. Council, *Modern World*, 43.)

Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI both taught that if our celebrations of Eucharist do not spill over into our lives, they “lack authenticity.” In the liturgy, we are co-missioned to bring about a greater awareness of what it means to become authentically human:

“The human person is the primary route the Church must travel in fulfilling its mission: the primary and fundamental way of the Church, the way traced out by Christ himself” (The Redeemer of the Human Race, n.14)

The way “traced out by Christ himself” reveals God’s love for each person whatever their circumstances – especially the disadvantaged. Called to be “of the same mind as Christ Jesus” (Phil 2:5), we will want our own political choices, and business and trading practices, to contribute to a deeper respect for human dignity, human life and human rights, and more responsible and equitable sharing of the planet’s resources. The alternative is to abandon society to less humane, even de-humanising, influences and ideologies; (e.g. consider the ways self-indulgence, violence and machismo in their many forms are constantly served up as entertainment, or advertising.)

We enculturate our faith even more radically by promoting the practices of compassion, gratuitous giving, and forgiving:

On the one hand, charity demands justice: recognition and respect for the legitimate rights of individuals and peoples. It strives to build the *earthly city* according to law and justice. On the other hand, charity also transcends justice and completes it in the logic of giving and forgiving. The *earthly city* is promoted not merely by relationships of rights and duties, but to an even greater and more fundamental extent by relationships of gratuitousness, mercy and communion...” (Pope Benedict, Caritas in Veritate.)



APPENDIX 1 FOR FURTHER REFLECTION/DISCUSSION

1. How do we experience the difference between someone speaking to us and someone reading to us? (p. 4)
2. How is the difference between a homily and a sermon experienced? (p. 5)
3. The decisive difference between liturgy and devotions (p. 5)
4. The decisive difference between ceremony and ritual, and different understandings of 'mystery' (p.9)
5. How do bodily postures and gestures embody interior dispositions (p.7), including a contemplative disposition"? (p.9)
6. The four ways Christ is really present in the celebration of Eucharist according to the Council, and different ways of being reverent. (pp 8,9)
7. The difference between canon law and liturgical norms. (p. 11)
8. How to improve periods of silence? (p. 9)
9. What are the obstacles to inculturation? (p. 10)
10. How to enhance the carry-over of liturgy into life? (pp. 13-14)

APPENDIX 2 SET-BACKS

Those who are being faithful to the renewal called for by the Second Vatican Council need not be too dismayed when confronted by reversals. These happen for very human reasons; we do not all move at the same pace, and who among us is fully where we need to be? We can respect one another's good intentions. But we are also obliged to respect the Church's teachings.

Reversals can only be temporary, because it is our faith that General/Ecumenical Councils are guided by the Holy Spirit. The reforms of previous Councils sometimes took many decades to be fully implemented.

It helps to remember that history is also 'salvation history,' which reveals how adversity also serves God's purpose. A step back, or even a wrong turn, sometimes gives us a better view of where we should be. Poor understanding by some can lead to better catechesis, and better understanding by many.

Further: family arguments take place within the context of family bonds that go deeper than the differences. There is a Catholic culture formed through the inter-action the Church's scriptures, liturgies, devotions, hymns, literature, art, pilgrimages, parishes, Religious Orders, schools, personal sacrifices, faithfulness, work for justice, peace, development, ecology, and health care... Within this culture, our belonging is mysteriously stronger than anything that offends.

This does not mean we have to sit back and wait. Liturgy renewal belongs within the wider context of renewal in our understanding of *the Church*. When our thinking about the Church starts from the sacrament of Holy Orders, lay advisors are an extension of the ministry of ordained ministers – and usually those the pastor chooses to consult.

The Second Vatican Council teaches that the nature and the mission of the Church derive *not* from the sacrament of Holy Orders, but from the sacrament of Baptism. On that basis, lay participation is wider than representing the ministry of priests and bishops. This *wider kind of participation* needs to be reflected in the way pastoral councils and liturgy commissions are formed, and how they function.

The Final Document on Synodality emphasises the significance of consulting these "participatory bodies", (91,92,104) and calls for "as great a participation of the People of God as possible in the decision-making processes (87.) Moreover,

"Decision-making does not conclude the discernment process. It must be accompanied and followed by practices of accountability and evaluation undertaken in a spirit of transparency inspired by evangelical criteria. Accountability to the community for one's ministry belongs to our oldest tradition: to the Apostolic Church itself..." (95)

Pope Benedict XVI had anticipated these requirements when he spoke of "co-responsibility":

"Co-responsibility requires a change in mentality, particularly with regard to the role of the laity in the Church, who should be considered not as 'collaborators' of the clergy, but as persons truly co-responsible for the being and the activity of the Church... (i.e. what the Church is like and what it does.)" Cardinal Ratzinger, 10 August 2012).

A "change in mentality" – on the part of all of us - can take time. It requires formation. Meanwhile, *set-backs of any kind can stimulate and deepen the felt need for lay participation in ways that reflect the teaching of the Church*. In that way, adversity is still being turned to good purpose.

APPENDIX 3: STATUS OF THE 1962 MISSAL

It is understandable that some ask why the Pope Francis would withdraw permission to use the 1962 Missal which means so much to a small community of devout people who are not seeking disunity.

When promulgating the revised Missal, Pope Paul made it clear that this was now the Church's Missal – incorporating and enhancing the existing Missal, and replacing its unrevised form. He also said that just as his predecessor Pius V had intended the revised Missal of his day to be “an instrument of liturgical unity”, so now he intends the same of the revised Missal. (cf Apostolic Constitution, 1969).

The Council did not intend the co-existence of a revised and an unrevised Missal; to suppose otherwise is to seriously misunderstand the Council's reasons for requiring the reform. The Council would have contradicted its own intentions if it had intended the existence of a revised Missal and an unrevised Missal “in parallel,” as if the renewal were merely optional.

When Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI allowed, under certain conditions, Mass to be celebrated according to the 1962 Missal, it was – in both cases – regarded as a concession to special needs, not a turning back from the liturgy reform. To emphasise the point, Pope Benedict even called it an extra-ordinary way of celebrating the Roman rite – not on a par with the ordinary form. His intentions are dishonoured whenever people treat the extraordinary form of the Mass as if it were another “ordinary” form of the Roman Missal.⁶

An unintended side-effect of Pope Benedict's more extensive concessions was that TLM adherents felt no need to pursue a deeper understanding of the Council; it seemed that for them nothing had changed.

The unrevised (1962) Missal was not “abrogated”; that means it was not *annulled*, which is why it can still be used in special circumstances. But it was *withdrawn from normal use*. It now lives on in the Novus Ordo.

⁶ Regrettably, some even claim that Mass according to the 1962 Missal is the only truly Catholic form of the Mass, and the 1962 Missal has become a flagship for wider dissent. As the one whose core ministry is to safeguard the Church's unity, Pope Francis could not ignore this. Nor can the college of bishops that shares responsibility with him for the universal Church. In implementing his Decree, bishops are asked “to proceed in such a way as to return to a unitary form of celebration...” In his more recent Apostolic Letter, he reiterates this requirement. A ‘hands-off’ attitude is not the proper attitude of bishops. Delay in carrying out Pope Francis’ decree is not obviating division; it is entrenching it.