



Catechesis For the Masses

Basic Teachings on Liturgy and Participation in the Mass in Both Forms
Introduction

“**M**other Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that fully conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy.” These words from the Second Vatican Council’s “Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy,” *Sacrosanctum concilium*, made clear that the end goal of the work of reforming the liturgy during and following the Council was for the People of God to be given increase in their ability to participate in what is the source and summit of the Christian life. While this goal has been advanced in many ways in the first fifty years after that historic council, by no means is the work of the implementation of that Council’s reform complete. Accordingly, we embark upon this series, *Catechesis for the Masses*, that the completion of the Council’s work may be continued to be brought closer to its fulfillment.

In particular, this series of catechetical resources will seek to draw all who receive them into a deeper encounter with Christ in the liturgy of the Church - where His saving works are accomplished on our behalf. The same “Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy” of the Second Vatican Council defines the two-fold purpose of the liturgy as that of the glorification of God in heaven and of the sanctification of His people. Accordingly, this series of catechetical materials has the purpose of aiding all of the faithful in participating in the liturgical life of the Church in keeping with this two-fold purpose: by giving greater glory to God through fitting worship and by helping all to open themselves in greater receptivity to the gift of divine life that is offered to us through this worship.

Practically speaking, these catechetical materials that will include written columns, adult faith formation sessions, and an accompanying video series, will look to offer teaching and reflection on the nature of the liturgy and what is intended by the term “fully conscious, and active participation” in the liturgy. There will be some explanation of general elements found in all liturgical prayers, with emphasis on how these general elements are found in the Holy Mass. Additionally, as these teachings are being delivered in connection with the initiation of a regular offering of Latin Masses, a significant component of the series will focus on the place of the Latin language in the liturgy, along with offering actual times to learn basic Latin pronunciation and key Latin responses for Mass. By way of the internet, all of these materials will be made readily available, including audio recordings of Latin prayers and responses for the sake of continuing practice of speaking and singing of these responses.



The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) showed the reform of the liturgy to be a priority, seeing participation in the liturgy as the source and summit of the Christian life.

As we introduce this series, it is of immediate importance to offer some larger explanation and perspective on the nature of the liturgy. So that you know what to expect, and that this series may be most effective, we give the following disclaimer: **these resources will not attempt to fully explain everything of the liturgy**, nor do they portend that our fully conscious participation in the liturgy requires such complete understanding - as a full explanation of every detail of the liturgy is not possible. For what we are seeking to enter into is the transcendence of God, receiving from Him a foretaste of eternity in His presence, which our limited capacity as human beings could never attain by our own powers. Let me explain more....

Appealing once more to the Second Vatican Council, we read, “In the earthly liturgy we take part in a foretaste of that heavenly liturgy which is celebrated in the holy city of Jerusalem toward which we journey as pilgrims.” In other words, our participation in the liturgy is *not merely an earthly act nor a purely human act*; it is a participation in *what is of the reality of eternal life in God’s presence*. Taking this a step further, the liturgy is first of all the work of God, opening up to us a glimpse of the glory of heaven, drawing us into this glimpse by His willing to bring such a glimpse down among us. As those who are recipients of the gift of salvation in Jesus Christ, our right participation in the

liturgy is always first and foremost *to open ourselves* to what Jesus Christ comes to accomplish in us, saving us from sin and death, giving us a share in the infinite and perfect glory that is found in heaven. Thus, in the bluntest of terms, in learning more about participation in the liturgy, we are embarking upon a deeper understanding of a participation in what is the infinite and perfect life of God. To seek to explain *everything* only serves to reduce the liturgy to the level of our own limited human capacity to comprehend the infinite, taking away any and every possibility of our being lifted up into that glimpse of the transcendent which is offered by the very nature of the liturgy itself. In practice, such over-explanation makes the liturgy into a strictly human act, removing any openness to the glimpse of heaven that it truly is meant to offer. Therefore, we will not look to explain everything; instead we will seek to grow in our “fully conscious participation,” that we are invited to encounter a glimpse of heaven, and thus we will “learn to offer ourselves” with humble openness to the great gift that is offered to us.

As we begin this series, we ask the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who shows us what it is to fully, consciously, and actively participate in the work of salvation through her beautiful words of response: “Let it be done according to thy Word.”

Catechesis for the Masses: General Outline of Topics

Adult Education Sessions

Introduction: Two Forms of One Rite
 Encountering the “Mystery” of God
 All About Active Participation
 Basic Latin: History, Pronunciation
 Practice at Speaking Latin
 Basics of Gregorian Chant
 Gregorian Chant Practice

Bulletin Columns and Videos

Introduction to this Series
 True and False Worship
 About the Two Forms of Mass
 Restful Participation in Liturgy
 Encountering the “Mystery” of God
 Humility Leads to Fruitfulness
 The Sound of Silence
 Latin: Our Mother Tongue
 Latin Mass: Is the Church Going Backwards?
 How Rituals Change
 Singing Leads to Learning
 Ministries of the Extraordinary Form
 Ministries of the Ordinary Form
 Review of *Ad Orientem* Worship
 Basics of Gregorian Chant
 Try it Four Times Before You Decide