



Episode 2: Intelligent Worship

SUMMARY

The Second Vatican Council, in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, called for “active participation” on the part of the Faithful.

It also called for a participation that would be *full* and *conscious*.

Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy

Mother 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. Such participation by the Christian people as “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people” (1 Pet. 2:9; cf. 2:4-5), is their right and duty by reason of their baptism. (n°. 14)

Pastors of souls must therefore realize that, when the liturgy is celebrated, something more is required than the mere observation of the laws governing valid and licit celebration; it is their duty also to ensure that the faithful take part fully aware of what they are doing, actively

engaged in the rite, and enriched by its effects. (n°. 11)

Virgil Michel

Without intelligence, there is no such thing as worship.

True worship, or worship of God, is an exercise of the virtue of religion. This virtue consists in an acknowledgement of God as our Creator and Father and of our total dependence on him in every respect.

Worship is thus always a rendering of due homage to God by intelligent beings. There can be no worship without intelligence, without the quality of mind or of consciousness.

The Liturgy of the Church, 3

Human beings must recognize that we are entirely dependent on God for everything. Even our existence is God’s gift.

If our participation in the liturgy is to be genuine and full, it must also be full and intelligent.

THE TEACHING OF THE CHURCH

✠ “Liturgy is the ‘action’ of the *whole Christ* (*Christus totus*). Those who even now celebrate it without signs are already in the heavenly liturgy, where celebration is wholly communion and feast.”

Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), n°. 1136

✠ “It is the whole *community*, the Body of Christ united with its Head, that celebrates. ‘Liturgical services are not private functions but are celebrations of the Church which is the sacrament of unity, namely, the holy people united and organized under the authority of the bishops. Therefore, liturgical services pertain to the whole Body of the Church. They manifest it, and have effects upon it. But they touch individual members of the Church in different ways, depending on their orders, their role in the liturgical services, and their actual participation in them.’ For this reason, ‘rites which are meant to be celebrated in common, with the faithful present and actively participating, should as far as possible be celebrated in that way rather than by an individual and quasi-privately.’”

CCC, n°. 1140

IN THE PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

Rite of Ordination

Receive the oblation of the holy people,
to be offered to God.

Understand what you do,
imitate what you celebrate,
and conform your life

to the mystery of the Lord’s cross.

Grant us, Lord,
as we honor with joyful devotion
the Nativity of your Son,
that we may come to know
with fullness of faith
the hidden depths of this mystery
and to love them ever more and more.
Through Christ our Lord.

Prayer after Communion, Nativity of the Lord

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How can we use our intellects to participate more fully in the Mass?
2. What prayers of the Mass would you like to understand more deeply?
3. What do our minds tell us about our dependence on God?
4. If every heartbeat is a gift from God, if God holds us in existence even at this moment, what should be our response?

FOR FURTHER READING

Virgil Michel, osb, *The Liturgy of the Church*, (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1937).

Robert Tuzik, *Reynold Hillenbrand: The Reform of the Catholic Liturgy and the Call to Social Action*, (Chicago: Hillenbrand Books, 2010).