

Session 2

Full, Active, Conscious Participation

Centuries of silence precede the liturgical renewal of the 20th century and the changes at Vatican II that turned altars to face the people in worship. For centuries people usually practiced other devotions during the Latin Mass.

Renewal started in France. Dom Prosper Guéranger (1805-75) feared individualism and established a Benedictine monastery at Solemnes to build community. He put Eucharist at the center of monastic life and generated the liturgical revival that flourished in the early 20th century.

Pius X (1905) urged frequent communion and lowered the age of first communion to seven, the age of reason. At a 1909 congress for lay Catholics, a Belgian monk named Dom Lambert Beauduin called for active participation of the laity in Church life, especially in the liturgy. Beauduin saw it as a powerful tool in the rebirth of society. He started a monthly publication called *Liturgical Life*.

The *Missa Recitata* (1922) restored dialogue to the Eucharistic liturgy in religious houses. The priest turned toward the people for the dialogue, and people loved it even though it was in Latin. In Brooklyn Father Stedman published a Latin/English missal (1932), which spread widely. As the whole Church began to use missals at Mass and respond in dialogue to the celebrant, people wondered why not pray in the vernacular.

Because the liturgical movement prepared the Church for renewal throughout the first half of the 20th century, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy was the first document the Second Vatican Council passed (1963). Bishops voted 2162 to 46 to approve the document, which stresses that the Eucharist is the

font and summit of the Church's activity. The Church arises from our worship together. Eucharist is the work of people on behalf of their God and the work of Jesus for the redemption of all.

The paschal mystery, Jesus' passage from death to life, is the heart of Christian faith. Every Sunday celebrates Jesus' resurrection to new life. Baptism



immerses the Christian in Jesus' self-giving death and life-giving resurrection.

Baptism calls every Christian to holiness and makes us priests, prophets, and kings who share in the Church's mission and worship. Christ is present not only in the priest, the Word, and the Eucharistic species at Mass but also in the people who gather in Jesus' name.

In the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, the Council sets four goals for public worship and for its own work—

- “To impart an ever increasing vigor to the Christian life of the faithful;”
- “To adapt more closely to the needs of our age those institutions which are subject to change;”
- “To foster whatever can promote union among all who believe in Christ;”
- “To strengthen whatever can help to call all humankind into the Church's fold.”

Reflect

- What vigor has the Council increased in your Christian life?
- What experiences of Catholic liturgy have most profoundly awakened you to the presence of God in your life?
- How do you actively, fully, consciously participate in public worship?
- Which changes among those listed below have helped you become a more active, conscious participant in worship?
- Celebrating Eucharist and other sacraments in English
- Richer scriptural fare on the table of the Word, a three-year cycle of readings that includes all four gospels
- Celebrating Jesus' resurrection and the promise of our own at funerals
- Multiple Eucharistic Prayers instead of one
- Altars that look like tables
- Priest and people face each other for dialog
- Restoration of the Prayer of the Faithful
- Communion in the hand
- Lay readers
- Sign of peace
- Communion under both species.
- People bringing gifts to the altar
- More circular church buildings that gather us around the altar
- Face to face Sacrament of Reconciliation
- New music
- Other
- What do you bring to your typical Sunday or holiday worship? What do you take away?