

Reading the Catechism of the Catholic Church together

On August 15, 1997 with an Apostolic Letter *Laetamur Magnopere* (*It is a Cause of Great Joy*), St. John Paul II Pope approved and promulgated the Latin Typical edition of the Catechism of the Catholic Church. In this Letter he implored the Bishops saying “I therefore, strongly urge my Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate, for whom the Catechism is primarily intended, to take the excellent opportunity afforded by the promulgation of this Latin edition to **intensify their efforts to disseminate the text more widely and to ensure that it is well received as an outstanding gift for the communities entrusted to them, which will thus be able to rediscover the inexhaustible riches of the faith**”.

Thanks be to God, many bishops took it upon themselves and it was translated into many different languages of the world, and we have it in English too.

It is in this spirit that I have felt that we as a Christian Community of Annunciation should take the reading of this fount of the richness of our faith taking a paragraph or two per week. Let it be a prayerful and meditative reading by allowing the Holy Spirit to guide and lead us into the deep and true knowledge of the essentials of our Catholic faith and into the growth and maturation of our spiritual life. The Catechism of the Catholic Church “is a statement of the Church’s faith and of catholic doctrine, attested to and illuminated by Sacred Scripture, Apostolic Tradition, and Church’s Magisterium”. It was given to us to be a sure and authentic reference for catholic teaching and for the faithful who wish to deepen their knowledge of the unfathomable riches of salvation.

The text of the Catechism of the Catholic Church is made up of four major different parts under different titles that cover all and various Catholic beliefs and teachings. But for our starting point we will read part II on the celebration of the Christian Mysteries, which specifically deals with worship and sacraments of the Church.

Hear again what St. John Paul II in the same Letter, asked the Church and is still asking us: “I ask all the Church’s Pastors and the Christian faithful to receive this catechism in a spirit of communion and to use it assiduously in fulfilling their mission of proclaiming the faith and calling people to the Gospel life”. Let us respond to this calling with faith and charity.

Blessed Virgin Mary Our Lady of Annunciation, pray for us. Amen.

Fr. Justus

THE CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

THE CELEBRATION OF THE CHRISTIAN MYSTERY

Why the liturgy?

1066 In the Symbol of the faith the Church confesses the mystery of the Holy Trinity and of the plan of God's "good pleasure" for all creation: the Father accomplishes the "mystery of his will" by giving his beloved Son and his Holy Spirit for the salvation of the world and for the glory of his name.¹ Such is the mystery of Christ, revealed and fulfilled in history according to the wisely ordered plan that St. Paul calls the "plan of the mystery"² and the patristic tradition will call the "economy of the Word incarnate" or the "economy of salvation."

1067 "The wonderful works of God among the people of the Old Testament were but a prelude to the work of Christ the Lord in redeeming mankind and giving perfect glory to God. He accomplished this work principally by the Paschal mystery of his Blessed Passion, Resurrection from the dead, and glorious Ascension, whereby 'dying he destroyed our death, rising he restored our life.' For it was from the side of Christ as he slept the sleep of death upon the cross that there came forth 'the wondrous sacrament of the whole Church.'"³ For this reason, the Church celebrates in the liturgy above all the Paschal mystery by which Christ accomplished the work of our salvation.

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THE CELEBRATION OF THE CHRISTIAN MYSTERY

Why the liturgy?

1068 It is this mystery of Christ that the Church proclaims and celebrates in her liturgy so that the faithful may live from it and bear witness to it in the world:

For it is in the liturgy, especially in the divine sacrifice of the Eucharist, that “the work of our redemption is accomplished,” and it is through the liturgy especially that the faithful are enabled to express in their lives and manifest to others the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church.⁴

What does the word liturgy mean?

1069 The word “liturgy” originally meant a “public work” or a “service in the name of/on behalf of the people.” In Christian tradition it means the participation of the People of God in “the work of God.”⁵ Through the liturgy Christ, our redeemer and high priest, continues the work of our redemption in, with, and through his Church.

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What does the word liturgy mean?

1070 In the New Testament the word “liturgy” refers not only to the celebration of divine worship but also to the proclamation of the Gospel and to active charity.⁶ In all of these situations it is a question of the service of God and neighbor. In a liturgical celebration the Church is servant in the image of her Lord, the one “leitourgos”; she shares in Christ’s priesthood (worship), which is both prophetic (proclamation) and kingly (service of charity):

The liturgy then is rightly seen as an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ. It involves the presentation of man’s sanctification under the guise of signs perceptible by the senses and its accomplishment in ways appropriate to each of these signs. In it full public worship is performed by the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, that is, by the Head and his members. From this it follows that every liturgical celebration, because it is an action of Christ the priest and of his Body which is the Church, is a sacred action surpassing all others. No other action of the Church can equal its efficacy by the same title and to the same degree.

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Liturgy as source of life

1071 As the work of Christ liturgy is also an action of his Church. It makes the Church present and manifests her as the visible sign of the communion in Christ between God and men. It engages the faithful in the new life of the community and involves the “conscious, active, and fruitful participation” of everyone.

1072 “The sacred liturgy does not exhaust the entire activity of the Church”:¹⁰ it must be preceded by evangelization, faith, and conversion. It can then produce its fruits in the lives of the faithful: new life in the Spirit, involvement in the mission of the Church, and service to her unity.

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Prayer and liturgy

1073 The liturgy is also a participation in Christ's own prayer addressed to the Father in the Holy Spirit. In the liturgy, all Christian prayer finds its source and goal. Through the liturgy the inner man is rooted and grounded in "the great love with which [the Father] loved us" in his beloved Son. It is the same "marvelous work of God" that is lived and internalized by all prayer, "at all times in the Spirit."

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Catechesis and liturgy

1074 "The liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; it is also the font from which all her power flows." It is therefore the privileged place for catechizing the People of God. "Catechesis is intrinsically linked with the whole of liturgical and sacramental activity, for it is in the sacraments, especially in the Eucharist, that Christ Jesus works in fullness for the transformation of men."

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Catechesis and liturgy

1075 Liturgical catechesis aims to initiate people into the mystery of Christ (It is "mystagogy.") by proceeding from the visible to the invisible, from the sign to the thing signified, from the "sacraments" to the "mysteries." Such catechesis is to be presented by local and regional catechisms. This Catechism, which aims to serve the whole Church in all the diversity of her rites and cultures,¹⁵ will present what is fundamental and common to the whole Church in the liturgy as mystery and as celebration (Section One), and then the seven sacraments and the sacramentals (Section Two).

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Section One

The Sacramental Economy

1076 The Church was made manifest to the world on the day of Pentecost by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The gift of the Spirit ushers in a new era in the “dispensation of the mystery”— the age of the Church, during which Christ manifests, makes present, and communicates his work of salvation through the liturgy of his Church, “until he comes.” In this age of the Church Christ now lives and acts in and with his Church, in a new way appropriate to this new age. He acts through the sacraments in what the common Tradition of the East and the West calls “the sacramental economy”; this is the communication (or “dispensation”) of the fruits of Christ’s Paschal mystery in the celebration of the Church’s “sacramental” liturgy. It is therefore important first to explain this “sacramental dispensation” (chapter one). The nature and essential features of liturgical celebration will then appear more clearly (chapter two).

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Chapter One
The Paschal Mystery in the Age of the Church

Article 1

THE LITURGY—WORK OF THE HOLY TRINITY

I. The Father—Source and Goal of the Liturgy

1077 “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. He destined us before him in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.”

1078 Blessing is a divine and life-giving action, the source of which is the Father; his blessing is both word and gift. When applied to man, the word “blessing” means adoration and surrender to his Creator in thanksgiving.

1079 From the beginning until the end of time the whole of God’s work is a blessing. From the liturgical poem of the first creation to the canticles of the heavenly Jerusalem, the inspired authors proclaim the plan of salvation as one vast divine blessing.