



The Liturgical Year

1168 Beginning with the Easter Triduum as its source of light, the new age of the Resurrection fills the whole liturgical year with its brilliance. Gradually, on either side of this source, the year is transfigured by the liturgy. It really is a "year of the Lord's favor."⁴² The economy of salvation is at work within the framework of time, but since its fulfillment in the Passover of Jesus and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the culmination of history is anticipated "as a foretaste," and the kingdom of God enters into our time.

1169 Therefore *Easter* is not simply one feast among others, but the "Feast of feasts," the "Solemnity of solemnities," just as the Eucharist is the "Sacrament of sacraments" (the Great Sacrament). St. Athanasius calls Easter "the Great Sunday"⁴³ and the Eastern Churches call Holy Week "the Great Week." The mystery of the Resurrection, in which Christ crushed death, permeates with its powerful energy our old time, until all is subjected to him.

1170 At the Council of Nicaea in 325, all the Churches agreed that Easter, the Christian Passover, should be celebrated on the Sunday following the first full moon (14 Nisan) after the vernal equinox. Because of the different methods of calculating the 14th day of the month of

Nisan, the date of Easter in the Western and Eastern Churches is not always the same. For this reason, the Churches are currently seeking an agreement in order once again to celebrate the day of the Lord's Resurrection on a common date.

1171 In the liturgical year the various aspects of the one Paschal mystery unfold. This is also the case with the cycle of feasts surrounding the mystery of the incarnation (Annunciation, Christmas, Epiphany). They commemorate the beginning of our salvation and communicate to us the first fruits of the Paschal mystery.

The sanctoral in the liturgical year

1172 "In celebrating this annual cycle of the mysteries of Christ, Holy Church honors the Blessed Mary, Mother of God, with a special love. She is inseparably linked with the saving work of her Son. In her the Church admires and exalts the most excellent fruit of redemption and joyfully contemplates, as in a faultless image, that which she herself desires and hopes wholly to be."⁴⁴

1173 When the Church keeps the memorials of martyrs and other saints during the annual cycle, she proclaims the Paschal mystery in those "who have suffered and have been glorified with Christ. She proposes them to the faithful as examples who draw all men to the Father through Christ, and through their merits she begs for God's favors."⁴⁵

The Liturgy of the Hours

1174 The mystery of Christ, his Incarnation and Passover, which we celebrate in the Eucharist especially at the Sunday assembly, permeates and transfigures the time of each day, through the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours, "the divine office."⁴⁶ This celebration, faithful to the apostolic exhortations to "pray constantly," is "so devised that the whole course of the day and night is made holy by the praise of God."⁴⁷ In this "public prayer of the Church,"⁴⁸ the faithful (clergy, religious, and lay people) exercise the royal priesthood of the baptized. Celebrated in "the form approved" by the Church, the Liturgy of the Hours "is truly the voice of the Bride herself addressed to her Bridegroom. It is the very prayer which Christ himself together with his Body addresses to the Father."⁴⁹

1175 The Liturgy of the Hours is intended to become the prayer of the whole People of God. In it Christ himself "continues his priestly work through his Church."⁵⁰ His members participate according to their own place in the Church and the circumstances of their lives: priests devoted to the pastoral ministry, because they are called to remain diligent in prayer and the service of the word; religious, by the charism of their consecrated lives; all the faithful as much as possible: "Pastors of souls should see to it that the principal hours, especially Vespers, are celebrated in common in church on Sundays and on the more solemn feasts. The laity, too, are encouraged to recite the divine office, either with the priests, or among themselves, or even individually."⁵¹

1176 The celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours demands not only harmonizing the voice with the praying heart, but also a deeper "understanding of the liturgy and of the Bible, especially of the Psalms."⁵²

1177 The hymns and litanies of the Liturgy of the Hours integrate the prayer of the psalms into the age of the Church, expressing the symbolism of the time of day, the liturgical season, or the feast being celebrated. Moreover, the reading from the Word of God at each Hour (with the subsequent responses or *troparia*) and readings from the Fathers and spiritual masters at certain Hours, reveal more deeply the meaning of the mystery being celebrated, assist in understanding the psalms, and prepare for silent prayer. The *lectio divina*, where the Word of God is so read and meditated that it becomes prayer, is thus rooted in the liturgical celebration.

1178 The Liturgy of the Hours, which is like an extension of the Eucharistic celebration, does not exclude but rather in a complementary way calls forth the various devotions of the People of God, especially adoration and worship of the Blessed Sacrament.

WHERE IS THE LITURGY CELEBRATED?

1179 The worship "in Spirit and in truth"⁵³ of the New Covenant is not tied exclusively to any one place. The whole earth is sacred and entrusted to the children of men. What matters above all is that, when the faithful assemble in the same place, they are the "living stones," gathered to be "built into a spiritual house."⁵⁴ For the Body of the risen Christ is the spiritual temple from which the source of living water springs forth: incorporated into Christ by the Holy Spirit, "we are the temple of the living God."⁵⁵

1180 When the exercise of religious liberty is not thwarted,⁵⁶ Christians construct buildings for divine worship. These visible churches are not simply gathering places but signify and make visible the Church living in this place, the dwelling of God with men reconciled and united in Christ.

1181 A church, "a house of prayer in which the Eucharist is celebrated and reserved, where the faithful assemble, and where is worshipped the presence of the Son of God our Savior, offered for us on the sacrificial altar for the help and consolation of the faithful - this house ought to be in good taste and a worthy place for prayer and sacred ceremonial."⁵⁷ In this "house of God" the truth and the harmony of the signs that make it up should show Christ to be present and active in this place.⁵⁸

1182 The *altar* of the New Covenant is the Lord's Cross,⁵⁹ from which the sacraments of the Paschal mystery flow. On the altar, which is the center of the church, the sacrifice of the Cross is made present under sacramental signs. The altar is also the table of the Lord, to which the People of God are invited.⁶⁰ In certain Eastern liturgies, the altar is also the symbol of the tomb (Christ truly died and is truly risen).

1183 The *tabernacle* is to be situated "in churches in a most worthy place with the greatest honor."⁶¹ The dignity, placing, and security of the Eucharistic tabernacle should foster adoration before the Lord really present in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar.⁶²

The *sacred chrism (myron)*, used in anointings as the sacramental sign of the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit, is traditionally reserved and venerated in a secure place in the sanctuary. The oil of catechumens and the oil of the sick may also be placed there.

1184 The *chair of the bishop (cathedra)* or that of the priest "should express his office of presiding over the assembly and of directing prayer."⁶³

The *lectern (ambo)*: "The dignity of the Word of God requires the church to have a suitable place for announcing his message so that the attention of the people may be easily directed to that place during the liturgy of the Word."⁶⁴

1185 The gathering of the People of God begins with Baptism; a church must have a place for the celebration of *Baptism* (baptistry) and for fostering remembrance of the baptismal promises (holy water font).

The renewal of the baptismal life requires *penance*. A church, then, must lend itself to the expression of repentance and the reception of forgiveness, which requires an appropriate place to receive penitents.

A church must also be a space that invites us to the recollection and silent prayer that extend and internalize the great prayer of the Eucharist.

1186 Finally, the church has an eschatological significance. To enter into the house of God, we must cross a *threshold*, which symbolizes passing from the world wounded by sin to the world of the new Life to which all men are called. The visible church is a symbol of the Father's house toward which the People of God is journeying and where the Father "will wipe every tear from their eyes."⁶⁵ Also for this reason, the Church is the house of all God's children, open and welcoming.

IN BRIEF

1187 The liturgy is the work of the whole Christ, head and body. Our high priest celebrates it unceasingly in the heavenly liturgy, with the holy Mother of God, the apostles, all the saints, and the multitude of those who have already entered the kingdom.

1188 In a liturgical celebration, the whole assembly is *leitourgos*, each member according to his own function. The baptismal priesthood is that of the whole Body of Christ. But some of the faithful are ordained through the sacrament of Holy Orders to represent Christ as head of the Body.

1189 The liturgical celebration involves signs and symbols relating to creation (candles, water, fire), human life (washing, anointing, breaking bread) and the history of salvation (the rites of the Passover). Integrated into the world of faith and taken up by the power of the Holy Spirit, these cosmic elements, human rituals, and gestures of remembrance of God become bearers of the saving and sanctifying action of Christ.

1190 The Liturgy of the Word is an integral part of the celebration. The meaning of the celebration is expressed by the Word of God which is proclaimed and by the response of faith to it.

1191 Song and music are closely connected with the liturgical action. The criteria for their proper use are the beauty expressive of prayer, the unanimous participation of the assembly, and the sacred character of the celebration.

1192 Sacred images in our churches and homes are intended to awaken and nourish our faith in the mystery of Christ. Through the icon of Christ and his works of salvation, it is he whom we adore. Through sacred images of the holy Mother of God, of the angels and of the saints, we venerate the persons represented.

1193 Sunday, the "Lord's Day," is the principal day for the celebration of the Eucharist because it is the day of the Resurrection. It is the pre-eminent day of the liturgical assembly, the day of the Christian family, and the day of joy and rest from work. Sunday is "the foundation and kernel of the whole liturgical year" (SC 106).

1194 The Church, "in the course of the year, . . . unfolds the whole mystery of Christ from his Incarnation and Nativity through his Ascension, to Pentecost and the expectation of the blessed hope of the coming of the Lord" (SC 102 § 2).

1195 By keeping the memorials of the saints - first of all the holy Mother of God, then the apostles, the martyrs, and other saints - on fixed days of the liturgical year, the Church on earth shows that she is united with the liturgy of heaven. She gives glory to Christ for having accomplished his salvation in his glorified members; their example encourages her on her way to the Father.

1196 The faithful who celebrate the Liturgy of the Hours are united to Christ our high priest, by the prayer of the Psalms, meditation on the Word of God, and canticles and blessings, in order to be joined with his unceasing and universal prayer that gives glory to the Father and implores the gift of the Holy Spirit on the whole world.

1197 Christ is the true temple of God, "the place where his glory dwells"; by the grace of God, Christians also become the temples of the Holy Spirit, living stones out of which the Church is built.

1198 In its earthly state the Church needs places where the community can gather together. Our visible churches, holy places, are images of the holy city, the heavenly Jerusalem, toward which we are making our way on pilgrimage.

1199 It is in these churches that the Church celebrates public worship to the glory of the Holy Trinity, hears the word of God and sings his praise, lifts up her prayer, and offers the sacrifice of Christ sacramentally present in the midst of the assembly. These churches are also places of recollection and personal prayer.

1 *Rev* 4:2, 8; *Isa* 6:1; cf. *Ezek* 1:26-28.

2 *Rev* 5:6; *Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*, Anaphora; cf. *Jn* 1:29; *Heb* 4:14-15; 10:19-2.

3 *Rev* 22:1; cf. 21:6; *Jn* 4:10-14.

4 Cf. *Rev* 4-5; 7:1-8; 14:1; *Isa* 6:2-3.

5 *Rev* 6:9-11; *Rev* 21:9; cf. 12.

6 *Rev* 7:9.

7 *SC* 26.

8 *SC* 27.

9 *LG* 10; cf. *1 Pet* 2:4-5.

10 Cf. *LG* 10; 34; *PO* 2.

11 *SC* 14; Cf. *1 Pet* 2:9; 2:4-5.

12 *Rom* 12:4.

13 Cf. *PO* 2; 15.

14 *SC* 29.

15 *SC* 28.

16 Cf. *Wis* 13:1; *Rom* 1:19 f.; *Acts* 14:17.

17 Cf. *Lk* 8:10.

18 Cf. *Jn* 9:6; *Mk* 7:33 ff.; 8:22 ff.

19 Cf. *Lk* 9:31; 22:7-20.

20 *SC* 112.

21 *Eph* 5:19; St. Augustine, *En. in Ps.* 72,1:PL 36,914; cf. *Col* 3:16.

22 *SC* 112 § 3.

23 Cf. *SC* 112.

24 St. Augustine, *Conf.* 9,6,14:PL 32,769-770.

25 Cf. *SC* 119.

26 *SC* 118; 121.

27 St. John Damascene, *De imag.* 1,16:PG 96:1245-1248.

28 Council of Nicaea II (787): *COD* 111.

29 *Heb* 12:1.

30 Cf. *Rom* 8:29; *1 Jn* 3:2.

31 Council of Nicaea II: *DS* 600.

32 St. John Damascene, *De imag.* 1,27:PG 94,1268A,B.

33 *SC* 102.

- 34 Cf. *Mt* 6:11; *Heb* 3:7-4:11; *Ps* 95:7.
- 35 St. Hippolytus, *De pasch.* 1-2 SCh 27,117.
- 36 SC 106.
- 37 Byzantine liturgy.
- 38 Cf. *Jn* 21:12; *Lk* 24:30.
- 39 St. Jerome, *Pasch.*: CCL 78,550.
- 40 SC 106.
- 41 Fanqith, *The Syriac Office of Antioch*, vol. VI, first part of Summer, 193 B.
- 42 *Lk* 4:19.
- 43 St. Athanasius (*ad 329*) *ep. fest.* 1:PG 24,1366.
- 44 SC 103.
- 45 SC 104; cf. SC 108,111.
- 46 Cf. SC, Ch. IV,83-101.
- 47 SC 84; *1 Thess* 5:17; *Eph* 6:18.
- 48 SC 98.
- 49 SC 84.
- 50 SC 83.
- 51 SC 100; Cf. 86; 96; 98; PO 5.
- 52 SC 90.
- 53 *Jn* 4:24.
- 54 *1 Pet* 2:4-5.
- 55 *2 Cor* 6:16.
- 56 Cf. DH 4
- 57 PO 5; Cf. SC 122-127.
- 58 Cf. SC 7.
- 59 Cf. *Heb* 13:10.
- 60 Cf. GIRM 259.
- 61 Paul VI, *Mysterium Fidei*: AAS (1965) 771.
- 62 Cf. SC 128.
- 63 GIRM 271.
- 64 GIRM 272.
- 65 *Rev* 21:4.

Liturgical Colors

(according to season)

This tells us what color of the vestments to be worn by the priest during the celebration of the liturgy.



Advent: The Experience of Desire

Lent: The Experience of Rescue



Gaudete/Laetare



Christmas: The Experience of Discovery

Easter: The Experience of Transformation



Marian Celebration



Ordinary Time: The Experience of Journey



Funeral Mass



Feast of the Holy Spirit and Martyrs