

Catechism on the Liturgy, I.1

I. Introduction

A. Participation.

1. The word participation is from the Latin: *partis* (part) and *capio* (I take). So what does it mean to partake of the Mass? Here are some good answers from the 1958 Instruction *De Musica Sacra*, from the Congregation of the Rites. Keep in mind that this Instruction is taking is based on a number of previous instructions from Blessed Pius IX, Pius XI, St. Pius X, Benedict XV and Pius XII.

“The Mass of its nature requires that all those present participate in it, in the fashion proper to each. This participation must be primarily interior (i.e., union with Christ the Priest; offering with and through Him). But the participation of those present becomes fuller if to internal attention is joined external participation, expressed, that is to say, by external actions such as the position of the body (genuflecting, standing, sitting) ceremonial gestures (Sign of the Cross), or in particular, the responses prayers and singing...”

“Perfect active participation (*participatio actuosa*), finally, is obtained when there is added sacramental participation (by communion). Deliberate active participation of the faithful is not possible without their adequate instruction.”

A few comments on these words are in order:

a. Notice that the participation is required. This is not referring to the 3rd Commandment directly, but in the sense that if you come, you cannot sit and be an idle or mute spectator and expect the blessing of the Lord, except in very difficult circumstances, such as poor health.

b. The participation is in accord with the fashion proper to each. This means first of all that the role of the altar boy is different than the role of the priest. But it also means that for some, the full attention to the Mass can be impossible, if they are grief-stricken. So there are plenty of exceptions to be made and hairs to be split in these matters. But I'm not going to try to make them all. I'll just speak about the norm. With that being said, the union with Christ the Priest at the altar is especially interior, just like His Mother or St. John standing before Him while He was on the cross. They gave Him their attention, devotion, sympathy, time and everything else they could give Him, but did so silently. That is participation which is primary, and primarily interior. So while praying the Rosary at the Mass is a very low form of participation - and a form which will appeal to very few - Pius XII made it clear that it is not to be condemned.

c. The gestures need to be well made. A sloppy Sign of the Cross, a distracted and irreverent genuflection sets the soul up for poor participation.

d. "...and singing..." I know that trying to move our parish to sing has been like pulling teeth, but I'm not giving up. Several things should help with this, such as our having a hymnal designed just for our parish and having acoustics in the new church building which will be about 1000 percent better. I say that the hymnal will be designed just for us, and there will be more on that later.

e. Some distinctions are in order regarding the Latin phrase *participatio actuosa*. It is often translated as *active* participation, when the translation *actual* participation is more accurate. To understand this, go back to what Our Lord said when He promised "I will be with you all days even unto the end of the world." He lives with us, even though He is at the right hand of the Father. The Church is His mystical body. So when the Church acts, it is the activity of Christ, the Head of the Church. So the teaching, governing and sanctifying of the Church are done through the hierarchy and the faithful, but when the priest sanctifies through blessing someone, it is really Christ who blesses through the priest. The sacrament which enables us to be part of that activity, that divine life of Christ, is Baptism. A baptized Christian not only has a right to participate in that life, he has a duty to do so.

The baptized can then *actually* participate in the Mass, but the unbaptized can participate only in an *active* way. In other words, the unbaptized can make the Sign of the Cross, and be blessed in doing so, but not in the same way as the baptized.

An example of both is listening. As the scriptures say, *fides ex auditu* – faith comes from hearing. A deacon or a priest is the one reading the Holy Gospel at Mass, but we participate actively and actually by listening attentively. The better we listen, the better we participate. The unbaptized can learn the faith by hearing it; the baptized can worship God with it besides learning.

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B. Some warnings about active participation.

1. Active participation in the liturgy can lead (sometimes clearly, sometimes imperceptibly) to a sort of taking possession of the liturgy. It can become in a sense the property of those who celebrate, who see the liturgy as a terrain for their "creativity." This leads to a kind of liturgical coup by which the sacred is eliminated, the language trivialized, and worship turned into a mere social event. The real subject of the liturgy is no longer God, but the person celebrating and/or the community which celebrates with him.

a. This is not to say all creativity is and must be banned from the liturgy. The organ was broken in an Austrian church one Christmas eve, and the pastor asked a guitarist to come up with a hymn accompanied by the guitar, and we received *Silent Night*. Our sanctuary is not configured well for a Solemn High Mass. So we have to improvise a bit in the movements of the ministers in the sanctuary.

b. But one cannot simply transform and re-arrange the whole thing. Fr. Hearty and I are not creators of the liturgy; we are servants and guardians of its mysteries. Both

individually and collectively as a parish our fundamental orientation must be to God.

2. The purpose of these inserts will be to explain the liturgy so that we can better participate. But the prayers of the liturgy are almost entirely structured on Sacred Scripture. And one of the difficulties in grasping the meaning of the texts is the fact that much if not all of the mentality and culture from which they stem has disappeared. The images of God which the texts convey show this problem: e.g., the God who sleeps, the God of wrath, etc.

a. But the modern proclivity to dump these texts or secondary gestures such as the washing of the feet on Holy Thursday on the grounds that they are passé, or old-fashioned, or medieval, or monastic (I've heard all this tripe) is as dumb as dirt. I can remember a lecture in which the priest was pleading for the removal of the word "Easter" on the grounds that the word came from a Babylonian goddess named Ishtar. "We should say Resurrection Day instead." His whole lecture reminded me of the Austrian emperor who didn't like one of Mozart's opera's because it had too many notes. "Which notes do you want taken out?" replied Mozart. Does the fact that we no longer see shepherds and flocks every day mean that such images are no longer comprehensible? Is it because no one at OLMC has ever met a seraph that the metaphorical power of this messenger no longer speaks to us? Nonsense. Half of the poetry ever written makes use of images and terms that are not part of daily life. These words and symbols are a part of a biblical and liturgical mother tongue which simply cannot be replaced. It is a language that must be learned.

b. The desire of modern liturgists to have a form of worship which may be grasped by everyone in the congregation at first hearing is also absurd. Now there are things which we should be able to grasp immediately. When I play pick-up basketball at the YMCA, it needs to be understood immediately that the first five to make a bucket from the top of the key are team # 1. These rules need to be simple, clear and immediately apprehensible. But when divine realities are concerned, this approach just doesn't work. Love, death, sin, joy, hope...these can *never* be grasped at once or on first inspection. Deep realities only gradually yield their full significance. So understanding is a lengthy and progressive process of becoming familiar with a particular reality. This is one of many reasons why the liturgy must have a great stability; not just in texts but also in gestures, vestments, and music.

3. Analysis or dissection then, is out of place when *considering* the liturgy. I use the word consider purposefully, since it's from the Latin and means "with starlight." That's not a very bright light. Our approach must not be analytical but dialogical instead, like a dialogue or conversation, allowing the liturgy time to say what it has to say; listening attentively to its overtones and allowing its deeper meaning to unfold. This sounds strange to liturgical Neanderthals who chuckle with evident approval about "Father X who could say Mass and give a sermon and be done with the whole thing in fifteen minutes." It will sound strange, but for the most part liturgical celebration in most churches is probably way too short. They do not provide enough time or space to enter into the event. The liturgy needs time to deliver its riches. And silence.

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4. Another danger to participation is the lack of silence. If the celebrant is convinced that his role is to keep the congregation interested – or worse entertained...anything but bored – then he can be tempted to think that the Mass without a sermon is lacking; Mass without him speaking from the pulpit is missing the key element. With too much of an intellectual approach, the imagination, affect, emotion and aesthetics are not given enough room and only the intellect is fed.

a. Liturgy is not the time or place for catechesis. Liturgy is its own end, which is worship. True, catechesis can take place in the sermon, but when the priest takes off the maniple, descends from the altar, looks the faithful in the eye and addresses them in the vernacular – all these are clear signs that the Mass is being interrupted for a time.

b. Liturgy should not be used as a means to disseminate information. We try to keep announcements to a bare minimum. Concerns about the parish hall or other things should be handled in the bulletin, which can be read after Mass. Worship of God is primary.

c. It should never be used as a warm-up for some other activity. That is, if the main activity of the parish is to be a parish picnic, the Mass must not be seen as a way to get everyone together first. It must always remain elevated over every other activity of the parish.

d. The Fathers of the Church adhered to a principle which held that the deepest catechesis (called mystagogical in Greek) should come only after the faithful had received the sacraments of initiation; Baptism, Penance and Confirmation. Prior to baptism, the instructions they received were limited to moral instruction and teaching on the Christian way of life. Immediately after baptism at Easter, they were instructed on the deep meanings of the sacraments. Their entire method of teaching was structured around a framework of questions and answers such as “Did you notice that...?” Celebrate and worship first, then understand. That is the tradition. How different from the modern conception that all must be understood immediately!

e. We do not adhere to the letter on this pedagogical approach. Pius XII warned about archeologism, which seeks to yank some practice from an earlier century and bring it willy-nilly into ours (my language, not his!). But the principle is sound. No catechism will succeed unless it is grounded on a stable, solid, reliable and faithful celebration of the Mass. Many a convert has seen a great lack of continuity between the catechism and a sloppy, irreverent celebration of Mass.

5. The danger of trying to make the readings more interesting by rhetorical devices and theatrics must also be avoided. I can remember in seminary (not an FSSP seminary!) when we were instructed not to read the Word of God, but to proclaim it. This led to the reader or priest imposing his emotions and emphases on the texts – emphases and

emotions which the texts simply do not have. Reading the scriptures in the liturgy and even before the sermon is not acting; rather the reader must allow himself to be a humble instrument of a word which comes from heaven. His eyes ought to be downcast, his voice plain and his gestures non-existent.

6. *Imitamini quo tractatis*...says Pope St. Leo the Great in the ancient text from the liturgy of ordination to the priesthood. “Do in practice what you do in the liturgy.” The application of the liturgy to everyday life is a big part of proper participation. Perhaps the worst danger to participation is to leave our good behavior behind in the church, and not apply it to daily life.

a. For example, do you have problems respecting God’s Holy Name? Then bow your head at the name of God every time you hear it, and it will do wonders for helping you learn how to respect His name. That is required in the liturgy (more on this later) and can be applied not only to grow in respect for the Name, but also to make reparation for the misuse of His Name. It’s hard to correct the people at work who misuse His Name, but you can surreptitiously bow your head each time you hear His Name, or the name of the Blessed Virgin or the pope or the saints, and make reparation for their disrespect.

b. Do you have problems with custody of the eyes? Then use the example of the priest who does not let his eyes wander around during the Mass, but keeps them focused on a particular point. At every moment of the Mass he is required to look at something, and not just anything to which he is inclined. The Mass can be a perfect training for custody of the eyes.

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C. Four Benefits of the Liturgy

1. Transcendence.

a. Pagan religion in the West had in its favor that it was waiting. One can recall the statue dedicated to *the unknown god* by the Athenians (Acts 17.23), which St. Paul used to tell them that God is Christ – He was the one they longed for. God’s mercy on the pagans in lavishing such great saints upon them, like Sts. Peter and Paul, seems to indicate that He prefers to be adored without being known, rather than our times, in which He is known but not adored.

b. What is adoration? In the widest sense it is a free and loving submission of the whole being to God, Who has sovereign rights over His creature. Revelation adds to this however:

1. It corrects the idea of the supernatural. Rather than the Divinity appearing as a superior force in nature, such as Zeus, Divinity appears as being infinitely superior to all nature. And “supernatural” does not carry in this thought some banal, modern connotation meaning the unexplainable or unusual. It means a reality which is infinitely

above all natural conceptions of sanctity that man is capable of having. The word *sanctus* (usually translated as “holy”) in Latin means “separated.” Our Lord spoke forcefully about this in the Gospels. “You are from beneath, I am from above. You are of this world, I am not of this world.” (Jn.8.23)

2. From this, we see a second effect of revelation (a Latin word which means “to draw aside the veil”) is that this God, is three times holy, thrice separated from the nature which He created. The burning bush on Mt. Sinai is enough to get Moses on his knees immediately. But far from crushing us with His splendor, He reveals Himself as a Father, and raises us to the dignity of a son through our baptism. Therefore adoration does not exclude tenderness: such is the power of the liturgy which has both – the awfulness of the Consecration, the tenderness of Communion.

c. The world has turned away from God’s transcendence. And we are living perhaps in the beginning of the great apostasy spoken of in the Scriptures. Just in this country, Catholic apostates (from a Greek word meaning “to stand outside of”) are the second largest denomination after practicing Catholics. But the state of this world is worse than the old paganism. The ancient pagans rejected Christ from ignorance. Modern pagans reject Him from contempt. Modern man glorifies himself, and this naturalism has entered even into prayer. It appears in liturgy as a hunger for novelty and adaptation; the invasion of modern forms of music and flat, vulgar language; and creativity which is one of the subtlest forms of human pride. Modern man has given into the temptation to adapt religion to man, rather than what the Church has always striven to do: to adapt man to religion.

d. If we turn our backs on this naturalism, we see in our liturgy an expression, an unfolding of the delight of baptism which transcends the fashions and peculiarities of the moment. It is perfectly adapted to that instinct for the sacred and that thirst for adoration that man carries within himself. That which never rises to God will never descend to man. “He that is of the earth, of the earth he is, and of the earth he speaketh.” (Jn 3.31) The language of the liturgy must come down from God before we can expect it to make us ascend toward Him.

e. To remedy this danger, not only does the Sacred Liturgy avoid spontaneous or made-up-at-the-spur-of-the-moment prayers, it gives us the theocentrism of the altar. The altar ascends to God. The priest and people face the altar. Our liturgy is about adoration, and “Mass facing the people” is not capable of expressing this. “There is a danger when the communitarian character tends to transform the assembly into a closed circle. The community must not enter into dialogue with itself; it is a collective force turned towards the coming of the Lord.” (Cardinal Ratzinger)

f. This turning to the Lord, to the thrice holy God, is symbolized by the priest and faithful facing the crucifix (ideally all facing the East, from whence will come the Lord), facing the Lord. “How greatly it is to be desired that Christianity should once more come to discover this primary meaning of the Mass: its theocentric meaning, and the reorientation of the whole of mankind, of the whole universe, towards its true center: this universal return, wrought in Christ crucified and ascended up to heaven; this resumption of all things in the immense flood of divine love, flowing back finally in filial love towards its source, the Father.” (Fr. Louis Bouyer)

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2. Liturgical beauty

a. People enter the Church by two doors: the door of the intelligence and the door of beauty. The first is open to scholars and intellectuals. The second is open to anyone. “It is necessary to lose the illusion that the truth can communicate itself fruitfully without that splendor that is of one nature with it and which is called beauty.” (Henri Charlier) The Church in her mystery needs an earthly epiphany (a Greek word meaning “manifestation”) accessible to all – from a child to a senior. This is why the church building itself should be majestic, the liturgy splendid and the music sweet. When a group of Japanese tourists visits Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, they are entranced to watch Solemn Vespers. Beauty has opened its doors to them. Notre Dame Cathedral and the *Summa Theologica* of St. Thomas are products of the same era, but how many have read the *Summa*? How many even can?

b. The beauty of the liturgy can be called the splendor of the truth (philosophers distinguish five kinds of beauty, and splendor is a shining forth, a compelling beauty of power). To the small and to the great the beauty of the chant or the polyphony, of the texts, candles, vestments and dignity of bearing – all these exercise an influence on the soul, which it touches directly even before the soul perceives the influence. But this is a very delicate art, and we rightly fear activists who meddle with it in order to render it more exciting or interesting. “The liturgy is not a show, a spectacle requiring brilliant producers and talented actors. The life of the liturgy does not consist in pleasant surprises and attractive ideas but in solemn repetitions.” (Cardinal Ratzinger)

c. What is the solemnity to which the Cardinal refers? First, it is a behavior opposed to sentimentality and the domination of emotion. When the priest faces the people for Mass, it is particularly difficult for him to keep his emotions from dominating the liturgy. If he is sad, this becomes burdensome and a distraction to the one who is experiencing joy. If he is in a particularly happy mood, then this is burdensome and distracting to the one who needs to mourn. Solemnity expresses the supernatural; it is a certain loftiness to raise us out of the everyday, and it is not bound to this or that emotion.

d. But the priest must be on guard that solemnity does not degenerate into pomposity and affectation. Adornment succeeds especially when it is almost forgotten, but accusations of triumphalism are an insult to the poor who love to see greatness exalted. “There is no trace of triumphalism in the solemnity with which the Church expresses the glory of God, the joy of the faith, the victory of truth and light over error and darkness. The richness of the liturgy is not the richness of some priestly caste: it is the richness of all, including the poor, who in fact desire it and are by no means scandalized by it.” (Cardinal Ratzinger)

Here is a story of the conversion of Prince Vladimir of Kiev, who, while still a pagan, wanted to worship the one God, and so listened to Moslems, Jews and Greeks,

each of whom came to show him their religion. He sent a delegation of ten men to go and see with their own eyes how each of the groups practiced their liturgy. When they returned, they told their prince: “First we visited the Bulgarians and saw how they worshipped in their mosques; they stand upright without a belt; they bow, they sit down, looking all around like men possessed, and there is no joy among them, but an awful sadness and stench. Their religion is not good...It was then that we went to Greece and they led us to the place where they worship their God. From that moment on we did not know if we were in heaven or on earth; there is no other sight like it here below, and there is nothing of such beauty. We simply cannot describe it; all we know is that it is there that God lives amongst men; and their worship is more marvelous than in the other countries.” (The Chronicles of Nestor) Vladimir converted, and that is how Christianity was brought to the Ukraine.

The Greeks had put on their best vestments, enlisted the help of their best choir, and chose the best priests to sing the liturgy. We can't do that each day in the parish! But we can strive to approximate that solemnity, even at a Low Mass.

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3. Sentire cum Ecclesia.

a. This phrase sums up what the study of theology hopes to accomplish, “To think and feel with the Church.” It’s a kind of supernatural sensitivity by which the faithful feel as if by intuition whether something is in conformity with the Faith and with the tradition of the Church. You see this in children when they have a strong sense about whether something is in keeping with their house. “Our family does not do it that way.” Perhaps they cannot articulate why the subject in question is out of line with the family, but they have a *sense* that it is. And that sense is not to be ignored. When Catherine Vianney, the older sister of St. Jean Vianney, first heard their new parish priest, she was the first in the family to sense that something was wrong. She was twelve years old. Indeed, the priest had sworn allegiance to the republic which was the result of the French Revolution. She could not say why the priest was a traitor to the Faith, she just knew he was.

b. This sense comes especially from the liturgy, more than any other source. “It was the celebration of the divine liturgy that kept the faith of the faithful intact during the centuries of Muslim persecution.” This was stated by Maximus V, the Malachite Rite patriarch, at a synod of the Malachite bishops (this rite is in union with Rome) in 1977.

The famous Archbishop Bossuet of Paris – probably the greatest preacher of his time in the late 19th century – said that the liturgy was “...the main instrument of Tradition.” He thought that the liturgy was “Tradition professed” as opposed to the declarations of councils which represent “Tradition defined.”

c. The popes know very well that most people do not read their encyclicals. When Pius XI wrote *Quas Primas*, his intention was to fight against the pest of secularism. Here is how the pope announced a new feast which had not been celebrated before, and how he

would change the missal. “In the task of helping the truths of the faith reach the people and of raising them to the joys of the interior life, the annual solemnities of the liturgical feasts are much more effective than all the documents, even the most serious, of the Church’s magisterium: the latter are usually only read by a small number of the most cultured; the salutary influence of the former reaches the heart and the intelligence, and thus the whole man.” The feast he instituted was of course the Feast of the Sacred Heart.

d. When, after Vatican II a destructive clergy discarded genuflections, sacred rites, Gregorian Chant, reverence for angels and saints, beautiful vestments and architecture, etc., etc., the faith of many was saved by reverence for holy things. I was once involved with a church which having come back to its senses, searched around for the sacred things which were once in it in order to restore them. A long section of the original communion rail was carefully stored in a barn by an old woman who could not give you quotes from documents about the liturgy – as opposed to the priest who had the rails torn out – but I dare say she knew more about the Church than he did.

e. Time after time converts to the Faith attest to this great truth; that the liturgy and the things which properly accompany it (really beautiful altars, vestments, statues, music, etc.), move the soul more than argument. “The young man I was at 18 years old, who was searching amidst a great cloud for a truth which presented itself to him confusedly – a living truth, made for the soul and not just for the mind – had sanctity revealed to him by Gregorian chant. In its bareness and its simplicity it took me much further than secular music, it allowed me to catch a glimpse of mysteries which I never suspected; it filled me with this ‘plenitude of God’ of which St. Paul speaks; it told me that his plenitude was for me if I wanted it; I was certain that it was God Himself who spoke to me through this chant.” (André Charlier, *Le Chant Gregorien*)

I knew an excellent young man who was a member of an elite choir from his alma mater, the University of Pennsylvania. They made a tour of Europe, and were invited to sing in a number of churches and even cathedrals. About half of the venues were in Catholic churches or cathedrals. He concluded that the faith which built those churches must be the one true faith. He was ordained a priest before I was, and has been faithful to his vows for 26 years so far, rendering great service to the Church in the parish, in the prison, in the hospital, and as a chaplain to the 101st Airborne Division.

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4. The education of the inner man.

a. One way to look at the pearl of great price, the treasure hidden in the field, that which gives life its meaning, and that which the contemplatives of the Church search for and would not exchange for all the gold in the world is the discovery of the indwelling of God. When we receive Holy Communion, it is the reception of the Holy Trinity in the soul. Thus the greatest benefit of the liturgy (because it is not an end unto itself) is to lead us with a steady hand into the sanctuary of the soul, so that we may grow in the supernatural life.

There are special vocations in the Church who search for God without images. I think of the Desert Fathers, or of the sons of St. Columba or St. Colmcille of ancient Ireland. But most of us draw from an immense treasury of signs, words, and ritual actions in order to nourish our meditation.

A taste for mental prayer and for silent prayer is not acquired by a process of reasoning. It is instead the result of a mysterious merging of the soul with the Bride of Christ (the Church). The taste – even the relishing of prayer – depends on our union with the Church and Her way of prayer. Here is what Dom Romain Banquet, a Benedictine Abbot once said to his monks: “Prayer, such as it was understood by St. Benedict, has as its theme the very text of the *Opus Dei* (the work of God, i.e., the Divine Office). It springs up from the womb of this office. Let yourself be caught up in it. God is bowing down to you at this moment. In silence, question the ideas that have been planted in this way. This kind of interior prayer is the most intimate part of the *Opus Dei* during its celebration; it becomes afterwards its reverberating echo, a precious perfume, a personal fruit suited to the dispositions and needs of each one of us according to the promptings of the Holy Ghost.” (*La Doctrine Monastique*)

Revolutions make more noise; political gatherings, wars, sports events, rock concerts...all human works are more noticeable, like the child in class who won't shut up. But supernatural good makes itself known without noise and hides itself in silence. Once a soul has tasted this supernatural good, the best football game in the world seems to have no more interest to it than a dog barking in the distance.

b. But this is not just true for contemplatives. Lay people can experience it too, if they could give themselves to the liturgy for a time each day. George Bernanos, the superb French novelist, illustrated this well in his life. “Each day he read the newspaper and listened to the radio. However each morning, whatever happened, he set aside half an hour as sacred. Before his family awoke, before the house filled with noise, he would read, in his old, worn missal, the Mass of the day in Latin, with all the concentration of mind and soul he was capable of: this predestined soul had received the divine privilege of attention. He nourished himself avidly with the unchanging formulas of the liturgy, finding in them each morning a note of startling freshness. It was as if, each morning, these words were being said for the first time in the entire history of the world and to him alone. They were his daily and supersubstantial bread. It was in this way that he started his day. On Sunday he went to Mass with his family and usually received communion.” (*Bernanos Vivant*, by F. Bruckberger)

It would be wonderful if our little church was filled each day with the faithful, but few have the time, energy, money, etc. to do so. Heaven knows that the village with the steeple the tallest structure and the bells the loudest sound seem like a dream any more. But what Bernanos did in his home you can do too. Taste and see. You will find the answer you need to the day's problem's in the Mass.

c. This taste for the interior life; this education of the soul takes place also in the liturgical season. Like the light from a star which went extinct thousands of years ago, but is just now shining on us, so the central events of our Lord's life – His passion, resurrection and ascension, accomplished at a particular point in time, and finished forever at least with regard to their historicity, are conveyed and prolonged by liturgical action. This is what St. Leo the Great meant when he said that that which was visible in the life of our Redeemer has passed into the mysteries.

d. The words *mysteria* and *sacramenta* are synonymous for the Fathers. They describe a sacred action in which the work of our redemption is made present, not just as a symbol, but as something which conveys a great reality. In the 16c men like Martin Luther were running around stressing the individual and psychological aspects of prayer which was very detrimental to an objective piety centered on the mysteries. One thinks of Luther alone in his cell pouring over the scriptures, and determining what true faith is from the pouring.

But when the liturgy unfolds the scriptures to us, it does not just tell a story likely to favor this or that personal meditation, in which each of us can engage afterwards. Instead, it realizes the actual presence of the Lord, with which we are free to communicate through the length of that act of worship. It is the Church in her entirety – and we with her – taking part in the death and resurrection of our Savior. This is no fruit of the effort of the mind or imagination. It is objective.

e. If we consent to let the liturgy accomplish in us the divine work of redemption (this consent like the Bernanos consented), then as the late Dom Gerard Calvert, OSB put it, "It is then that the judicious choice of scriptural texts and their calm repetition, their power of expression, the art of Gregorian chant, the sacraments and the mysteries of the life of Christ which pass back and forth unceasingly before our eyes, imprint on our souls the image of the Son, who transforms them and reconciles them with the Father."

For those who wish to accept it, the liturgy offers a remedy for the sadness of our exile and gives us a foretaste of heaven.

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D. On how the Sacred Liturgy teaches us.

1. It would be a mistake to think about the liturgy as having a purely didactic nature, or to think of teaching or evangelizing as its primary purpose. As Cardinal Ratzinger put it in his excellent book The Spirit of the Liturgy, "That is why St. Augustine could say that the true 'sacrifice' is the *civitas Dei*, that is, love-transformed mankind, the divinization of creation and the surrender of all things to God: God all in all (cf. I Cor 15:28). This is the purpose of the world. That is the essence of sacrifice and worship."

a. Pope John Paul II warned us about those attempts which seek to fashion the liturgy into a didactic exercise, where every implicit thing is made explicit, with endless explanation. Conscious participation, as he points out, does call for increased learning

about what the liturgy means. However,

It does not mean a constant attempt within the liturgy itself to make the implicit explicit, since this often leads to a verbosity and informality which are alien to the Roman rite and end by trivializing the act of worship. Nor does it mean the suppression of all subconscious experience, which is vital in a liturgy that thrives on symbols that speak to the subconscious just as they speak to the conscious. (October 9, 1993 Address)

b. The teaching aspect of the liturgy again, is not its primary purpose, and never has been. The ceremonies of the liturgy do many things, and “instruction for simple folk,” as Cardinal Bona is quoted by Pope Pius XII, is only one of them. Still, the liturgy does instruct, and does it well.

Exterior worship, finally, reveals and emphasizes the unity of the mystical Body, feeds new fuel to its holy zeal, fortifies its energy, intensifies its action day by day: “for although the ceremonies themselves can claim no perfection or sanctity in their own right, they are, nevertheless, the outward acts of religion, designed to rouse the heart, like signals of a sort, to veneration of the outward acts of religion, designed to rouse the heart, like signals of a sort, to veneration of the sacred realities, and to raise the mind to meditation on the supernatural. They serve to foster piety, to kindle the flame of charity, to increase our faith and deepen our devotion. They provide instruction for simple folk, decoration for divine worship, and continuity of religious practice. They make it possible to tell genuine Christians from their false or heretical counterparts. (Mediator Dei)

c. Let us look briefly at the fact that all men require some sort of liturgy, because it has always been a primary way to express their thoughts about life and death. Liturgy is, among other things, a putting into action in gesture, movement, song, clothes and speech, what we think. And from the earliest time of history, men have been engaged in some sort of liturgy. As a Benedictine monk from Le Barroux put it:

The ripe fruits of a whole civilization, hanging heavy in beauty, are often caught up in the civilization’s fall. Sometimes they survive it like a refined and fragile flower (think perhaps, for example, of the outdated etiquette of the French court). We forget that these sacred rites were first of all the poetry of mankind in his infancy, barbarous and crude but the expression of men who danced out their theology before they ever thought to write it down. These religious rites in their earliest manifestation from the very first graspable expression, from across the long night of the ages, to have come down to us from our remote ancestors. For well before we have any written inscription, any wall painting, any hieroglyph from primitive man, we discover in what survives of his funeral rites the first and moving witness to a belief in a reality beyond him. The dead man, his legs drawn up to his chest in a fetal position, is once more entrusted to mother earth like the seed of eternity.

d. It is clear as well, that liturgy is required by every culture or civilization, in order that its religion be apprehended, and moral duties demanded by the culture be inculcated beginning with the youngest child. This is not exclusively a Western notion. It may be found in the East as well. From the same anonymous monk:

Every mode of religion, to make a deep and lasting impression on the human mind, must exercise our obedience, by enjoining practices of devotion; and must acquire our esteem, by inculcating moral duties analogous to the dictates of our own hearts. The religion of Zoroaster was abundantly provided with the former, and possessed a sufficient portion of the latter. At the age of puberty, the faithful Persian was invested

with a mysterious girdle, the badge of the divine protection, and from that moment all the actions of his life, even the most indifferent, or the most necessary, were sanctified by their peculiar prayers, ejaculations, or genuflections; the omission of which, under any circumstances, was a grievous sin, not inferior in guilt to the violation of moral duties.

e. Not only in the religion of Zoroaster, but in every religion worthy of the name, one may find liturgy, where the actions, gestures, clothing and words are of paramount importance not only to the believer, but also to the honor of the deity being worshipped. These ceremonies and the things that went with them taught the believer how to be faithful to the deity.

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f. The religion of the Chosen People was no exception to this principle. In order to teach the children of Abraham what was sacred and what was not, a plethora of sacred paraphernalia, holy days and clothing was employed in the service of God to teach them the idea of the holy.

But there was yet another idea to be expressed by the priesthood. The object of reconciliation was holiness. Israel was to be 'a holy nation' – reconciled through the 'sprinkling of blood;' brought near to and kept in fellowship with God by that means. The priesthood, as the representative offerers of that blood and mediators of the people, were also to show forth the 'holiness' of Israel. Every one knows how this was symbolized by the gold-plate which the high-priest wore on his forehead, and which bore the words: 'Holiness unto Jehovah.' But though the high-priest in this, as in every other respect, was the fullest embodiment of the functions and the object of the priesthood, the same truth was also otherwise shown forth. The bodily qualifications required in the priesthood, the kind of defilements which would temporarily or wholly interrupt their functions, their mode of ordination, and even every portion, material and color of their distinctive dress were all intended to express in a symbolical manner this characteristic of holiness. In all these respects there was a difference between Israel and the tribe of Levi; between the tribe of Levi and the family of Aaron; and, finally, between an ordinary priest and the high-priest, who most fully typified our Great High-priest, in whom all these symbols have found their reality. (Alfred Edersheim, The Temple Its Ministry and Services)

g. Not only were these sacred articles and vestments used to teach holiness; the very gestures of the priest were packed with significance. The book of *Leviticus* is replete with these gestures, down to the slightest detail. "He is to dip his finger into the blood and sprinkle some of it seven times before the Lord, in front of the curtain of the sanctuary." (Lev. 4.6)

According to the difference of sacrifices, the blood was differently applied, and in different places. In all burnt-, trespass-, and peace-offerings the blood was thrown directly out of the vessel or vessels in which it had been caught, the priest going first to one corner of the altar and then to the other, and throwing it in the form of the Greek letter gamma (capitalized), so that each time two sides of the altar were covered. Any

blood left after these two ‘gifts,’ as they were called (which stood for four), was poured out at the base of the altar, whence it flowed into the Kedron. In all sin-offerings the blood was not thrown, but sprinkled, the priest dipping the forefinger of his right hand into the blood, and then sprinkling it from his finger by a motion of the thumb. According to the importance of the sin-offering, the blood was so applied either to the four horns of the altar of burnt-offering, or else it was brought into the Holy Place itself, and sprinkled first seven times towards the veil of the Most Holy Place (Lev. 4:6,17), and then on the four horns of the golden altar of incense, beginning at the northeast. Finally, on the Day of Atonement the blood was sprinkled within the Most Holy Place itself. From all sin-offerings the blood of which was sprinkled on the horns of the altar of burnt-offering certain portions were to be eaten, while those whose blood was brought into the holy Place itself were wholly burnt. But in the sacrifices of firstlings, of tithes of animals, and of the paschal lamb, the blood was neither thrown or sprinkled, and only poured out at the base of the altar. (Edersheim)

h. What was true for the Persians, and what was true for the Israelites, is also true for Catholics. In the *New Catechism*, we read in the section on how the liturgy is to be celebrated: “In human life, signs and symbols occupy an important place. As a being at once body and spirit, man expresses and perceives spiritual realities through physical signs and symbols. As a social being, man needs signs and symbols to communicate with others, through language, gestures, and actions. The same holds true for his relationship with God.”

2. If it has been established that everyone needs signs and symbols in order to learn; then in what sense does the classic Roman liturgy teach, beyond the obvious case of the sermon?

a. One way to answer this question is to look briefly at the art of teaching, of which there appear to be eight modes. The modes (from *modus*, “limit”) are like the colors of the spectrum, or notes on a musical scale, and are stages of a gradual act. As much as attempts to make teaching into a science, at least in the United States, have largely failed, it may be wise to speak of teaching as an art.

b. The idea of these modes comes from the thought of John Senior, who was a Professor of Latin at Cornell University, and later, at the University of Kansas. His ideas on teaching having different modes, came from a variety of sources, from Plato to Sacred Scripture, St. John Cassian, and especially St. Thomas Aquinas, notably in the *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard*, and above all from his long experience in the classroom. His ideas are certainly open to criticism, and much disagreement (as one would find much argument about any art), but hopefully, you will find them somewhat useful. Then, after a brief discussion of what a particular mode is, I hope to apply the mode in question to the liturgy, to show how the liturgy teaches us in many ways, and on many levels.

Art, from articulum meaning “joint,” is the joining together of things not joined in nature. It operates in four modes: Two are transitive, that is they result in something extrinsic to the artist – ars faciens, the making art, like

Catechism on the Liturgy I,10

c. Although it is proper to think of these eight modes as stages of a gradual act, they should not be seen as stages in the sense of a rocket ship, where one burns out and falls away to oblivion, and another being lit and burning in its place. Rather, they are like the scales of music, where the musician sounds *do* here and *mi* there, and then ends on *fa*. So it is that a good teacher can go back and forth between the modes, forming and instituting and eruditing a student in a single class, or staying in one mode alone, depending on the need and capability of the student.

1. The first of these modes is *erudire* (ex + rudus), and the word means to make what is rude smooth, or polished. In other words, the task of the teacher in this mode is to bring the student out of rudeness – which is not necessarily ill will - but rather an inability to recognize the time and place of a thing. Erudition is then a kindly introduction, a pointing out of what and how things are done. Simply put, erudition inculcates good manners, and good manners are the right approach to things.

Of course, there are those who would deny that there are such things as good manners when speaking about the sacred. The idea of ignoring a proper way of doing something – which might mean some personal sacrifice - in favor of what is more expedient or comfortable, is a temptation to which many in the Church have succumbed, thinking that it is not important to make gestures such as the Sign of the Cross in a certain way, with accuracy and devotion. Perhaps some of the problem comes from philosophers such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who is famous for having elevated the petulance of the recalcitrant child to the point of ordinance. “Let the child do nothing on anybody’s word. Nothing is good for him unless he feels it to be so.”

In this mode of Erudition, the smallest child can grasp the significance of the Holy Eucharist, by not only being taught on the proper way to fold one’s hands in order to receive Holy Communion devoutly, but by taking in, as it were, consciously or otherwise, the example of parents, parishioners, and the priest.

Let me tell an anecdote to illustrate this. I was speaking with a good and friendly bishop one evening, who had asked me how he could restore reverence for the Holy Eucharist in his diocese. I should have answered like St. Joseph of Cupertino, who, when asked the same question responded, “See to it that the priests in your diocese pray their breviaries and celebrate their Masses devoutly.” But instead I asked him to repeat the question (to his surprise) asking again simply because it was such a good and beautiful question, and I wanted to hear it once more, and was unaccustomed to hearing bishops talk this way. While I did not have a simple answer (though I recall stating that above all it was something he had to want...and if he really wanted it, he would find a way to accomplish such a noble goal), I did want to bring up the aspect of erudition.

This mode of teaching is often neglected, especially if the priest who celebrates the Mass is negligent about paying attention to the details of reverence. In the Gregorian Rite then, one finds many detailed instructions to insure that the Eucharist is not treated as ordinary bread, but bread which is holy and set apart. This is evident from the necessity of keeping the canonical fingers together after the consecration, to the many genuflections, to the use of the corporal, to kneeling for communion, to the use of the paten, to mention just a few of these safeguards – all of which are teaching.

After we had talked somewhat about this mode of teaching, the bishop told me a story about his childhood parish. The pastor of the very large parish was a greatly respected and admired priest, who took great care to insure that the celebration of the Mass was dignified and orderly, according to the manifold specifications in the old rite. But while he was coming down from the altar, a mishap occurred, where many of the consecrated hosts had dropped on the marble floor. Women gasped, men blushed, and the pastor was exceedingly nervous and upset at the incident; his normal composure absent from the rest of the Mass.

But what most struck the boy who would one day become a bishop, was that after Mass, he observed the great man (for the tall monsignor was a great man in the boy's eyes), getting on his hands and knees, and with a magnifying glass, holy water, and white linen carefully inspecting the entire area (guarded by an altar boy with a candle), and just as carefully (though unintentionally) purifying the whole area with tears in his eyes. The bishop then said something to this effect, "I think I learned more about what the Holy Eucharist was by that accident, than by any sermon I ever heard. Is that what you mean by Erudition?"

Well, in a word, yes. The boy saw with his own eyes the actions of a priest who paid attention to the details of reverence, so that whatever the Holy Eucharist was, it was *extremely* important not only to the pastor, but to everyone there who saw the mishap. It was, in a word, sacred. As St. Cyril of Jerusalem put it, "Have the utmost care that no part of the Eucharistic species be lost. For, tell me, if any one gave you grains of gold, would you not guard them with the greatest circumspection and be most solicitous that none of them be lost and that you thereby suffered no loss? How much more cautious you must be not to lose a crumb of that, which is incomparably more valuable than gold and precious stones"

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Continuing with the subject of Erudition, one reads of people who saw St. Bernadette Soubirous making the Sign of the Cross, hereby learning more about prayer than anything they heard in a sermon or read in a book. And by making the simple gesture of the Sign of the Cross, we signify at the same time a profound theology. St. Francis de Sales said in his excellent little book The Standard of the Cross:

We raise the hand first to the forehead, saying: "In the name of the Father," to signify that the Father is the first person of the Most Holy Trinity, of whom the Son is begotten and from whom the Holy Ghost proceeds. Then saying "...and the Son," the hand is lowered to the breast, to express that the Son proceeds from the Father, who sent Him down to the womb of the Virgin. Then the hand is moved from the left shoulder or side to the right, while saying: "...and of the Holy Ghost," thereby signifying that the Holy Ghost, as the third person of the Holy Trinity, proceeds from the Father and the Son, that He is the love that unites both, and that we, through His grace, partake of the fruits of the Passion. Accordingly, the Sign of the Cross is a brief declaration of our faith in the three great mysteries: namely, of our faith in the Blessed Trinity, in the Passion of Christ and in the forgiveness of sin, by which we pass from the left side of curse to the right of blessing.

No wonder St. Francis insisted on making the Sign well!

But as important as Erudition is in the gradual act of learning what is sacred, it is much to the advantage of the learner to receive a higher mode of teaching, so that he can learn sacredness even more profoundly than he did in the acquisition of good manners. Erudition has its limits, and one would hope that the Catholic attending Holy Mass was able to do more than just fold his hands correctly, and make a good sign of the Cross. Thus a higher mode of teaching is required of us.

2. This next mode is called Formation; the second mode of the art of teaching. The word comes from the Latin *formare*, and its root is from *forma*, one of the five types of beauty which philosophers distinguish. Each of these kinds of beauty is present in Holy Mass, and each of them has something to teach us.

a. The first of these formal kinds of beauty is *splendor*, a shining forth of form indirectly visible in the matter. So when the liturgy and the things which surround it are splendid, then the one who participates in the liturgy is being taught even more profoundly than when he learned the good manners of how to behave in the presence of the King of Kings.

Abbott Suger, a medieval Benedictine Abbott who is credited with coming up with the gothic style of architecture, explained his idea that what others were doing with literature and the decorative arts, he did in the field of architecture.

As for me, concludes Suger, I confess that I took great pleasure in devoting all the costliest and most precious things I could find to the service of the administration of the Most Holy Eucharist. If, to fulfill an order from God manifested through the mouth of the Prophets, golden chalices, vases and cups were used to receive the blood of goats, calves and the red cow of the expiation, how much greater is our obligation to use, in order to receive the blood of Jesus Christ, in perpetual service and with the utmost devotion, vases of gold, gems and everything that is considered most precious. Surely neither we nor our worldly goods can suffice to serve such great mysteries. Even if, in a new creation, our substance were changed into that of Seraphim and Cherubim, it would still be unworthy to serve the ineffable Host. We can however offer propitiation for our sins. Some, no doubt, would, in contradiction, tell us that all that is necessary is to bring to the cult a pure heart, a holy soul and true intentions; we also think that these conditions are a prime necessity and have a very special importance. But we likewise affirm that the ornamentation of the sacred vessels used for the Holy Sacrifice should possess an outer magnificence which, so far as is possible, equals our inner purity. We must serve in every way and with the utmost circumspection our Redeemer, Him from whom we receive everything without exception, and who has united His nature with ours in a Person who, placing us at His right hand, has promised us that we should truly possess His kingdom, Our Lord who lives and reigns world without end.

The good Abbott understood well the importance of splendor in the celebration of the liturgy, by insisting that splendid things be used in the liturgy.

Being formed with beauty is a great advantage to the learner, if nothing else than because beauty is one of the four Transcendentals by which we can know God. These are Existence, Goodness, Truth and Beauty. Each of them transcends this world and points us up to the next. Where you find one Transcendental, you find the others. These realities are filled with angels. Contrariwise, we find devils teeming in ugliness, falsehood, evil and destruction.

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b. The second kind of beauty is Specific (from *spectare*, “to see”), which means “something beautiful to look at.” When the church in which we celebrate the Mass is beautiful to look at, inside and out, it can teach as eloquently as any sermon, though perhaps on a subconscious level. So if one takes the time to look at a church which grew from the Gregorian Rite, and really reflects on what he sees, then he will understand the teaching of the Church somewhat as he would in studying a text about a particular subject of theology, though not in the same way.

For example, when Mr. Henry Adams (a Protestant and an amateur student of architecture) visited the cathedral of Chartres in France, he learned a great deal about what the Church taught about the Blessed Virgin Mary, just by looking at the stone. For the builders of Chartres expressed the theology of the Church in a remarkable way in the very stone of the edifice, and it is impressive that a Protestant man could open his eyes enough to see this teaching.

To the Church, no doubt, its cathedral here has a fixed and administrative meaning, which is the same as that of every other bishop’s seat and with which we have nothing to do. To us, it is a child’s fancy; a toy-house to please the Queen of Heaven – to please her so much that she would be happy in it – to charm her till she smiled.

The Queen Mother was as majestic as you like; she was absolute; she could be stern; she was not above being angry; but she was still a woman, who loved grace, beauty, ornament – her toilette, robes, jewels; - who considered both light and color; who kept a keen eye on her Court, and exacted prompt and willing obedience from king and archbishop as well as from beggars and drunken priests. She protected her friends and punished her enemies. She required space, beyond what was known in the Courts of kings, because she was liable at all times to have ten thousand people begging for favors – mostly inconsistent with the law – and deaf to refusal. She was extremely sensitive to neglect, to disagreeable impressions, to want of intelligence in her surroundings. She was the greatest artist, as she was the greatest philosopher and musician and theologian, that ever lived on earth, except her Son, Who, at Chartres, is still an Infant under her guardianship. Her taste was infallible; her sentence eternally final. This church

was built for her in this spirit of simple-minded, practical, utilitarian faith – in this singleness of thought, exactly as a little girl sets up a doll-house for her favorite blond doll. Unless you can go back to your dolls, you are out of place here. If you can go back to them, and get rid for one small hour of the weight of custom, you shall see Chartres in glory. (Mont St. Michel and Chartres)

Thus, when we attend Holy Mass in a beautiful church – and by that I mean one which accurately reflects the constant and traditional teaching of the Church – then we will be learning that teaching in a marvelous way, like the plant soaking up the sunlight. That a Protestant could understand our theology so well just by looking at the stone is a great testimony to Specific beauty and its power to teach.

c. The third kind of beauty is Decor (from *decere*, “to fit”). It is the beauty that results when accidents are recognized as “fitting.” It is an often recognized fact that formal and specific beauty can be botched by bad taste in otherwise beautiful persons, because they are wearing clothes which are unfitting or unsuitable to them.

I hope you will pardon another anecdote, related to me by my spiritual director when I was in seminary. My director was a convert from Judaism, and one day brought a Jewish friend of his to Mass. The Church was beautiful, the music being played was good, but when the priest came out from the sacristy for Mass, he was holding a number of balloons tied to strings in one hand, and a hymnal in the other, and on his chasuble was a depiction of Snoopy (the cartoon character). The priest who celebrated the Mass was a very likeable man as it turns out, but the Jewish man who saw him stood and said to his friend (my director), “I came here because you told me I would learn about God. You have insulted me. I am leaving.”

It seems to me that the cartoon character on the chasuble was so unfitting, spoiling whatever formal and specific beauty there was to the beginning of the Mass, or to the likeableness of the priest, that one could say that the Jewish man who left the Mass knew more about God than the priest did. Of course, there will be some who might try to defend what the priest was wearing, according to the old saying, ‘*de gustibus non est disputandum*’ (there is no dispute over matters of taste). Indeed, arguments about what is fitting are hard to present, since the opponent will often insist on the subject at hand being simply a matter of one man’s taste as opposed to another. But if the Mass is the proclamation of the death of the Lord, as St. Paul said it was, then there are things which are fitting to such a proclamation, and things which are not.

An example of what is very fitting to such a proclamation, is the work the medieval monks did not only in their illuminated manuscripts, but in their commentaries. The Cistercians used to write long explanations in the prefaces of their antiphonaries. In these explanations, ideas on musical techniques were adapted to spiritual considerations.

One of these concepts is explained by the theme of the “region of dissimilarity,” so dear to St. Bernard: in this context, the *regio dissimilitudinis* is the confusion of

poorly organized chant. The remedy is found in Scripture: the authority of the Psalter restores dignity to each note by suggesting the use of the ten-note scale. This biblical norm, unknown to pure musical science in combination with the laws established by

Guido Arezzo, was to make it possible for the Cistercians as well as all the other monk-musicians to achieve their ends: to add to the holy words of the Gospel the color and beauty of song. The Love of Learning and the Desire for God, Dom Leclercq

Thank heaven we have a magisterial Church, which can teach us which songs are beautiful (*quid decet*) and have just the right color for the Mass. Heaven help the poor parish in which the songs used for the Mass do not form the parishioners, but actually deform them, with ugliness, or more commonly, unfitting music for a proclamation of the death of the Lord...music better fitted to a picnic.

Catechism on the Liturgy I,13

d. The fourth kind of beauty is Pulchritude (whose root means “power”). It is the force of things and persons. Solomon pointed out that the Blessed Virgin had this beauty when in the Song of Songs, he sang *Pulchra es, amica mea...terribilis ut castrorum acies ordinata* “Thou art beautiful my friend...terrible as an army in array of battle.”

Though a committed pacifist might object to the notion, there really is a terrible beauty to seeing and hearing a regiment of soldiers obeying the order to “Fix Bayonets,” and seeing the sun glint off the steel of the long row of blades. It is a powerful beauty, and in the Church, often deliberately ignored in vestments, architecture and sacred vessels, and music. It is certainly weak in the imagination of modern man. There is a whole generation of clerics who have imagined sacred things as cheap, in the guise of an affection for “noble simplicity.”

The power of imagination of the medieval man, on the other hand, was quite developed.

We are used to seeing, almost without looking at them unless with a distracted eye, printed or moving pictures. We are fond of abstract ideas. Our imagination having become lazy seldom allows us any longer to do anything but dream. But in the men of the Middle Ages it was vigorous and active. It permitted them to picture, to “make present,” to see beings with all the details provided by the texts: the colors and dimensions of things, the clothing, bearing and actions of the people, the complex environment in which they move. They liked to describe them and, so to speak, recreate them, giving very sharp relief to images and feelings. The words of the sacred text never failed to produce a strong impression on the mind. The biblical words did not become trite; people never got used to them. The Scripture which they liked to compare to a river or a well, remained a fountain that was always fresh. The spiritual men of those days counsel the renunciation of carnal images; but this is in order to substitute for them a holy imagination. The

sanctification of the imagination results in their attachment to the slightest particulars of the text, and not merely the ideas it contains. Dom Leclerq

So the vestments the priest wears, the candlesticks, altar cloths, Stations of the Cross, the music...everything one sees and hears in the church ought to have a certain power illustrating the majesty of God.

e. The fifth kind of beauty is Amenity (from *amoenitas*, “without walls”). It is usually translated as pleasantness, which comes from not needing walls, since there is no danger. Having formal, specific, splendid and powerful beauty in the Mass is of great advantage to the parish, but, one hopes, we will not neglect the pleasantness of beauty. A perfect example of how the liturgy teaches us Amenity or pleasant beauty is of course, the singing of Gregorian Chant.

At the monastery of St. Gall in Switzerland in the Middle Ages, there was a poet whose name was Notker. Around him grew a whole school of disciples to perfect the technique which had come to them from Jumieges, and the compositions which came from them and other monasteries were multiplied and amplified, resulting in tropes, sequences, versicles and *prosalae* – to mention a few kinds of their works, with each form having its own laws and its own history. And the monks loved these texts.

And all loved to sing

The delightful kyrielles

The sweet and lovely sequences

With full voice and in rich tones. (Leclerq)

Going to Mass with the delight, the sweetness and richness of Chant then, is like reading a copy of the Bible or the Psalms, with excellent illustrations added. Nay, chant is even more than that, since the very melodies of chant come from the text of Sacred Scripture itself, and the soul is being formed by the music of God, and not mere human composers.

But what is beauty? What is a good definition of it? St. Thomas Aquinas gives this definition: “That which when seen pleases.” This seems to go along with modern notions of beauty, such as Benjamin Franklin’s famous line in Poor Richard’s Almanac: “Beauty, like supreme dominion is but supported by opinion.” Or as Margaret Wolfe Hungerford put in one of her novels, “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.” Is it really? Or is there something objective to beauty which is independent of the eye of the beholder?

St. Thomas says it is objective. So though Andy Warhol might think that a crumpled up can of Schlitz beer is beautiful, he does so because he lacks right reason. No, beauty has three elements according to the Universal Doctor: Wholeness (or integrity), proportion (or harmony) and radiance (or shining). This is what the Church uses to determine if a thing or a collection of things is beautiful. A string of pearls is beautiful in itself, having all three qualities, but place it on the neck of a lumberjack, and it is not fitting, and there is a loss of integrity. An art deco altar might be beautiful in itself, but put it into a baroque church and the whole church suffers from the loss of integrity. A good rifle has pulchritude, but put it in a Christmas manger and again, the whole thing loses its harmony.

Catechism on the Liturgy I,14

f. Putting beauty (formation) into a building.

The qualifications to speak authoritatively on how a church ought to look are daunting. So much knowledge must be understood, compiled, harmonized and adapted practically, that to find a man with such qualifications seems impossible. And yet, God provided His Bride with just such a man. Fourteen years after the Council of Trent, a young archbishop put together specific directives regarding the design of Catholic churches, affirming the authority of tradition. He was an expert in architecture; in liturgy (he was instrumental in the revision of the Roman Pontifical, Missal and Breviary under St. Pius V), an expert in priestly formation (he was instrumental in the decree of 1563 regarding this formation), and expert in Canon Law (he was the Papal Delegate to Italy) and he was an expert in art and music. Wow. If that were not enough, he was extremely well read in the Fathers of the Church, and in the medieval doctors (especially St. Thomas Aquinas), so his ability in dogmatic theology was used frequently at the Council of Trent.

His name is St. Charles Borromeo, and the document he wrote is called *Instructiones Fabricae et Supellectilis Ecclesisticae* (Instructions on the Building and Furnishing of Churches). He wrote it so that it could be applied to Cathedrals, monasteries or humble parish churches. He understood well why mostly odd numbers should be used (1, 3, 5, 7 – in recognition and honor of the Unity of God, the Holy Trinity, Pentecost, and the Seven Sacraments respectively), so that a composition would always have a clear center. This would result in symmetry (a reflection of divine order). When symmetry could not be achieved, then the right side was favored in keeping with the Mass. So for example, if a church could not afford two bell towers, it could build one tower but it must be on the epistle side of the church. He understood well why and what kinds of circles, domes or vaults should be used for the ceilings, to reflect the perfection of heaven.

During his time, when Protestants were rejecting the idea that man could encounter the sacred through the senses, St. Charles strove to integrate all the visual arts (like sculpture or stained glass) with the preeminent auditory arts (hearing the text of the Mass, music, the sermon) so that everything was in harmony with and in support of the Sung Mass. He did not favor any particular aesthetic style. The Romanesque, Byzantine, Gothic, Baroque...many styles could be used to achieve this harmony. But note the hierarchy here: First is the Mass, and then come singing, then sermons and instructions, then at the last come statues or paintings.

I won't go into the details of his *Instructions* in any length, especially on those parts which refer to the building of convents or cathedrals, but will simply use the parts which refer to the parish church, and apply them to our situation. Not all of what he teaches is possible for us. For example, he says that the sanctuary should be toward the east and should align with the sunrise at the time of the equinox. This is not possible for us. But

many things are, so let us look at these in order, to see what should be done. As you read these qualifications, try to apply his principles to our parish church, and see if we are in conformity to the guidance of this great saint.

1. The building should be so prominent and identifiable with the Catholic Church, as to be unmistakable. St. Charles thought of a church as being a building which any Catholic even from another land would know it as such on sight. He was a proponent of the recognition by Catholics of the Blessed Sacrament such that they could walk or ride by and tip their hats or make the Sign of the Cross in honor of the Sacrament. Non-Catholics should also be able to identify our churches, in regard to their uniqueness and beauty.

2. The Latin cross or cruciform plan is the preferred configuration of a Catholic Church. It would consist at a minimum of a sanctuary, transepts, and a nave. The main entrance should align axially with the sanctuary. And the sanctuary, if possible, should be contained within a vaulted apse form.

3. The façade should have a distinguishable depth and serve as a transition space into the church. The façade is the most important exterior wall of the church, and should contain all the church's exterior ornamentation and decoration. Narrative visual embellishments normally should not be placed on a church's side or rear elevations. He writes the following: "There is one feature above all that should be observed in the façade of every church, especially a parish church. In the upper part of the chief doorway on the outside, there should be an image of the most Blessed Virgin Mary, holding her son Jesus in her arms; on the right side there should be the effigy of the saint to whom the church is dedicated, while on the left side an effigy of another saint to whom the people of that parish are particularly devoted." He is writing obviously for the baroque style, but even in the gothic the images are at least to be put over the main door.

a. He states that the façade should have an odd number of doors, and ideally three doors if possible. If not three, then one door.

b. The central doorway should be the largest and have the greatest ornamentation, though the side doors may have ornamentation as well.

Catechism on the Liturgy I,15

4. St. Charles states that windows should be constructed as high as possible, and in such a way that a person standing outside cannot look inside. They should be odd in number, and should be the principal source of illumination for the church. Their illumination must be such that the congregation is not prevented from having a clear view of the main and side altars. St. Charles also pointed out that nothing but the sky should be seen through the windows. However, if the windows are low, then they should be of stained glass.

5. The bell and bell towers are another vital component to the exterior of a

church. They are to call the faithful to the Sacred Liturgy, to mark the times of the Consecration, the Divine Office, the Angelus, weddings, and funerals. The bells should be in a freestanding tower, or part of a tower that forms the façade of the church. If there is only one tower (two are the ideal), then it must be on the epistle or right side of the church. A cathedral should have seven bells, but even a humble church that can afford only one bell, should have a bell that can be played in two distinct manners (e.g., one way for funerals, another way for weddings). The tower is to be of solid construction, but the actual belfry should be open to all sides so that the sound can radiate in all directions.

6. The towers should have a fixed cross at their apex. A clock and weather vane may be incorporated into the bell tower's design. Unlike a regular clock, the face of a church clock should show the day's 3rd, 6th, 9th and 12th hours to mark the times of the Divine Office. The tower's fixed cross may serve as the vane's fixed shaft. The variable component should be the figure of a rooster. The fixed cross represents the solidity of faith, while the moveable cock represents the ever changing world – the variability of everything except faith. It reminds all of the denial of St. Peter.

7. The main altar and sanctuary should be the nave's axial focus. The transepts should be large enough to accommodate a side altar. If the church is not large enough to accommodate transepts, then the side altars should be the axial focus of the side aisles.

8. The floor of the sanctuary should have an odd number of steps above the floor of the nave. If possible, the sanctuary floor should be of a more durable, refined and carefully crafted material than the floor of the nave. The sanctuary vault should contain mosaic or other decorative work, to reflect the vault of heaven. The sanctuary should be large enough to easily accommodate a Solemn High Mass with all the ministers. The ambry (the covered inset into the wall in which are placed the Holy Oils) should be on the epistle side in the back wall of the sanctuary.

9. The main altar should rest on at least one step up from the floor of the sanctuary, and ideally three steps. It should be made of solid stone or faced with marble, and must contain relics of at least two saints. If it is not made of stone, then it should have an altar stone laid into the wood of the mensa (the table portion of the altar). The side altars should also contain relics, and support at least two devotional statues. The tabernacle should rest directly on the main altar, though there should be tabernacles on the side altars for use in such times as Holy Week. Interestingly, he says that the tabernacle for a Cathedral was not to be located on its main altar, but should be in a separate chapel dedicated for that purpose, adjacent to the sanctuary.

10. Since the sacrifice should be made during the daylight hours – especially the morning – he envisions that the light of the church should be primarily natural, though the Lampadarium (holy lamp) and certain candles or lamps for the saints should be burning regardless of natural illumination. The Lampadarium should be in close physical proximity to the Blessed Sacrament, and ideally in the cathedral it would consist of seven lamps, to represent the seven spirits who constantly behold the face of God. The crucifix and candles are to be made of matching metal of superior quality.

11. Ideally there should be two ambones, one for the Epistle and the other for the Gospel. The pulpit is outside the sanctuary, and elevated high above the faithful, in the nave. A single pulpit may be used both as an ambo for the proclamation of scripture, and for preaching, but it is placed in the sanctuary on the Gospel side.

12. There should be two sacristies, one for vestments and the priests, and the other for working on the things needed for the sanctuary. If possible there is a vestibule near the main entrance, to facilitate the processions and recessions of the High Mass. In more modest churches it is in the sacristy.

13. The baptistery should be located within a separate chapel at the rear of the church on the Gospel side. Ideally, it should have a stepped depression to signify descent into the sepulcher.

14. The confessionals must focus on the privacy for the penitent, while at the same time removing any appearance or avenue for inappropriate conduct or pecuniary gain.

15. He took great care to make sure that the images of God and the saints be appropriate, realistic, and reverent. The art must be so clear as to be unmistakable as to what it portrays, though symbolism may be used. If the image is obscure, then the name of the saint must be written under the image. No images were to be in the flooring, because they would not be properly honored there.

Please keep these guidelines in mind, so that when you see the drawings of what our new church will look like, you will see a structure which conforms itself closely to what St. Charles taught a church should look like.

Catechism on the Liturgy I,16

g. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states that "...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. (#1180) You wonder how a building could accomplish that, even given the *Instructions* of St. Charles. But it can, especially if it reflects in stone and wood the Gregorian Rite through three natural laws: Permanence, verticality and iconography.

1. Permanence. In the Mass of the Dedication of a Church, we read in the Tract: "They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Sion: he shall not be moved for ever that dwelleth in Jerusalem." Just as the sacred liturgy should be permanent (and not subject to change unless for a very grave reason) so the church building ought to be permanent to reflect this. It is done in several ways:

a. Durability. The church ought to be a building that will serve for generations. It should transcend time and culture. In other words, to construct a church according to

the latest fad will ensure that the structure will be passé, or obsolete in a few years. It is the same principle with church music, or vestments, etc. When Fr. Skip tries to rap his sermon he'll be a buffoon, not a messenger of the Holy Gospel. As the Sacred Liturgy is durable, so should the church building be durable.

b. Massing. The church ought to be of significant mass, built with solid foundations and thick walls. This is related to durability, and integral to verticality. A good, solid mass of stone helps the value of the church being an icon of Christ. This reflects the solid base of the Sacred Liturgy, the massive prayer of the Roman Canon.

c. Continuity. Just as any change in the Sacred Liturgy should only be done in continuity with what came before (this is called “organic development”), so the church design should come from what has been done before; what is tried and true. For example, the semicircular arch of Romanesque architecture was handed down from the earliest time of the Church. It reflects perfectly the structure of Gregorian Chant. By this I mean that Chant – when sung properly – does not “hit” the highest notes or lowest notes with volume, but softens and tapers the sound to achieve *melisma* (a Latin word whose root is “honey”). Gothic architecture retains all the qualities of the Romanesque, but adds a soaring verticality. This reflects two things that were occurring in the Church when the Gothic was developed: Devotion to Our Lady, and the growth of polyphony. The Gothic arch then accommodates both the sweetness of Chant and the great soaring melodies and glorious harmonies of polyphony.

2. Verticality. “Glory to God in the *highest...*” The vertical should dominate the horizontal. This reflects the primary purpose of the Church – to get us into heaven. The church building should be like the Elevation of the Host at the Mass.

a. It is not a coincidence that the Epistle for the feast of a Dedication of a Church is taken from the vision of St. John the Evangelist of the heavenly Jerusalem: “In those days I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice from the throne, saying: Behold the tabernacle of God with men, and He will dwell with them.” The solid foundation is the main altar and the tabernacle, which in themselves ought to point up to the New Jerusalem.

b. It is the dramatic sense of height that enables a man to look up. If there is no height, there is no physical lifting of the head and the eyes toward heaven. If there is no lifting of the eyes and head, the formation of transcendence in the worshipper is very hard to accomplish. This can be seen also in forms of music which are especially earthbound and stuck in some period of time like the 60's. Therefore everything in the church ought to be firmly rooted *here*, but point to *there* – to what is beyond this world. The altar rails, the Stations of the Cross, the candlesticks...everything should point to heaven.

c. Verticality also forms the worshipper in the recognition that Christ is a King. Our ancestors in the Faith called their great churches *basilicas*, a word which comes from the Greek meaning “a house of the king.”

3. Iconography. This refers to the value of a church building as a “sign” or icon.

a. The church should be something to remind us of the next world. However, “Do not conform yourselves to this age.” (St. Paul) Just as the Mass we celebrate should not be conformed to this world, so the church building shouldn’t either.

b. The building should point beyond itself. It will do so not by graphic art (like clever marquees outside the church which attempt to lure new customers), but by veiling the church with symbols, just like the Mass is veiled in Latin. To this day, people flock to see the cathedrals of Europe not necessarily because they are Catholic, but because they are drawn to the mystery of beauty. Those churches allow one to really think of a different world beyond this one.

c. The Introit of the Mass of the Dedication of a Church begins, “Terrible is this place: it is the house of God, and the gate of heaven; and it shall be called the court of God.” The very appearance of our churches should call this great truth to mind.

So if we follow those three simple laws of church architecture – verticality, permanence, and iconography – we will have a building which will help us go to heaven. As one parishioner put it, after he had seen the Gregorian Rite in our cathedral, “The cathedral was a participant in the liturgy.”

Catechism on the Liturgy I,17

2. Now if the only thing one knew about the Mass was how to perform all its gestures correctly and with devotion, and that the Mass was beautiful in all the meanings of that word, then he would be well on his way to an understanding of God, and of His court, which is heaven. But there is an even higher mode of teaching which the Church employs in the Mass, and it is to put forms into the student who has been polished and formed. This third mode in the art of teaching is *informare*, “to inform.” Literally, it means to sow the imagistic and intelligible seeds of subjects in the bodies and minds of the students, like a farmer seeding corn in his fields. In fact, both (*formare* and *informare*) are called “drilling” which means “piercing through” in Anglo-Saxon. To get technical, Formation is a mode of beauty signifying a form apparent in matter, and Information is an intelligible principle recognized by imagination and intellect through a process analogous to generation, the “conceiving” of images and concepts.

a. It is clear that the poems which the medieval monks composed – which are an important component of the body of Western Chant - are ideal for putting the forms of doctrine into the listeners and singers of it. In other words, if the ordinary man can sing a thought, then he will remember it far longer and better than if he cannot sing it. That is why advertising agencies spend so much time trying to come up with little songs to sell their products.

b. Regarding the songs of the Mass then, Leon Gauthier puts it this way, “Our

monks are those theologians whose enthusiasm is not wanting in exactness.” Furthermore, he was able (as any of us can, should we so desire) to distill from their poems what he describes as “an exposition of Catholic doctrine.”

c. Not only the Chant, but the very architecture which is consonant with the Gregorian Rite also informs the believer. “The few capitals from Cluny that have been preserved show, not the chimeras which St. Bernard deprecated, but the Christological symbols for the different tones of the chant. The third tone, for example, like compunction, moves the soul deeply and causes it, as it were, to experience Christ’s Resurrection.” (Leclercq)

d. So by attending Holy Mass devoutly, especially High Mass, one may absorb a great deal of Catholic doctrine just by singing the Propers and the Commons of the feast days, in Gregorian Chant above all, but also in polyphony and hymnody, and if this singing is surrounded by a beautiful church, then together these sacred songs will drill or penetrate (inform) the soul with the melody and sweet truth of God.

e. Another example of informing is the use of Sacred Scripture in the classic Roman Rite. To learn the meaning of Scripture, one must rely on far more than easy vernacular translations. Scripture is accessible to all, certainly, but it is always mysterious, always in need of further study and reflection. Mystery is in the very nature of Scripture, since it is the Word of God, and mysterious things must be heard over and over again. For example, when we use the Rosary correctly we can almost hear the Blessed Mother telling us how important it is to look at the mystery once more. Like any mother who must tell her children over and over again a particular lesson, so that they can finally learn *what* is right and then *do* what is right, the Blessed Mother asks her children regarding the mysteries of the Rosary (and hoping that they will respond in the affirmative), “Do you want me to tell you the story again about my Son?” Children love to hear the same story over and over. Would that the same would hold true for our attitude towards Sacred Scripture, for one must be like a little child in order to enter the kingdom of heaven. We need to ask to hear the story over and over again.

Here is a fine example by St. Gregory the Great, of how mysterious Sacred Scripture really is.

For as the word of God, by the mysteries which it contains, exercises the understanding of the wise, so usually by what presents itself on the outside, it nurses the simple-minded. It presents in open day that wherewith the little ones may be fed; it keeps in secret that whereby men of a loftier range may be held in suspense of admiration. It is, as it were, a kind of river, if I may so liken it, which is both shallow and deep, wherein both the lamb may find a footing, and the elephant float at large. (Preface to the Commentary on the Book of Job)

So even a small child can be nursed with Sacred Scripture. And again, I hope you don’t think they have to hear it dumbed down. To unlock the secrets in the chest of Scripture we shall have to hear it over and over again anyway. *Repetitio est mater studiorum.*

Repetition is the mother of learning. The Church in her wisdom then, proposes to us the Sacred Scriptures in the liturgy, over and over again. She was very wise in not proposing too many texts to us. Several of the Fathers of the Church (such as St. Augustine) thought that it was necessary to hear a single parable forty times before one could begin to really understand it. Thus the repetition of the readings of Scripture at the Mass is the patient teaching of the Mother to the child so that he might learn to become a disciple of her Son.

I should add at this point, that while Erudition, Formation and Information are early modes in the art of teaching, that is not to say that one advanced in age cannot benefit from them. In fact, when a man enters the seminary he might be quite advanced in all good manners and even the virtues. But he will need to be well polished (*erudiebat*) before the first time he must perform the liturgical role of Thurifer. “This is how we hold the thurible up. This is how we incense the people.”

Once the believer has been polished, formed, and informed, he is ready to be educated, which is the fourth mode of teaching.

Catechism on the Liturgy I,18

3. This fourth mode is *educare*, or Education (*ex + ducere*, “to draw out”), and it is a kind of teaching that draws from students things already known but not yet recognized. In this mode, a good deal of the time spent in teaching is to let the student alone, and for the student of the Mass perhaps to let him alone with the Missal and the Divine Office.

So we would do well to examine the Divine Office at this point, since it is such an integral part of the liturgy. Granted, few of the faithful (God forbid that this should apply to priests!) pray the breviary. It is true that many do not experience a higher level of learning than that of Formation and Information. But for those who do rise to the level of Education, the breviary is a marvelous teaching tool of the Church. It draws out the meaning of the feast day, or of the liturgical season, in a way which the missal alone cannot.

The breviary is derived chiefly from the Bible, so that to meditate upon the breviary is for the most part to meditate upon the inspired word of the Sacred Scriptures. As the Psalmist says, “I have been delighted in the way of thy testimonies. I will not forget thy words.” (Ps. 118) The reproach of Protestants – that Catholics do not read the Bible – certainly does not apply to those who use the Breviary. For that matter it does not apply to those who read their missals either.

In the lessons and sermons of the breviary, we can follow the thoughts of the Fathers of the Church, who were and are still the great interpreters of Sacred Scripture. In meditating on these texts, we do not need to fear being led astray by false piety or

unsound doctrine. There is no danger of illusions or spiritual aberrations such as one might find in some manuals of prayer, which seek to stir up the sensibilities by appeals to the imagination, but which at the same time neglect to furnish a sound doctrinal foundation for the learner, without which mere emotion is of no avail.

The missal is not enough for those who wish to be educated in the liturgy. The missal and the breviary go together; each complements the other. If those who love the Mass wish to carry their devotion to it to its logical conclusion, they must inevitably take up the breviary. The Divine Office (which is contained in the breviary) is at once a preparation for the Mass and a prolongation of it. If therefore the missal has taught us to understand the Mass as the Church does, then it makes perfect sense to make use of the Church's official preparation for Mass (First Vespers, Compline, Matins and Lauds), and it makes just as much sense to continue throughout the day to dwell with the Church upon the theme of the morning Mass, with the Minor Hours, Second Vespers and Compline.

There is moreover, a close correspondence in the content of the missal and the breviary. The theme for each day is the same in both of them, the same mystery of the same saint of the day. The collect of the Mass for a given day appears also as the oration for Lauds, the Minor Hours and Vespers. On days when the Mass is celebrated in honor of some saint, an account of that saint's life is read in the second nocturn of Matins. The lessons of the first nocturn often correspond to the epistle of the Mass, which is again broken up into brief passages for the short lessons of the Minor Hours. The homily lessons of the third nocturn are a commentary on the gospel of the Mass. Thus in order to pray the Mass completely, one should pray the Breviary. The Mass calls for the breviary.

4. Let us say that the believer has been polished, formed, informed and educated in his faith by the Mass, but yearns for more, desiring to cast his net into deeper waters. For him, there is the deeper water of Institution, which is, according to Senior, the fifth mode of teaching, and its name is derived from the Latin word *instituere*. Institutes are sets of plans. The student who has been polished, formed, informed and educated needs a *vademecum* (literally "come with me"), a summary or synopsis of what he has learned to prompt and correct him when knowledge is put to use, like the classic institutes of Latin by Donatus.

While it would be a mistake to use the *Liber Usualis* as the sole text for doctrine – thus ignoring such important developments as the catechism – this great book can suffice for a *vademecum*.

The liturgy is at once the mirror of a culture and its culmination. Just as the office of Corpus Christi, in the composition of which St. Thomas surely participated, crowns his doctrinal work, so the hymns, sequences and innumerable poems written by the monks are the culmination of their theology. The liturgy had been the motive for the renewal of monastic culture in the Carolingian period, and was also its fruit. During the following centuries, it is in the atmosphere of the liturgy and amid the poems composed for it, in hymnis et canticis that the synthesis of all the artes was effected, of the literary techniques, religious reflection and all sources of information whether biblical, patristic

or classical. In the liturgy, all these resources fully attained their final potentiality; they were restored to God in an homage which recognized that they had come from Him. Thanksgiving, Eucharist, theology, confessio fidei, all these expressions, in monastic tradition expressed only slightly differing aspects of a single reality. In the liturgy, grammar was elevated to the rank of an eschatological fact. It participated in the eternal praise that the monks, in unison with the Angels began offering God in the abbey choir and which will be perpetuated in Heaven. In the liturgy, love of learning and desire of God find perfect reconciliation. (Leclercq)

Catechism on the Liturgy I,19

Again, it would be a mistake to insist on using the liturgy as the *only* text for learning, a mistake which would ignore the good development of the catechism and before that the scholastic approach of late medieval times. But it is clear nonetheless that the texts contained in the *Liber Usualis* can and do serve in what Leon Gauthier describes as, “an exposition of Catholic doctrine.”

I would not dispute the point that a faithful Catholic could participate in the liturgy, armed with nothing but a crucifix, or a chaplet, or maybe nothing in his hands at all. But to participate in a deeper sense, going beyond even education, he will need a daily missal for his *vademecum*. The best missal of all is likely the *Liber Usualis*, because it has everything the daily missal has, plus the music that should go with it.

5. At this point, the believer is polished, formed, informed, educated and instituted in the Sacred, by his ever deepening participation in the Mass. But he can go deeper still, by the sixth mode of teaching, which Senior called Instruction. *Instruere* means putting an army at the ready for battle.

“In the ancient times and in all the middle ages, music was a part of the studies. Why? And why this pre-eminence given to music rather than to any of the other arts? Music is the most violent of all the arts, and the one which most powerfully affects the senses. Music is very useful in forming sensitivity...The slightest beat of the drum, even if you are thinking about something else, will produce a physical effect far more powerful than any painting.” James Taylor, Poetic Knowledge

The experience of the procession into Mass, with an organ thundering, or with the silent power of Chant, disposes us to “fight the good fight” in the Mass, by rejecting anger towards our neighbor, as well as the common distractions of the world. Thus music has the capability to put us at the ready for battle.

But even before the procession starts, the simple act of the priest putting on the amice in the sanctuary *instructs* us in a marvelous union of Sacred Scripture, vestment and gesture.

The meaning of this rite is explained by the Church herself in the prayer which is to be recited by the celebrant when he puts on the amice: “Place, O Lord, on my head the

helmet of salvation, that I may overcome the assaults of Satan.” The question arises, what is to be understood by this helmet of salvation (galea salutis), with which the priest at the altar should be armed against the attacks of Satan. The expression is taken from Holy Scripture, which also contains its meaning. When the Apostle St. Paul exhorts Christians to put on the armor of God, to resist the attacks of Satan, he urges them “to take unto them the helmet of salvation” (galeam salutis assumite – (Eph. 6.17).

In another place he says Christians should “be sober, having on the breast-plate of faith and charity, and for a helmet the hope of salvation” (induti lorica[m] fidei et caritatis et galeam spem salutis – I Thess. 5.8). The protecting helmet and, consequently, the amice also which covers the head in a similar manner, are accordingly symbolical of Christian hope; for “hope” in the goods of grace and glory acquired and promised to us by Christ is a powerful weapon of protection against “our adversary the devil who, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour” (I Pet. 5.8). Truly, the supernatural virtue of hope is our protection and shield in combat against all the enemies of salvation! “They that hope in the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall take wings as the eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.” (Is. 40.31)

“The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the protector of my life: of whom shall I be afraid? My enemies that trouble me, have themselves been weakened, and have fallen. If armies in camp should stand together against me, my heart shall not fear. If a battle should rise up against me, in this will I be confident!” (Ps. 26.1-3) Unshaken in faith and all confident in God, animated with every hope of his salvation, he will “walk upon the asp and the basilisk, and trample under foot the lion and the dragon” (Ps.90.13) (Therefore, a lively hope, is that firm confidence in God is that armor of protection which the priest prays for in putting on the amice, that he may victoriously overcome all the attacks and temptations of the Evil One, especially during Mass.) Such a petition is most appropriate before beginning Holy Mass. Although the devil is ever lying in wait for man to destroy or at least to weaken in him the life of faith and hope, yet it is more particularly at the time of the Holy Sacrifice that he seeks to confuse the soul by all manner of suggestions and distractions, in order to rob him of devotion and of the fruits of the Sacrifice. The amice now admonishes the priest to arm and to prepare himself to encounter this danger. Fr. Ghir, The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass

Catechism on the Liturgy I,20

Apparently, the amice was also intended to cover the neck, in order to help the voice to properly sing the praises of God. As a symbol then, it helps the priest remember to exercise control over his speech. Even at the ordination of a subdeacon, the bishop says to him “Receive the amice, by which the restraint of the tongue is signified.”

Words are the expression of the hidden life of the soul; he only can control his tongue who perfectly controls his interior. Therefore, the Apostle St. James sees in the guarding and bridling of the tongue not only something very difficult, but, moreover, a sign of great perfection; for he writes: “If any man offend not in word, the same is a

perfect man.” (James 3.2) And yet “Who does not offend by his tongue?” (Eccl. 10.17) To master our tongue, we must at the proper time practice a silence holy and pleasing to God, we must be intent on recollection of mind and live in God’s presence. “It is good to await in silence the salvation of God.” (Lam. 3.26) And on the other hand, he who would become a spiritual man, a man of prayer, must above all, bridle his tongue, avoid talkativeness, speak more with God than with men. (Gehr)

The prayers that go with the donning of all the other vestments are also perfect examples of instruction. And, for the Catholic who might flag in his fervor, there are any number of other gestures, prayers and actions with which the Mass can instruct.

5. Having been polished, formed, informed, educated and instructed in the knowledge of the mysteries, there is an even higher, or deeper mode of teaching which the Mass will give us, and it is called Discipline, (from *disciplinare*, or *discere*, “to learn”) It is a kind of tandem knowledge, a hitch of teacher and student working together to learn, involving two acts: correction (the rod) and affection (the staff). As Psalm 22.4 puts it, “Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.” The word comfort comes from the Latin, and means “with strength.” So St. David is saying that both correction and affection make us stronger. Monks call the flagellum (the whip by which they chastise themselves, like Pope John Paul II used to use before ordinations) the *discipline*, and spiritual sons are called “disciples.”

There is no lack of teachers who think that students should never be corrected, and others who think the purpose of their subjects is to correct original sin. Both are incorrect.

Since there are infinite ways to miss a target and only one to hit it, error easily happens and uncorrected knowledge is worse than ignorance – the Devil had the highest knowledge next to God and misdirected it. But discipline can’t be applied before there is a fault; you can’t correct what doesn’t exist. Unless the student has first been brought from a rude, unruly state, polished, formed to his natural but hitherto hidden beauty, informed, educated and instituted, he has nothing to rebel against and, if he has not rebelled, he can’t be justly punished. It isn’t novices but those in advanced stages of intellectual and spiritual development who need the sting, as St. Paul himself confessed: “And lest the greatness of the revelations should exalt me, there was given me a sting of my flesh, an angel of Satan, to buffet me.” (Senior)

In what sense can the liturgy be said to discipline us, especially in the sense of a kind of tandem learning, receiving at once the rod of correction and the staff of comfort? I would suggest that this mode of discipline might be found above all in liturgical silence. It is probably not an accident that there are increasing numbers of spiritual books being written which teach the reader to empty the mind of the noise that clogs it up. A visit to any bookstore in the United States reveals a plethora of self-help books to lead the reader into silence. And, many a denizen of a modern city goes into the countryside to reach the “quietness of nature” and silence. But, they do not meet silence there; on the contrary, they carry the noise of the great towns and the noise of their own souls out into the country with them. The self-help books are not wrong however, in pointing the need for

silence, nor are the spiritual books.

It is a blessing to have a common understanding not only about the meaning of things but also about the meaning of silence. Simply not to be talking is not the same as to be silent. Silence must be present within a man as a primary reality in its own right, not merely as the opposite of speech. This living in the primary silence adds another life to man, who is only man through the word: it adds the life in silence. It points him beyond the life that is in the word to a life beyond the word, and it points him beyond himself. (Max Picard, The World of Silence)

Now, just as ivy grows around a wall even for centuries, so it seems as if cathedrals have grown around silence. They seem to be built around silence. When I first visited the Romanesque basilica at Paray-le-Monial in France, I fell in love with that type of architecture, and it remains my favorite, if nothing else because of its silence. It was as if its silence existed as a substance there, and I thought it capable of producing men of silence, even cities of silence.

Likewise with the liturgy, it is clear that active participation in it does not preclude, as Pope John Paul II stated in his address to the American bishops in October of 1998, “...*the active passivity of silence, stillness and listening: indeed it demands it.*” He explained further the nature of this active silence.

Worshippers are not passive, for instance, when listening to the readings or the homily, or following the prayers of the celebrant, and the chants and music of the liturgy. These are experiences of silence and stillness, but they are in their own way profoundly active. In a culture which neither favors nor fosters meditative quiet, the art of interior listening is learned only with difficulty.

Catechism on the Liturgy I,21

In a commentary on this address of the Holy Father, a commentator goes on to say,

If we are to foster the awe, reverence, and adoration through which we may know the Word of Christ, then we must love, and not fear silence and stillness in the Mass and in our life. From silence comes the Word. From silence God spoke and created the world. From silence he spoke to Mary and came to dwell in her womb. From silence he sent his Holy Spirit at Pentecost to lead the Church. Meditative quiet, as the pope laments, is neither favored nor fostered in our culture. Yet there is no getting around the simple fact that only in stillness do we learn to listen with the interior ear. Only in stillness can we build the habit of listening, a habit that, when impeded by the jangle of noise, can never develop. Only in stillness do we calm down enough to sense the Lord’s presence. Only in stillness do we find out that the Lord loves us and that we are made to love him. Silence, then, is not a den of terror; it is rather the place where we fall in love. (The Spirit of the

Liturgy, Romano Guardini)

This is a very high level of teaching and learning we are discussing at this point.

It is in this very aspect of the liturgy that its didactic aim is to be found, that of teaching the soul not to see purposes everywhere, not to be too conscious of the end it wishes to attain, not to be desirous of being over clever and grown-up, but to understand simplicity in life. The soul must learn to abandon, at least in prayer, the restlessness of purposeful activity; it must learn to waste time for the sake of God and to be prepared for the sacred game with sayings and thought and gestures, without always immediately asking “why?” and “wherefore?”. It must learn not to be continually yearning to do something, to attack something, to accomplish something useful, but to play the divinely ordained game of the liturgy in liberty and beauty and holy joy before God. (Anne Husted Burleigh, “Common Wisdom.”

The silence of the Canon of the Mass in particular, harmonizes perfectly with the accomplishment and the essence of the mystery of the Eucharistic Sacrifice. Indeed, the material elements are changed into the Body and Blood of Christ, with the senses perceiving it, or the created mind being able to comprehend it; the real presence and the sacrificial life of the Savior under the sacramental species is concealed beyond all discernment. The holy silence of the Canon is quite suited to indicate and recall the concealment and the depth, the incomprehensibility and ineffableness of the wonderful mysteries that are enacted on the altar. “The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him!” (Hab. 2.20)

There is another reason for this silence at the Canon...a mystical one.

The priest at the altar is the representative and image of the praying and sacrificing Savior. Now, as on the Mount of Olives and on the Cross, Jesus prayed not only in loud tones, but also in a low voice and in the silence of His heart to the Father, so also it is proper that the priest should herein resemble His Divine Model, when representing and renewing the Sacrifice of the Cross. The altar becomes not merely the Cross, but also the crib; for at the moment of Consecration the marvels of Bethlehem as well as those of Golgotha are renewed. Whilst deep silence pervaded all things and the night was in the midst of its course, the Almighty Word of God descended from His royal throne in heaven to the crib of Bethlehem; in like manner, does the King of Glory at the consecration come down upon the altar, amid the most profound silence. (Gühr)

While children may not appreciate silence as an adult would, it is especially in silence that we receive the rod of correction and the staff of comfort. “For while all things were in quiet silence and night was in the midst of her course, Thy almighty word leapt down from heaven...” (Wis. 18.14-15)

6. After having been polished, formed, informed, educated, instituted, instructed and disciplined in the mysteries, the believer is now ready to put into action what he has

been taught. This is the highest mode of teaching in Senior's view, and it is called Exercise, (*exercere*), the putting into action, or exercise, of the things already learned.

Philosophers distinguish between potency (capable of being something else), act (the state of actually being it) and exercise (functioning). For example, a tree in the woods is potentially firewood; chopped and split, it is firewood in act and, in exercise, it burns. Since God is the only being purely in exercised act, when we achieve this state, we are His image (having minds) and His likeness (using them). The ultimate teacher is Christ, residing in the soul. Teachers act in loco Christi and students imitating them are indirectly imitating Christ, as St. Paul said, "Be ye followers (imitatores) of me, as I also am of Christ." (Senior)

It is a precept of the Church (Denz. 437, 1205) that Holy Communion must be received by all adults in virtue of the Divine Command, "You can have no life in yourselves, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood." (Jn.6.54)

As St. Thomas points out (*Summa Theo.* IIIa, Q. 80, a.12, ad 1) "On the part of the communicants, extreme reverence and caution are necessary to prevent anything happening which would not be fitting for so great a sacrament. This is most likely to occur in the drinking of the blood which might easily be spilt, if there were any carelessness in receiving it. And because the Christian community has increased...it is a prudent custom for the blood to be received by the priest alone, and not by the people."

It seems to me that the perfect example of how the liturgy teaches in this eighth and highest mode, may be seen in the act of Holy Communion. What strikes me most at this point, about the priest acting *in loco Christi* at the time of the distribution of Holy Communion, is the supplication he makes for every one of his parishioners to whom he gives the King of Kings. "*Corpus Domini nostri Jesu Christi custodiat animam tuam ad vitam aeternam. Amen.*"

Catechism on the Liturgy I,22

It seems that everyone, whom our Blessed Lord met, needed some individual favor – a solution to some problem – from St. Peter to the most pathetic man suffering from leprosy. The people with whom He came into contact were not just faces in the crowd. They were individuals, with particular need. For example, the woman who suffered from an issue of blood came up to Him with the thought that if she could only touch the hem of His garment, she would be healed. He was in a hurry at the time, on His way to heal the daughter of Jairus, who was at the point of death. "And immediately Jesus knowing in himself the virtue that had proceeded from him, turning to the multitude, said: Who hath touched my garments? And his disciples said to him: Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou who hath touched me?" (Mk. 5.30-31)

St. Peter pointed out that it was just a casual contact, and that many had brushed up against Him, but Christ insisted on having an answer, because virtue had gone out of Him. This is partly because God does not seem interested in mass-produced miracles.

Every single person who met the Lord was brought into some personal relation with Him, and they were all able to say – with anger or delight – “He turned, and spoke to *me*.” Everyone who met Him could carry away from the meeting some personal memory of His voice. “Go and sin no more.” “Thy faith hath saved thee.”

But He is fully able to distinguish between those who approach Him with pride, or with humility. “And it came to pass, as they walked in the way that a certain man said to him: I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. Jesus said to him: the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.” (Lk. 9.57-58) It seems like a curt response, but it was the right response to the man who would approach him with pride and self-assurance.

Should one approach Him honestly however, and with humility, the result is quite different. “And the two disciples heard him speak and they followed Jesus. And Jesus turning, and seeing them following him, saith to them: What seek you? Who said to him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou? He saith to them: Come and see. They came, and saw where he abode, and they stayed with him that day: now it was about the tenth hour.” (Jn. 1. 37-39) The result of this enquiry is the Lord entertaining them all day until sundown.

*How surely he recognizes, how gently he inspires, contrition, and at various levels! The woman of Samaria, with her pious platitudes, must be suddenly knocked off her perch with the command, “Go home, fetch thy husband.” The woman taken in adultery is to be won by sympathy; “I will not condemn thee either. Go, and do not sin again henceforward.” The Magdalen – she is pardoned already; “If great sins have been forgiven her, she has also greatly loved.” How nicely graded are the demands he makes on different souls! The young man who has kept all the commandments from his youth up must be sent home to sell all that he has. But when poor Zacchaeus, the publican, has been beckoned down from his eyrie in the sycamore-tree, and announces, “I give half of what I have to the poor,” that is enough; “He too is a son of Abraham.” How well he knows where faith is strong enough, where it is not yet strong enough, to do without reassurance! The Magdalen is to keep her distance; only Thomas may thrust *his hand into the wounds*. Everybody, to our Lord, from our Blessed Lady downwards, is a separate problem, needing a separate approach.*

And so it is, if only we had faith to believe it, in Holy Communion. That long procession to the altar-rails, how interminable it seems! The priest, you would think, must get tired of muttering the same formula two or three hundred times over! But no, he is not allowed to say “Corpus Domini Jesu Christi custodiat animas vestras”, the sacred words must be said to each communicant individually. Jesus Christ is not simply coming among us, he is coming to each of us; and although the gift is always the same (for it is nothing less than the whole of himself), the purpose for which it is given, the influence which it is meant to bestow, on your soul or mine, is something special, in proportion to the needs of each, in accordance with the plan he has for each. He knows you, and makes allowances for you; knows you, and can gauge your capacity; knows you, and is not to be put off by excuses. He can tell whether you are really trying to find him when you go to

the altar, or merely following the dictates of convention; whether you come in a spirit of humility, or expecting too much of him. He can tell whether the contrition you feel for your sins needs to be drawn out still more, or is ripening already into love; whether your faith is such that it still needs reassurance, or whether it can stand up to the test of a rebuff.
(The Layman and His Conscience, Msgr. Ronald Knox)

So from the altar boy who is learning how to hold the paten correctly, to the priest with many academic degrees, *everyone* can learn from the Mass, in any country, and at any time. The Mass can run up and down touching each of the eight modes of teaching, like the chanter singing the musical scales, sometimes pausing at this note, or skipping to a higher note, or going back to the first note.

As Sacred Scripture has different senses to it, so that either the lamb or the elephant can be nourished from its waters (as St. Gregory pointed out), so the Mass can teach and nourish anyone, no matter what his level of knowledge might be, or what level of participation he might be capable of pursuing.

The Mass is like heaven, where the lowest angel and the lowest saint, join their voices with the highest angels and saints, all of them singing “Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus.”