

The Sacraments and the Liturgy

1

The New Testament speaks of the risen Jesus as

‘a leitourgos in the sanctuary of heaven’(Hebrews 8:2),
and speaks of his ministry as a leitourgia(Hebrews 8:6).

laos ‘people’ / ergon ‘work’

- as prophet – speaking God’s word to the people from the sanctuary (communion with God)
- as priest – drawing the people into the sanctuary (communion with God)
- as king – in this way bringing about the reign of God among the people (making the world a sacred place, a ‘holy land’, a ‘sanctuary’)

2

Sacrament : pertaining to the sacred

Greek ‘mysterion’ Latin ‘sacramentum’

‘The mystery was made known to me by revelation’ (Eph 3:3).

‘The mystery of the kingdom of God’(Mark 4:11).

Greek ‘mysterion’ Latin ‘mysterium’

‘sacramentum’ and ‘symbolum’ often used interchangeably
symbol = brings all different aspects together

Greek ‘symbolon’ ultimately = reveals the divine
‘together’ / ‘throw’(‘ball’)

3

Sacrament pertaining to the sacred

‘The sacraments sanctify (‘make holy’) people

build up the Body of Christ

give worship to God’(Vatican II SC 59)

Mystery : Revealed in a way that is veiled
perceptible only to faith

Symbol : brings together all the various aspects of
reality and so reveals what is ultimately divine.

4



Jesus is THE Sacrament,
THE Mystery
THE Symbol of God

‘The Word became flesh
and lived among us,
and we have seen his glory,
the glory as of a father’s only son,
full of grace and truth ...
From his fullness
we have all received,
grace upon grace’(John 1:14,16).

‘To see me is to see the Father.’
(John 14:8)

5

The Church is THE Sacrament
THE mystery
THE symbol of Jesus

As a community we are to be disciples of Jesus ‘the Way’
to the Father (John 14:10).

The Church is his ‘body’ in the world,
living the life given to us by his Spirit –
the Spirit he shares with the Father.

6

‘It is the Paschal mystery of Christ that the Church
proclaims and celebrates in her liturgy, so that the
faithful may live from it and bear witness to it in the
world’(Catechism n. 1068).

- ‘Mystery’ - Something revealed by God in a veiled
way, perceptible only by faith.
- ‘Paschal mystery’ - Jesus’ self-giving on the cross and
his being embraced by God in the Resurrection.

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Vatican II On the Liturgy SC 2

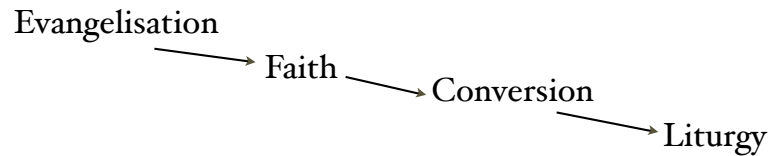
‘It is in the liturgy, especially in the divine sacrifice of the
Eucharist, that the work of our redemption is
accomplished, and it is through the liturgy especially that
the faithful are enabled to express in their lives and
manifest to others the mystery of Christ and the real
nature of the true Church.’

8

‘The liturgy is an exercise of the priestly work of Jesus Christ ... Every liturgical celebration ... is an action of Christ the priest and of his Body which is the Church’(Vatican II, SC 7§2-3).

It is an exercise of Jesus’ prophetic work
and kingly work

‘The sacred liturgy must be preceded by evangelisation, faith and conversion’(Catechism n. 1072).



9

n.1073

‘The liturgy is a participation in Christ’s own prayer addressed to the Father in the Holy Spirit. In the liturgy all Christian prayer finds its source and goal.

Through the liturgy our inner self is rooted and grounded in the great love with which the Father loves us in his Beloved Son.’

n.1074

‘The liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed.

It is also the font from which all her power flows.

It is the privileged place for catechising the People of God.’

10

n.1088

‘Christ is present in the sacraments so that when anybody baptises it is really Christ himself who baptises.

He is present in his word since it is he himself who speaks when the holy Scriptures are read in the Church.

He is present when the Church prays and sings, for he has promised “where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in their midst.”’

11

n.1095

‘The Church re-reads and re-lives the great events of salvation history in the “today” of her liturgy.’

- In the liturgy Jesus’ self-giving (culminating on Calvary) and God’s taking him into the risen life are re-presented (made present) for us and for our salvation.
- In the liturgy we gather as God’s People to open our hearts to welcome the blessings that God is pouring out upon us.

12

n.1097

‘The liturgical assembly derives its unity from the “communion of the Holy Spirit” who gathers the children of God into the one Body of Christ.’

n.1098

‘The grace of the Holy Spirit seeks to awaken faith, conversion of heart, and adherence to the Father’s will.

These dispositions are the precondition both for the reception of othergraces conferred in the celebration itself and the fruits of new life which the celebration is intended to produce afterward.’

13

n.1101

‘The Holy Spirit gives a spiritual understanding of the Word of God to those who read or hear it, according to the disposition of their hearts. By means of the words, actions, and symbols that form the structure of the celebration, the Spirit puts the faithful and the ministers into a living relationship with Christ, the Word and Image of the Father, so that they can live out the meaning of what they hear, contemplate and do in the celebration.’

14

n.1112

‘The mission of the Holy Spirit in the liturgy of the Church is

- to prepare the assembly to encounter Christ;
- to recall and manifest Christ to the faith of the assembly;
- to make the saving work of Christ present and active by his transforming power; and
- to make the gift of communion bear fruit in the Church.’

n.1127

‘Celebrated worthily in faith, the sacraments confer the grace that they signify. This is because in them Christ himself is acting.’

15

n.1138

The liturgy is offered by

- the powers of heaven
- the whole of creation
- the people of the Old and New Covenants
- ‘a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation from all tribes and peoples and languages’(Revelation 7:9).

16

n.1141

‘Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy, and to which the Christian people, “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people”, have a right and an obligation by reason of their Baptism.’

n.1142

- Some ministers are consecrated by the sacrament of Holy Orders, by which the Holy Spirit enables them to act in the person of Christ the Head. The ordained minister is, as it were, an ‘icon’ of Christ the priest.

17

n.1143

- Other liturgical ministries include servers, readers, commentators, music ministry, special ministers of the Eucharist

n.1144

‘In the celebration of the sacraments it is the whole assembly that is leitourgos, each according to its function, but in the unity of the Spirit who acts in all.’

18

n.1202

‘The Church is Catholic, capable of integrating into her unity, while purifying, all the authentic riches of cultures.’

n.1204

‘In order that the mystery of Christ be “made known to all the nations ... to bring about the obedience of faith”(Romans 16:26), it must be proclaimed, celebrated and lived in all cultures in such a way that they themselves are not abolished by it, but redeemed and brought to their fullness. It is with and through their own human culture, assumed and transfigured by Christ, that the multitude of God’s children has access to the Father in the one Spirit.’

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