



INSTRUCTION

FOR APPLYING

THE LITURGICAL PRESCRIPTIONS

OF THE CODE OF CANONS

OF THE EASTERN CHURCHES



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On the cover:

Saint Basil celebrates the Divine Liturgy.

A miniature from 1429.

Liturgical scroll n. 708, Patmos, Monastery of St. John the Theologian.



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INTRODUCTION

1. The Mystery of salvation in history and in liturgy

The Father, incomprehensible and unchangeable, has revealed to humanity his mystery, his plan of love, realized through the Son in the Holy Spirit, for the salvation of mankind. In creation, he called the cosmos into existence and rendered it beautiful for man, made in the image and likeness (cf. Gen. 1:26) of God. And when man knew the bitter experience of sin, the Father did not abandon him, but bandaged his wounds with his mercy, offering his salvation and reconciling to himself the ancestors, patriarchs, the just, and the entire lineage of the elect and forming an alliance with his people.

In the fullness of time, by the work of the Holy Spirit, the Word made himself flesh of the Virgin Mary, assuming unto himself and espousing human nature in the virgin's womb. After having dwelt among men and having announced, with words and signs, the Gospel of the Kingdom, he so loved the Church, his spouse, that he offered himself in the supreme oblation on the Cross to remove her every stain and reclothe her with beauty and splendor. In the Pascal Mystery of his death and resurrection, he, the new Passover, holocaust and priest, poured out blood and water on the Church, a symbol of the sacraments, and poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit upon her. Having entered the sanctuary of heaven, he intercedes for mankind (cf. Heb. 7:25). Since then, the Church, which is his Spouse and Body, walks in time and space, always united with heaven and oriented toward the eternal wedding in the communion of saints, without ever ceasing to acclaim and invoke him until he returns.

Out of the baptismal font, the Lord Christ generates children, who bear the image of the Resurrected, to the Church. These, united to Christ in the Holy Spirit, are rendered fit to celebrate with Christ the sacred liturgy, spiritual worship.

The liturgy of the Church is first of all celebration, by means of the Holy Spirit, of the mystery of our salvation, accomplished in the Passover of the Lord Jesus, in obedience to the eternal will of the heavenly Father. In the sacramental mystery, the risen Christ offers

himself, rendering us fully conformed to his image through the gift of his Spirit, so that for us "life means Christ" (Phil. 1:21).

The Lord makes himself present when the Word of God is proclaimed in the assembly and welcomed with a pure heart. In Christian initiation, the children of the Church receive the gift to die with, be buried with, and be raised with Christ the Lord (cf. Rom. 6:1-11; Col. 2:20; 3:1-4). In being conformed to Christ the Priest, it has been given to some of his children, chosen for the ministry of priesthood, to serve his priestly, prophetic, and royal people, and to pronounce the epiclesis so that the Spirit may place them in the presence of the divine majesty, to render him glory and praise, and to express thanksgiving. In the wedding Feast of the Eucharist, the Spouse offers her his Body and Blood, the beginning of the promised and invoked kingdom, rendered present by the fire of the Spirit. In Marriage, the Church unites herself to the Spouse in the fecundity of new children and in the commitment of witness and evangelization. In the sacrament of Forgiveness, the son that was lost but has been found (cf. Lk. 15:11-32) is re-admitted to the presence of the Father. In the holy Oil for the sick, the Church invokes her Lord for healing and the remission of sins. United to Christ praying, to whom the monk in particular aspires his whole existence, she offers praise, thanksgiving, and epiclesis supplication to the Father continuously in the Holy Spirit. Her liturgy extends itself in the "time of salvation", the seasons of which are laden with grace.

In the complexity of these mysteries, the terrestrial liturgy already unites the earth to heaven, and thus to the divine and perfect liturgy celebrated there, until the time when, upon the return of her Lord, humanity will be allowed to see God as he is and to unceasingly adore the most holy Trinity.

Liturgy in the Eastern Churches

In the Apostolic Letter *Orientalium Lumen*, John Paul II invites one to listen to the Churches of the East, "living interpreters of the treasure of tradition they preserve", inasmuch as - says the Pope - "in contemplating them, before my eyes appear elements of great significance for a fuller and more thorough understanding of the Christian experience. These elements are capable of giving a more complete Christian response to the expectations of the men and women of today. Indeed, in comparison to any other culture, the Christian East has a unique and privileged role as

the original setting where the Church was born"¹. In this perspective, remembering "with what love the Eastern Christians celebrate the sacred liturgy"², he underscores that in the liturgical celebration the sense of mystery "is so strongly felt by all the faithful of the Christian East"³ and that "liturgical prayer in the East shows a great aptitude for involving the human person in his or her totality: the mystery is sung in the loftiness of its content, but also in the warmth of the sentiments it awakens in the heart of redeemed humanity. In the sacred act, even bodiliness is summoned to praise, and beauty, which in the East is one of the best loved names expressing the divine harmony and the model of transfigured humanity⁴, appears everywhere: in the shape of the church, in the sounds, in the colours, in the lights, in the scents. The lengthy duration of the celebrations, the repeated invocations, everything expresses gradual identification with the mystery celebrated with one's whole person. Thus the prayer of the Church already becomes participation in the heavenly liturgy, an anticipation of the final beatitude"⁵.

This confirms even more the invaluable affirmation of the conciliar Decree on ecumenism: "Everyone should realize that it is of supreme importance to understand, venerate, preserve and foster the rich liturgical and spiritual heritage of the Eastern Churches in order faithfully to preserve the fullness of Christian tradition, and to bring about reconciliation between Eastern and Western Christians"⁶.

¹ JOHN PAUL II, Ap. Lett. *Oriente Lumen* (2 May 1995), 5: AAS 87 (1995) 749.

² VATICAN COUNCIL II, Decr. on Ecumenism *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 15.

³ JOHN PAUL II, Ap. Lett. *Oriente Lumen* (2 May 1995), 6: AAS 87 (1995) 751.

⁴ Cf. CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *The Pedagogue*, III, 1, 1: *SCh* 158,12.

⁵ JOHN PAUL II, Ap. Lett. *Oriente Lumen* (2 May 1995), 11: AAS 87 (1995) 757.

⁶ VATICAN COUNCIL II, Decr. on Ecumenism *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 15.

CHAPTER I

THE MEANING AND NATURE OF THE INSTRUCTION

3. *The Second Vatican Council and the liturgy*

"Every scribe who has been instructed in the kingdom of heaven is like the head of a household who brings from his storeroom both the new and the old" (Mt. 13:52). This expression summarizes the disposition of the Fathers assembled in the Second Vatican Council. The Constitutions and Decrees approved by the Council itself, as well as the interpretive and applicative documents for the implementation of the decisions made during the Council, aspire to this gospel verse.

It is not by chance that the first document published by Vatican Council II was that of the holy liturgy. The same Council emphasized the importance of such a choice, noting that to revive and restore the liturgy must be considered "a sign of the providential dispositions of God in our time, and as a movement of the Holy Spirit in his Church"⁷, because the liturgy daily builds up those who are in the Church, making of them a holy temple of the Lord, a dwelling place for God in the Spirit (cf. Eph 2:21-22), to the mature measure of the fullness of Christ (cf. Eph 4:13). At the same time it marvelously increases their power to preach Christ⁸.

Prepared by decades of reflection elaborated in particular by the then-called liturgical movement, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy was followed by intense collegiate activity which sought to clarify and gradually introduce it in the life of the Western Church, spreading its spirit, codifying some of the rules and inserting them in the liturgical books.

⁷ VATICAN COUNCIL II, Const. on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 43.

⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, 2.

4. *Conciliar and post-conciliar principles and norms for the Eastern Churches*

All the Christian Churches are founded on the one message of Christ and necessarily share a common heritage. Therefore, quite a number of principles of the conciliar Constitution on the sacred liturgy universally provide valid elements for the liturgies of all the Churches and should be applied even in the celebrations of Churches that do not follow the Roman rite⁹. The practical norms of the Constitution and those of the Code of Canon Law promulgated in 1983 must be understood as affecting only the Latin Church¹⁰. The principles and norms of liturgical nature which directly concern the Eastern Churches are found instead in various conciliar documents, such as in *Lumen Gentium* (n. 23), *Unitatis Redintegratio* (nn. 14-17) and even more importantly in *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*. These exalt the inalienable value of the specific, and thus diversified, traditions of the Eastern Churches. After the Second Vatican Council, the most important collection of norms for the Eastern Churches is constituted by the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches.

The quoted documents disclose general principles and practical norms regarding several aspects of ecclesial life. Some legislate in liturgical matters, indicating obligatory norms for all Catholic Eastern Churches. Obviously, these do not pretend to exhaust the totality of the indications regulating the liturgical celebrations for every single Church *sui iuris*. Such prescriptions belong, in fact, to the particular laws of each Church.

5. *The present Instruction for the application of the liturgical prescriptions of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*

The liturgical laws valid for all the Eastern Churches are important because they provide the general orientation. However, being distributed among various texts, they risk remaining ignored, poorly coordinated and poorly interpreted. It seemed opportune, therefore, to gather them in a systematic whole, completing them with further clarification: thus, the intent of the Instruction, presented to the Eastern Churches which are in

⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, 3.

¹⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, 3 and Code of Canon Law (promulgated by John Paul II, 25 January 1983) [CIC], can. 1.

full communion with the Apostolic See, is to help them fully realize their own identity. The authoritative general directive of this Instruction, formulated to be implemented in Eastern celebrations and liturgical life, articulates itself in propositions of a juridical-pastoral nature, constantly taking initiative from a theological perspective.

The Instruction poses the following objectives:

- to lead to a more profound understanding of the immense richness of the authentic Eastern traditions, which are to be scrupulously maintained and communicated to all the faithful;

- to arrange the liturgical norms valid for all the Catholic Eastern Churches in an organic summary and to introduce recovery, where necessary, of the Eastern liturgical authenticity, according to the Tradition which each Eastern Church has inherited from the Apostles through the Fathers;

- to exhort a permanent liturgical formation to be organized on a solid basis, for both the clergy - beginning with seminarians and formation institutes -, and the people of God through schools of mystagogical catechesis;

- to list the principles in common for the elaboration of Liturgical Directories for the individual Churches *sui iuris*.

The frequent comparison with the Roman liturgy is intended to highlight the Eastern uniqueness, which risks being compromised or even eliminated in the contact with the Latin Church, her institutions, her doctrinal elaboration, her liturgical practices, and her internal organization which is often more developed also because of more favorable historical vicissitudes.

6. *Elaboration of the local Liturgical Directories*

The present Instruction, compiled on the basis of the indications of the Holy See and of the Eastern liturgical traditions, limits itself to the formulation of principles and rules valid for all the Catholic Eastern Churches. The authorities of the individual Churches *sui iuris*, according to the indications of the Apostolic Constitution *Sacri Canones*¹¹, are invited to receive them with full open-mindedness and insert them into the prescriptions of their own particular liturgical laws.

¹¹ Cf. AAS 82 (1990) 1037 - 1038.

For communities of Churches *sui iuris* belonging to the same liturgical family, such as the Churches of Constantinopolitan or of Syro-Chaldean traditions, the Holy See will provide for the formulation of more detailed indications in collaboration with the Churches concerned. Every single Church *sui iuris* belonging to such families will provide, according to methods that will be specified, for the elaboration of a *corpus* of norms which adapt the present document and the one that will be elaborated for her entire liturgical family to her own specific situation.

The Churches *sui iuris*, rather, which do not belong to a broader liturgical family should elaborate as soon as possible their own particular norms based on the present Instruction. The Holy See is available to provide experts to collaborate with the individual Churches *sui iuris* for the elaboration of such particular norms, if the Churches believe they have the need and request it. At the end of the process, the Liturgical Directory of each individual Church *sui iuris* will be presented to the Holy See.

CHAPTER II

THE INALIENABLE VALUE OF THE PARTICULAR HERITAGE OF THE EASTERN CHURCHES AND THE URGENCY OF ITS FLOURISHING

7. The heritage of the Eastern Churches

The conciliar documents, the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches and the repeated authoritative declarations of the Magisterium affirm the inalienable value of the particular heritage of the Eastern Churches. *Lumen Gentium* n. 23 declares that these, by divine Providence, whilst safeguarding the unity of the faith and the unique divine structure of the universal Church, enjoy their own theological and spiritual heritage, their own discipline, and their own liturgical usage. *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* n. 1 specifies that in these shines the Tradition derived from the Apostles through the Fathers, which constitutes part of the divinely revealed, undivided heritage of the Universal Church.

Within the unity of the Catholic faith, each one of these heritages expresses the variety of its manifestations¹². The fullness of the Mystery of God reveals itself progressively according to the historical and cultural circumstances of peoples and expresses itself in each of the Eastern Churches' manner of living the faith¹³.

8. Articulations of the Eastern Churches

Addressing the various groups of Churches organically united, *Lumen Gentium* n. 23 affirms that "some of these, notably the ancient patriarchal Churches, as mothers in the faith, gave birth to other daughter-Churches, as it were, and down to our own days they are linked with these by bonds of a more intimate charity...". The Code of Canons

¹² Cf. Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches (promulgated by John Paul II, 18 October 1990) [CCEO], can. 39.

¹³ Cf. CCEO can. 28.

of the Eastern Churches makes the same affirmation when it speaks of the Churches *sui iuris* as a community of the Christian faithful united by a Hierarchy (can. 27); it recalls the rites that constitute their own heritage (can. 28 § 1); and it specifies that these rites trace their origins to the Alexandrian, Antiochene, Armenian, Chaldean and Constantinopolitan traditions (can. 28 § 2).

9. *Particular aspects of the heritage of the Eastern Churches*

These Churches have jealously retained the symbolic biblical theology, explained at great length by the Fathers. They preserve the sense of the awesome and inexpressible Mystery which surrounds and connotes the celebrative act. In the texts and in their whole spirit, they maintain the sense of liturgy with formulas that are both rich and meaningful as unceasing doxology, as a petition for forgiveness and as uninterrupted epiclesis. These Churches boast of a spirituality drawing directly from Sacred Scripture and, consequently, a theology less subjected to strictly rational categories. For historical and cultural reasons, they have maintained a more direct continuity with the spiritual atmosphere of Christian origins, a prerogative that is ever more frequently considered even by the Occident not as a sign of stagnancy and backwardness but of precious fidelity to the sources of salvation.

The Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, in can. 28 § 1 which refers to *Lumen Gentium* n. 23 and *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* n. 3, elucidates the important areas which articulate the heritage of each of the Churches *sui iuris*: liturgy, theology, spirituality and discipline. It is necessary to note that these particular fields penetrate and condition one another in turn inside a global vision of divine revelation which pervades all life and which culminates in the praise of the most holy Trinity.

Such articulations imply the idea of a history, of a culture, of conceptions and uses specific to each Church, and likewise constitute the rays originating in the one Lord, the sun of justice which illumines every man (cf. Jn 1:9) and brings him to live in communion with him. Every one of these rays, received by each individual Church *sui iuris*, has value and infinite dynamism and constitutes a part of the universal heritage of the Church.

10. *The duty to protect the Eastern heritage*

Desiring that these treasures flourish and contribute ever more efficiently to the evangelization of the world, *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* affirms, as do successive documents, that the members of Eastern Churches have the right and the duty to preserve them, to know them, and to live them¹⁴. Such affirmation contains a clear condemnation of any attempt to distance the Eastern faithful from their Churches, whether in an explicit and irreversible manner, with its juridical consequences, inducing them to pass from one Church *sui iuris* to another¹⁵, or whether in a less explicit manner, favoring the acquisition of forms of thought, spirituality, and devotions that are not coherent with their own ecclesial heritage, and thus contrary to the indications so often emphasized by Roman Pontiffs and expressed, with particular force, already in the Apostolic Letter *Orientalium Dignitas* of Leo XIII.

The danger of losing the Eastern identity manifests itself particularly in a time like the present, characterized by great migrations from the East toward lands believed to be more hospitable, which are prevalently of Latin tradition. These host countries are enriched by the heritage of the Eastern faithful who establish themselves there, and the preservation of such heritage is to be sustained and encouraged not only by the Eastern pastors but also by the Latin ones of the immigration territories, because it wonderfully expresses the multicolored richness of the Church of Christ.

11. *The progress of Tradition*

The Apostolic Letter *Orientalium Lumen* particularly emphasizes the irreplaceable role of the Catholic Eastern faithful, "living bearers, together with our Orthodox brothers and sisters," of the "venerable and ancient tradition of the Eastern churches" (n. 1). It refers to an expression already formulated in the Decree *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* (n. 1), where it is moreover wished for the Eastern Catholic Churches that they might fulfill their mission with new apostolic strength. This does not

¹⁴ Cf. VATICAN COUNCIL II, Decr. on the Catholic Eastern Churches *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, 6.

¹⁵ Cf. CCEO can. 31 and 1465.

exclude new development and, in fact, no Church, Eastern or Western, has ever been able to survive without adapting itself continuously to the changing conditions of life. Rather, the Church guards against every undue and inopportune precipitation, requiring that any eventual modification be not only well prepared, but also inspired and conforming to the genuine traditions.

12. *Criteria for the interpretation of organic progress*

The Council specifies that changes in the rites and disciplines of these Churches are not admitted except by reason of their own organic progress¹⁶ and adds that whenever they have fallen short, due to circumstances of time or persons, they are to strive to return to their ancestral traditions¹⁷. The Holy Father John Paul II sees in this a "symbol of the firm attitude held by the Apostolic See, that the Council so efficiently expressed by asking the Eastern Churches in full communion with it to have the courage to rediscover the authentic traditions of their own identity, restoring the original purity where necessary"¹⁸.

The organic progress, in every Church *sui iuris*, implies taking into account first of all the roots from which the heritage of these Churches was initially developed, mainly in Jerusalem, Alexandria, Antioch, Constantinople, Armenia, and in the ancient empire of Persia; and secondly, the manner in which such traditions were transmitted, adapting to the various circumstances and places but maintained in a coherent, organic continuity.

To explain this principle it serves to mention an exhortation of Pope Paul VI to the members of the Commissions entrusted with preparing the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches. Evoking the double scope of the future Code (faithful to the traditions and in view of the demands of our world), he observed how in presenting new things it is necessary

¹⁶ Cf. also CCEO can. 40 § 1.

¹⁷ Cf. VATICAN COUNCIL II, Decr. on the Catholic Eastern Churches *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, 6.

¹⁸ JOHN PAUL II, Homily during the Divine Liturgy in the Armenian rite (21 November 1987): *L'Osservatore Romano*, 23-24 November 1987, p. 6; see also in *Servizio Informazioni per le Chiese Orientali*, supplement to nn. 485-556, p. 5.

to pay attention to take sufficiently into account the system of the transmitted heritage. Any renewal, in fact, should be coherent and agree with sound tradition, in such a way that the new norms do not appear as an extraneous body forced into an ecclesiastical composite, but blossoming as though spontaneously from already existing norms¹⁹.

¹⁹ Cf. PAUL VI, Discourse of 18 March 1974: *Nuntia* 1 (1975) 6.

CHAPTER III

THE RICHNESS OF THE LITURGICAL HERITAGE

13. *The Eastern heritage is more than just liturgy*

Certainly, the tendency to reduce the specific heritage of the Eastern Churches to just its liturgical dimension should not be encouraged. The attraction exerted by the sacredness of the rites, the intense emotion arising from the poetic dimension of the texts, has possibly led to an excessive emphasis of the exterior or emotional aspect, an easy place of refuge for those who deny the liturgy its necessary link with life. This is what has sometimes led the same Eastern Catholics to perceive only the liturgical patrimony as being specifically their own, conforming themselves instead, for the other aspects of spirituality, to the Western sensibility considered as common to the Universal Church. Rather, the value of Eastern theologies and spiritualities, understood as part of the undivided heritage of the Universal Church, is a fairly recent discovery, as is the emergence of the importance of particular disciplines.

The practice of the Eastern liturgy without its entire heritage flowing into it, as into its highest expression, would risk reducing it to pure superficiality.

14. *The eminence of liturgy*

Ever since its origins, the entire liturgical setting has played an absolutely central role: the vivid sense that all new faith life culminates in the great act of worship of Christ and of the Church united to him is, in fact, a founding element already beginning in the apostolic period.

"The holy liturgy, the place in which proclamations and adorations and the communion and fellowship among the believers are manifested, is the true former of the Christian life and the most complete synthesis of its various aspects"²⁰. In fact, the liturgy is the "summit and font"²¹ of

²⁰ JOHN PAUL II, Discourse to participants of the meeting about the pastoral problems of the Catholic Church of the Byzantine rite in Romania (22 January 1994): *L'Osservatore Romano*, 22 January 1994, p. 5; see also in *Servizio Informazioni per le*

Christian life and expresses it as in a synthesis; evokes and actualizes the mystery of Christ and the Church, presents it to the contemplation of the faithful and sings it, rendering thanks to the Lord "for eternal is his love" (Ps. 136).

15. *The special pre-eminence of the liturgy in the Eastern Churches*

The pre-eminence of the liturgical patrimony is even greater in the Eastern Churches because they have maintained in a special way the primacy of the liturgy as the summit of Christian life, remaining thus completely faithful to the spirit of the Church of the Fathers, when the liturgy was the place where catechesis and religious teaching occurred; the Scripture was proclaimed and commented; the catechumens and penitents were prepared for Baptism and Reconciliation accordingly, in the period preceding Easter, in a perfect synthesis of instructions and symbols; even the diakonia found its place there. The whole life of the Church was, therefore, summarized in the liturgy. Even today, it is this model which inspires the Eastern Churches and which constitutes their force. This model should be the inspiration especially for the necessary reevaluation of the "mystagogical" method for the formation of the faithful: from the liturgy, understood and assimilated, progress in the life of Christ is born.

The contemplation of the divine mysteries and participation in them are realized through expressive forms which are also spiritual attitudes: doxology, which is grateful praise and pleasing adoration and which extols the Lord "wondrous among his saints" (Ps. 67[68],36 LXX); anamnesis of the wonders of the economy of salvation and the action of thanksgiving which spontaneously arises from it; epiclesis, the invocation of the Spirit who brings to completion the whole reality of the Church and the Kingdom; and finally, the apophatic dimension, more notably Eastern, which expresses the sense of unworthiness and finiteness before the inexpressible nature of the divine realities which presents itself to mankind as the "mysterium tremendum", surrounded by the veil of awe, by a sense of inadequacy and thus out of humble adoration: all this is

Chiese Orientali 49 (1994) 2.

²¹ Cf. VATICAN COUNCIL II, Const. on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 10.

expressed in the numerous apophatic linguistic formulas, but also by surrounding the sanctuary with respect, separating and veiling it.

In the liturgy of the Eastern Churches, the experience of the incarnation of the faith is realized in the culture of the peoples, so that such culture is both the inspiration and fruit of faith and especially of the liturgy. This multiformity of the Eastern liturgies does not harm the unity of the Church at all, but rather reinforces it, allowing it to sink its roots in the concrete reality of a determined time and space.

The prayer of the Churches of the East is strongly communitarian: their liturgy leads the faithful not only to seek refuge and protection in the Lord, but also to be united to his flock²² and thus to be integrated in the assembly, to take an active part there, according to their appropriate rank, to feel the presence of the whole communion of saints, who are themselves summoned for songs of praise and invocation.

In addition, the liturgical life remains more essentially in the center of ecclesial concerns, expresses the faith and its content and at the same time guides the spiritual life of the believers. This has been made especially evident when many Eastern Churches, oppressed by persecutory regimes, were able to survive and even strengthen themselves despite having to limit the extent of their own spiritual and pastoral action only to liturgical celebration, from which the people in a certain sense drew upon the life-giving substance of their faith.

16. The liturgical heritage in the Eastern Catholic Churches as a source of identity

The Eastern Catholic Churches, although having been influenced by the weight of Western tradition, have maintained in the field of liturgy a more faithful conformity to their true traditions. It is precisely their liturgies, restored to greater authenticity and vitality by eliminating that which has altered them, that could be the best starting point for a growth of their specific identity, from which could be drawn words and gestures capable of touching the hearts and illuminating the minds of their faithful in the present time.

The preservation of the liturgical riches will be more fruitful the more they are determined not only by normative intervention by the

²² Cf. Prayer to make a catechumen in the Byzantine tradition.

Hierarchy, but also by the spontaneous and faithful adhesion of the Christian people, so educated by their pastors. It is important to recall that in these times pastors should be, also in this field, true models of the flock, so that its traditional fidelity may be maintained. Also of great significance will be the desirable presence of monastic communities, alive and attentive to relish and present the unfathomable riches of the heritage received from the traditions of their respective Churches: "In fact, in the East an intrinsic link exists between liturgical prayer, spiritual tradition and monastic life. For this reason precisely, a well-trained and motivated renewal of monastic life could mean true ecclesial fruitfulness for them as well. Nor should it be thought that this would diminish the effectiveness of the pastoral ministry which in fact will be strengthened by such a vigorous spirituality, and thus will find once more its ideal place"²³.

17. The importance of Tradition in the liturgy

Such a heritage of faith is received through Tradition, which guarantees its continuity and authenticity throughout time, ever since antiquity and especially since the testimony of the Apostles. It is received with open heart, maintained, transmitted, taught, confirmed, and clarified by the Holy Spirit. It is an intangible divine deposit, whose explication is dynamic, in a fraternal exchange with the other Churches, where universality is established through diversification and adaptability. Applied to liturgy, Tradition has shown an extraordinary vitality in the Eastern Churches: the prayer of the Church has journeyed constantly, even if imperceptibly, not only on the basis of reforms from above - which have occurred very seldomly - but precisely on the basis of this living Tradition.

18. Liturgical reform and renewal

The first requirement of every Eastern liturgical renewal, as is also the case for liturgical reform in the West, is that of rediscovering full

²³ JOHN PAUL II, Ap. Lett. *Oriente Lumen* (2 May 1995), 27: AAS 87 (1995) 773.

fidelity to their own liturgical traditions, benefiting from their riches and eliminating that which has altered their authenticity. Such heedfulness is not subordinate to but precedes so-called updating. Although a delicate task that must be executed with care so as not to disturb souls, it must be coherently and constantly pursued if the Eastern Catholic Churches want to remain faithful to the mandate received. It is once again John Paul II who declares: "If, therefore, you must trim extraneous forms and developments, deriving from various influences that come from liturgical and paraliturgical traditions foreign to your tradition, it is possible that, so doing, you will have to also correct some popular habits"²⁴.

We are witness today to the diffusion of a mentality that tends to overvalue efficiency, excessive activism, and the attainment of results with minimum effort and without deep personal involvement. This attitude can also negatively influence the approach towards liturgy, even in the East. The liturgy, rather, continues to be a demanding school which requires an assimilation that is progressive, laborious, and never completely accomplished. Monastic communities are particularly sensitive to this dimension and, therefore, can make an important contribution to the full comprehension and progress of the liturgical heritage. From this arises the opportunity to involve in this common responsibility, wherever possible, masculine and feminine monastic communities belonging to the same tradition.

These considerations do not take away from the rightful exigency to express, as much as possible, the Gospel in a plain and clear way for the contemporary man and woman. Every formula necessitates, therefore, unceasing vigilance to remain alive under the breath of the Spirit. But Tradition, even in its literal expression - as is the case for Scriptures - contains unrenouncable treasures; its strengths are received, assimilated, and utilized to transmit to mankind the fullness of the Mystery of God. Indeed, it is about words of fire, just like the Word of God which is sharper than a two-edged sword and penetrates to the division of soul and spirit (cf. Heb. 4:12). The fact that they are constantly repeated in the liturgy should not take anything away from their vigor and perennial timeliness.

²⁴ JOHN PAUL II, Discourse to the participants of the Synod of the Catholic Armenian Patriarch (26 August 1989): *L'Osservatore Romano*, 27 August 1989, p. 7; see also in *Servizio Informazioni per le Chiese Orientali*, supplement to nn. 485-556, p. 42.

19. *Study and profundity prior to every modification*

It is indispensable to remember the exhortation in n. 23 of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy: "In order that sound tradition be retained, and yet the way remain open to legitimate progress, the revision of any part of the liturgy should occur only after careful investigation - theological, historical, and pastoral". Indeed, the liturgical reform desired by the Second Vatican Council was able to be carried out precisely because it was preceded, and successfully followed, by lengthy experimentation, intense historical studies, critical textual analyses, theological studies, biblical studies, and pastoral studies, culminating in the work of individual and committee research, both at the local and international level. Without all this, the references, frameworks, and precise contents necessary for a valid endeavor would not have been obtained.

20. *Criteria for liturgical renewal*

In modifying ancient liturgical practice, it must be determined if the element to be introduced is coherent with the contextual meaning in which it is placed. Such a context should be understood beginning with eventual references to Sacred Scripture, interpretations of the Holy Fathers, liturgical reforms previously made, and mystagogical catechesis. Here it must be verified that the new change is homogeneous with the symbolic language, with the images and the style specific to the liturgy of the particular Church. The new element will have its place if, required for serious pastoral reasons, it blends within the celebration without contrast but with coherence, almost as if it had naturally derived from it. In addition, it should be ensured that it is not already present, perhaps in another form, in a different moment of the celebration or in another part of the liturgical *corpus* of that Church.

Every renewal initiative should be careful not to be conditioned by other systems, which may appear to be more efficient. From time to time, addressing the faithful of various Eastern Catholic Churches, John Paul II's vibrant and repeated exhortations refer to such caution: "Do not adhere with excessive improvisation to the imitation of cultures and traditions which are not your own, thus betraying the sensibility of your own people. (...) This means it is necessary that every eventual adaptation of your liturgy be founded on an attentive study of the

sources, objective knowledge of the specific features of your culture, and maintenance of the tradition common to all Coptic Christianity"²⁵.

21. *The ecumenical value of the common liturgical heritage*

Among the important missions entrusted especially to the Eastern Catholic Churches, *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* (n. 24) and the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches (can. 903), as well as the Ecumenical Directory (n. 39), underscore the need to promote union with the Eastern Churches that are not yet in full communion with the See of Peter, indicating the conditions: religious fidelity to the ancient traditions of the Eastern Churches, better knowledge of one another, and collaboration and fraternal respect of persons and things. These are important principles for the orientation of the ecclesiastical life of every single Eastern Catholic community and are of eminent value in the celebrations of divine worship, because it is precisely thus that the Eastern Catholic and the Orthodox Churches have more integrally maintained the same heritage.

In every effort of liturgical renewal, therefore, the practice of the Orthodox brethren should be taken into account, knowing it, respecting it and distancing from it as little as possible so as not to increase the existing separation, but rather intensifying efforts in view of eventual adaptations, maturing and working together. Thus will be manifested the unity that already subsists in daily receiving the same spiritual nourishment from practicing the same common heritage²⁶.

²⁵ JOHN PAUL II, Homily in the Prayer of incense in the Alexandrian-Coptic rite (14 August 1988): *L'Osservatore Romano*, 16-17 August 1988, p. 5; see also in *Servizio Informazioni per le Chiese Orientali*, supplement to nn. 485-556, p. 24.

²⁶ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Discourse to participants of the meeting about the pastoral problems of the Catholic Church of the Byzantine rite in Romania (22 January 1994): *L'Osservatore Romano*, 22 January 1994, p. 5; see also in *Servizio Informazioni per le Chiese Orientali* 49 (1994) 2.

CHAPTER IV

COMPETENCIES AND COMPONENTS OF LITURGICAL LEGISLATION

22. *Competencies for regulating worship*

Reference to can. 657, can. 668 § 2 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches indicates the competent authority for the regulation of public divine worship. In the patriarchal Churches, this is the Patriarch with the consent of the Synod of Bishops (which should occur in collaboration with the liturgical Commission of the patriarchal Church²⁷). Be it noted that which is established concerning patriarchal Churches is also applicable, from can. 152 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, to the major archiepiscopal Churches. In the metropolitan Churches *sui iuris*, the competent authority is the Metropolitan with the consent of the Council of Hierarchs. Both cases require prior review by the Apostolic See. In all the other Churches, the competent authority is exclusively the Apostolic See and, within the limits established by it, the Bishops and their legitimately constituted *coetus* (can. 657 § 1). Other canons of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches indicate the framework of the common norms which regulate the entire liturgical life in the Eastern Churches.

23. *The role of the Bishop*

The coordination of the liturgical roles, entrusted to the authority of the Church, is made explicit by the current legislation in can. 199 § 1 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, which indicates the role of "the eparchial Bishop as the moderator, promoter and guardian of the entire liturgical life of the eparchy". Similar commitment is asked, in other canons, of his collaborators: protopresbyters (can. 278 § 1), parish priests (can. 289 § 2), and church rectors (can. 309).

²⁷ Cf. CCEO cann. 114 § 1 and 124.

The task of the Bishop is to be vigilant that the liturgical life "be fostered as much as possible and ordered according to the prescriptions and legitimate customs of his own Church *sui iuris*" (can. 199 § 1). The Bishop, therefore, does not act solely based on its own judgment nor based on the local customs, but refers to the specific heritage of his own Church *sui iuris*. In this way, the authority of the individual Bishops becomes participation in a greater authority which regulates the liturgical life of their own Church *sui iuris*.

In exercising his mandate as moderator of the liturgical life, the Bishop should neither act arbitrarily nor give way to the behavior of groups or factions, but, together with his clergy, let him be an attentive guardian of the liturgical awareness present and operating in the living memory of the people of God entrusted to him. Just as the *sensus fidelium* is determinant of the comprehension of the faith believed, so is it in the safeguarding of the faith celebrated. The people, from their part, must be faithful to the indications of the pastor and endeavor to understand them in depth and realize his mandate. To promote a better understanding and celebration of the liturgy, eparchial liturgical commissions of experts should be formed. Of great importance in the liturgical maturation of the people of God will be authentic communities of Eastern monks and nuns, places where, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, the Mystery daily celebrated in faith is lived in fullness.

24. *The role of the Apostolic See*

The Apostolic See has intended to exercise an important role in the preservation and harmonious development of the liturgical practices in the Eastern Catholic Churches. This has been realized in the various ways which have progressively flowed together in the activity of the Commission, created in 1717 and operational in the heart of the Congregation for the Propagation of Faith (*Propaganda Fide*) until 1862, for the correction of the liturgical books of the Church of the East. These interventions felt the effects of the mentality and convictions of the times, according to which a certain subordination of the non-Latin liturgies was perceived toward the Latin-rite liturgy which was considered "ritus praestantior". This attitude may have led to interventions in the Eastern liturgical texts which today, in light of theological studies and progress,

have need of revision, in the sense of a return to ancestral traditions²⁸. The work of the commissions, nevertheless, availing themselves of the best experts of the times, succeeded in safeguarding a major part of the Eastern heritage, often defending it against aggressive initiatives and publishing precious editions of liturgical texts for numerous Eastern Churches. Today, particularly after the solemn declarations of the Apostolic Letter *Orientalium Dignitas* by Leo XIII, after the creation of the still active special Commission for the liturgy within the Congregation for the Eastern Churches in 1931, and above all after the Second Vatican Council and the Apostolic Letter *Oriente Lumen* by John Paul II, respect for the Eastern liturgies is an indisputable attitude and the Apostolic See can offer a more complete service to the Churches.

If the solicitude of the Apostolic See for the liturgical life of the Eastern Churches has often been revealed beneficial in the past, it appears likewise indispensable in the precarious situations in which not a few of the Eastern Churches also find themselves today. The fundamental importance of the liturgy as divine-human action which realizes salvation *hic et nunc* and its nature as the privileged place which preserves and expresses the *depositum fidei* are precisely that which motivates the function of guardianship and protection, even of Eastern liturgical practices, which the Apostolic See continues to perform: it is a question of guaranteeing and defending the faith in one of its most important expressions. Such conviction motivated the formulation of can. 657 § 1 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches which reserves the approval of liturgical texts to the Apostolic See for non-patriarchal and non-metropolitan Churches *sui iuris* and requires a prior review by it for the patriarchal and metropolitan Churches. Such revision obviously applies to all that concerns liturgical celebrations.

25. *Competencies for the approval of the translations of liturgical books*

Through the centuries various circumstances have provoked important changes in the area of language. Within the Eastern territories themselves, the original languages have been slowly but profoundly transformed, sometimes having even disappeared and been replaced by

²⁸ Cf. VATICAN COUNCIL II, Decr. on the Catholic Eastern Churches *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, 6.

others. In other cases, many of the faithful of the Eastern Churches have left their land of origin and established themselves elsewhere, living next to Christians educated in different traditions; with the passing of time, they have been inserted in the cultural context of the place where they were located. They have often lost the knowledge and use of their original languages, rendering the participation in the liturgy of their own Church more difficult. Therefore, to prevent this difficulty, ever since ancient times the Eastern Churches have often taken measures to translate their own liturgical texts into languages understood by the faithful.

Can. 657 § 2 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches specifies that the right to approve the versions of the books is up to the competent authority for the approval of the liturgical books themselves, after having sent a report to the Apostolic See in the case of patriarchal and metropolitan Churches *sui iuris*.

The multiplication of eparchies or churches *sui iuris* of the same liturgical families that use the same language, sometimes within the same territory, normally requires that standard translations be used. The competent authorities should agree among themselves to obtain this uniformity.

26. *Components of liturgical legislation*

Referring to liturgical legislation, can. 3 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches concerns the prescriptions of liturgical books. Besides these, the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches mentions other norms of liturgical nature emanating from the competent authority of the Churches *sui iuris* and not included in the liturgical books, such as regulations (can. 668), prescriptions of the Churches *sui iuris* (can. 199), and liturgical laws (can. 150 § 2). All these prescriptions, those of universal as well as particular legislation, have the force of law. Regarding the latter, can. 3 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches insists on the obligation to diligently observe them.

27. *The complexity of particular liturgical legislation*

For a wise and realistic interpretation of the particular prescriptions, it is necessary to take into account the fact that, except for the organic whole in which they are inserted, they do not always constitute a totality

that is entirely homogeneous. In fact, various norms, as much those about liturgical books as others, have been diversified, being adapted to the specific requirements of the different environments and contexts. The result has been that, in view of the different situations, diverse and even contradictory orientations can result. The competent authorities for regulating liturgical life have the duty to examine them closely in light of the above-mentioned general principles, at the same time accounting for coherence with the original traditions and the new demands of the current context. It is a delicate task for which research and studies should be encouraged to discover theological as well as pastoral significance.

28. *Custom*

Can. 1508 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, similar to can. 27 of the Code of Canon Law, affirms that custom is the best interpreter of laws, while cann. 1507 and 1509 explain the rules for applying it. As can. 1507 specifies, custom is the fruit of the continuous and uncontested practice of the local community, precious because it is rooted in the life of the people. Also concerning this subject, a wise discernment will be necessary to preserve that which is most valid and stimulating for a true Christian flourishing and to intervene in that which is superfluous or less suitable to the particular genuine traditions.

29. *Liturgical books and ecumenism*

Can. 656 § 1 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches affirms that the only books to be used in liturgical celebrations are those which have received ecclesiastical approval. Although an obvious principle, some practical difficulties are encountered. In fact, some Eastern Catholic Churches lack their own editions of liturgical books, or at least some, and must use editions, which objectively speaking are sometimes very well done, used by the corresponding Orthodox Churches. Such use occurs with the tacit approval of the Apostolic See or the local Authority. This necessity, each case being examined with prudence, may prove itself a valuable custom, as a manifestation of the partial but deep and extensive communion existing till today between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches which come from a common trunk, and may serve as a dynamic seed for the recovery of full communion. On the other

hand, quite a number of editions of liturgical books published in Rome are sometimes appreciated and used by Orthodox brethren. Nonetheless, any unnecessary differentiation between the liturgical books of the Eastern Catholic Churches and those of the Orthodox should be avoided. Rather, common editions, in the measure in which it is possible, are encouraged. Pope John Paul II affirms, in the occasion of his address to the Catholics of the Armenian Church, "It is particularly dear to me to wish that the common study of the liturgy and its necessary adaptations be a privileged field of collaboration between Armenian Catholics and Orthodox"²⁹.

Such a wish is repeated anew in the general terms of the Ecumenical Directory n. 187 which exhorts the use of liturgical texts in common with other Churches or ecclesial Communities, because "when Christians pray together, with one voice, their common testimony reaches the heavens and is understood also on earth".

30. *Catechetical directories and liturgy: catechesis and mystagogy*

Can. 621 §§ 1 and 2 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches addresses the catechetical Directories that need to be elaborated in the patriarchal and metropolitan Churches: it requires that the special character of the Eastern Churches be taken into account in such a way that the catechetical teaching emphasizes the importance of the Bible and the liturgy as well as the traditions of each Church *sui iuris* in patrology, hagiography, and iconography. It is reiterated that in the East, as is also recommended in the Western Church today, catechesis cannot be separated from liturgy, since the former takes inspiration from the latter, as the mystery of Christ celebrated *in actu*. Such is the method adopted by numerous Fathers of the Church in the formation of the faithful. It is expressed as "catechesis" for the catechumens and "mystagogy" or "catechetical mystagogy" for the initiates in the divine Mysteries. In this way the faithful are continuously guided toward the joyful rediscovery of the Word and of the death and resurrection of their Lord to whom the Spirit of the Father introduced them. By understanding what they

²⁹ JOHN PAUL II, Homily during the Divine Liturgy in the Armenian rite (21 November 1987): *L'Osservatore Romano*, 23-24 November 1987, p. 6; see also in *Servizio Informazioni per le Chiese Orientali*, supplement to nn. 485-556, p. 6.

celebrate and from the full assimilation of what they have celebrated, they draw a plan for life: mystagogy is thus the content of their existence, redeemed, sanctified, and on the path of divinization and, as such, is the foundation of spirituality and morals. Therefore, it is urged that the catechetical process of the individual Eastern Catholic Churches concretely have as a starting point their own specific liturgical celebrations.

CHAPTER V

THE LITURGICAL CELEBRATION AS AN ICON OF THE CHURCH

31. *The Church, assembly at prayer*

The book of the Acts of the Apostles describes the life of the first Christians: "They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to prayers (...). All who believed were together and had all things in common (...). Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple" (Acts 2: 42,44,46). In these passages can be recognized characteristic traits of liturgical worship, reaching out to listen to the Word of God announced by the Apostles and to sing divine praises in the midst of the assembly (cf. Heb. 2:12), especially forming the Body of Christ, the "one Bread" out of many, through the communal participation in the breaking of the Bread and in the Cup of blessing (cf. 1 Cor. 10:16-17), the supreme sacramental sign until the consummation of time.

From this emerges the communal aspect of an assembly gathered around the Apostles, ministers of the New Alliance, who reveal the fulfillment of the promises in the person of Christ crucified and risen. In the post-apostolic period, Ignatius of Antioch presents the same vision of the Church at prayer: "As the Lord did nothing without the Father, wither by himself or through the Apostles (for he was united with him), so you must do nothing without the bishop and the presbyters... run together as to one temple of God, as to one altar, to one Jesus Christ, who came forth from one Father and remained with the One and returned to the One"³⁰.

Even if in the East, eremitical monasticism has flourished and continues to flourish, the communitarian nature of prayer is nonetheless a fundamental aspect of Eastern spirituality: the faithful situates their spiritual lives in the liturgical activity. This characteristic should be maintained and revived in the heart of Christians, also to avoid the

³⁰ IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH, *Letter to the Magnesians* VII, 1-2: *SCh* 10 A, 84-86 (English translation from *The Apostolic Fathers*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1992², 95).

infiltration in the faithful of the search for spirituality which is often foreign to their own traditions and sometimes even to the Christian faith.

32. *The Eucharist makes the Church*

Liturgical prayer certainly conforms and perfectly expresses the authentic deposit of faith, according to the ancient expression of the *Indiculus: legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi*³¹, commonly synthesized as *lex orandi lex credendi*. The Church, therefore, understands herself in depth precisely starting from her nature as a celebrating assembly. In this sense, it should not be forgotten that, if the Church makes the Eucharist, the Eucharist makes the Church to the point of becoming the criterion of conformity for the same right doctrine, as Irenaeus of Lyon reminds us: "Our thought is in full accord with the Eucharist and Eucharist, in its turn, confirms our thought"³².

33. *The active participation of the faithful*

The apostle Paul exhorts the Romans to direct spiritual worship to God, offering themselves as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God (cf. Rom. 12:1). The apostle Peter makes the same admonition when he writes that we are "living stones for the construction of a spiritual house, for a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Pt 2:5). To offer together worship that is pleasing to God through the Son in the Holy Spirit is, therefore, at the same time both a right and a duty of the baptized. Thus, awareness must be formed in the faithful and the method and necessary space must be arranged in order that this participation be complete and thus active, full, devout, intelligent and fruitful. Care must be taken to ensure that, after an attentive historical examination of the rites, the parts which in the course of time have been inappropriately taken from the people are restored to them. Those who are entrusted with a ministry (presbyters, deacons, lectors, cantors, commentators, the choir, etc.) should not, in

³¹ *Indiculus* chap. 8: DS 246/139. Cf. also PROSPERO OF AQUITANIA, *De vocatione omnium gentium* I, 12: PL 51, 664 C.

³² IRAENEUS OF LYON, *Against heresies* IV, 18, 5: SCh 100, 610.

fact, substitute but rather guide the whole assembly, in such a way that it can also externally express its participation as it should. However, giving to the people parts which are specifically the competencies of the holy ministries is to be avoided.

34. *The liturgical assemblies are hierarchically ordered*

Liturgical assemblies must be ordered. This was a precise norm of the Old Testament, as had already been delineated especially in Leviticus and in the book of Numbers, and raised to an apostolic precept by St. Paul: "Everything must be done properly and in order" (1 Cor. 14:40) when the assembly gathers for celebration. Just as the first Christians listened to the Apostles, so their successors the Bishops guided the gatherings of prayer, personally or through presbyters or deacons. As to the content of the celebrations, it was determined in part by the formulas and rites inherited from the past - from the Old Testament and from the Judaic tradition -, understood in light of Christian Revelation; and in part by subsequent creations compiled by either the authors of the New Testament, or by successive authors, but always verified by authority and by the *sensus fidei* of the Christian people.

Can. 7 § 1 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches reminds us that all the Christian faithful participate in the priestly function of Christ, and are all, therefore, deputed for the celebration of divine worship. In addition, can. 17 affirms: "The Christian faithful have the right to worship God according to the prescriptions of their own Church *sui iuris*, and to follow their own form of spiritual life consonant with the teaching of the Church". However, each of the faithful participates in the divine worship in a way proper to each: assemblies of worship are thus composed of different parts just as the body is composed of different members which constitute, all together, a single living being (cf. 1 Cor. 12:12-31). In this way the entire body of the liturgical assembly, well coordinated and connected through the collaboration of every joint, according to the particular power of each member, can grow and attain to the unity of faith and knowledge of Christ, avoiding the risk of being carried here and there by every wind of doctrine (cf. Eph. 4:13-16).

CHAPTER VI

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS ON DIVINE WORSHIP AND THE SACRAMENTS

35. *Elements of liturgical life*

Every day, in more ways and in different moments, the liturgy "daily builds up those who are in the Church, making of them a holy temple of the Lord, a dwelling-place for God in the Spirit"³³. The sacraments are fundamental moments in the liturgical life. However, they are not isolated, but rather are inserted in the context which prepares for them and extends their action and efficiency. Prayer, which illumines the various parts of the day and the cycles of the year, is very important. In the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, it assumes the name of "Divine Praises" and entails supplication and listening to the Word of God, in addition to praise. The daily Divine Praises have the function of making divine grace, which flows from the Pascal Mystery celebrated *par excellence* in the Eucharist, shine in every moment of the day. Other elements include the sacred buildings, with the architectural arrangement, fixtures, furnishings, sacred icons, and also how the ceremonies of the various functions occur.

36. *The liturgical year*

The cycle of the annual feasts, the one that revolves around Easter as the center and the one which articulates itself in the monthly feasts, the weekly and daily cycle, and the same cycle of the events of life marked by the sacraments penetrate and sustain each other, constituting a marvelous plan which renders the various moments of the history of salvation present and permeates the entire spiritual life of the faithful. The calendar of the various Eastern Churches is thus articulated, characterized by a wise, spiritual harmony.

³³ VATICAN COUNCIL II, Const. on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 2.

In addition to Sundays and the annual feast of Easter, other feasts are celebrated with more emphasis in all Eastern Churches. Can. 880 § 1 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches specifies that their constitution, their transferal or their suppression depends only on the supreme authority of the Church. To constitute, transfer or suppress feast days belongs to the respective authority which is competent to establish particular laws, always taking into account the obligation to guard the proper patrimony and not allow changes to be made except by reason of its organic progress³⁴.

There are more important feasts which are considered holy days of obligation, some of which are common to all the Eastern Churches³⁵. On these feasts, the Christian faithful are bound by obligation to participate in the divine worship and to abstain from the activities which might impede such participation³⁶.

In addition to feast days, and usually in preparation for their celebration, days of penance must also be observed³⁷, during which the Christian faithful are obliged to observe the fast and abstinence in the manner established by the particular law of their Church *sui iuris*³⁸.

If in recent times, feasts or fasts coming from the Latin liturgy or from other incongruous liturgies have been introduced in the calendars of the Eastern Catholic Churches, necessary steps should be taken, with pastoral prudence, to restore the calendar to its traditional structure, eliminating the elements incompatible with the spirit and features of the Eastern heritage.

Until the time in which all Christians reach the desired agreement of fixing one day for the common celebration of the Easter feast, the practice, already in use among some Catholic communities living in countries of Orthodox majority, will be encouraged to celebrate Easter on the day in which it is celebrated by the Orthodox, in conformity with the indications formulated by Vatican Council II in the appendix of the *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and in *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* n. 20. In addition to being a sign of ecumenical fraternity, this practice allows the

³⁴ Cf. CCEO can. 880 § 2, which refers to can. 40 § 1.

³⁵ Cf. can. 880 § 3 of the CCEO which lists them all.

³⁶ Cf. CCEO can. 881.

³⁷ Cf. CCEO can. 880 §§ 1-2.

³⁸ Cf. CCEO can. 882.

Catholic faithful to enter harmoniously in the common spiritual climate, which often also marks civilian life, avoiding inappropriate dissonance.

37. Directed toward relation with the Lord Jesus

In the study and mystagogy of the people about the sacraments, as in all liturgical celebrations of the Church, the principal norm is always to find the functional and indispensable connection with Christ the Lord. In the various moments of the liturgical year, the principal events of the history of salvation are evoked: those of the Old Testament which find their fulfillment in him, those of the New Testament which cover the whole life of Christ while he lived among mankind, giving the commandments of salvation to them and guiding them to the knowledge of the true God³⁹, and those of the time of the Church during which the Lord continues to accomplish marvels in his saints. This is valid in a particular way for the sacraments in which, in various ways, he purifies us in water, sanctifies us in the Spirit and, in the mystery of his Body and his Blood, has left us a memorial of his passion for our salvation.

38. The relation between liturgy and devotions

The Eastern Churches have traditionally always known how to integrate into their liturgies various elements which respond to the sensibility of the spirit of the peoples. They have their own devotional forms and formulas, less precise, more individual and probably easier, such as exclamatory prayers, celebration of the divine office with their own particular content, veneration of the most Holy Cross, of icons, of relics, of sanctuaries, the use of candles, incensing, and sometimes even the offering of animals; but these manifestations of piety have usually remained linked with the liturgical life, finding their inspiration there and, to a certain extent, their context in it. This is probably the reason for which other devotions have generally not been developed in parallel to the official worship, as in the West. The Eastern Catholic Churches, nevertheless, have received quite a number of devotions specific to the Latin Church, thus not belonging to the traditional structure of Eastern

³⁹ Cf. Byzantine Anaphora of Saint Basil.

worship. It is not good that the particular devotions, which contribute to the spiritual life of the faithful, turn out to be extraneous to the heritage of each Church: if, therefore, they develop independently from this patrimony, they could give rise to "parallel" forms of spirituality. But since these devotions are by now much diffused in the Eastern Catholic Churches and, in fact, feed and comfort their faithful, it would be seriously imprudent and a sign of pastoral insensitivity to believe that they must simply be eradicated. The authorities of the Churches *sui iuris* are to concretely promote an authentic mystagogical formation of the faithful and, in the first place, of the ministers, toward a spirituality that flows from their own liturgical traditions. Enriched by a better formation, the faithful will gradually become more capable of living and rediscovering the riches of their own liturgy. Such pastoral action should take inspiration from the recommendation in n. 13 of the conciliar Constitution on the sacred liturgy: "Popular devotions of the Christian people (...) should be so drawn up that they harmonize with the liturgical seasons, accord with the sacred liturgy, are in some way derived from it, and lead the people to it, since in fact the liturgy by its very nature is far superior to any of them".

In any event, it should be kept in mind that which has been established by can. 656 § 2: "Books of prayers or devotions, intended for either the public or the private use of the Christian faithful, are to have ecclesiastical permission."

39. *Conciliar prescriptions on the sacraments*

Concerned for the safekeeping and flourishing of the precious Eastern traditions, "the holy ecumenical council confirms and approves the ancient discipline concerning the sacraments which exist in the Eastern Churches, and also the ritual observed in their celebration and administration, and wishes this to be restored where such a case arises"⁴⁰. Numbers 13-18 of the *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* specify more urgent prescriptions which can and must serve as the model for the criteria to use in other cases. This has been realized at least partially in the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches on the level of universal

⁴⁰ VATICAN COUNCIL II, Decr. on the Catholic Eastern Churches *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, 12.

law, but must still be clarified, especially on the particular level, by the authorities of the different Churches *sui iuris*.

The Council, in particular, is not satisfied to just confirm and praise the ancient discipline enforced by the Eastern Churches but desires it to be re-established in the places where it has weakened or fallen away. Therefore, in reviewing their own law, the different Churches *sui iuris* must take into account this desire and courageously undertake, even if cautiously and gradually, the recuperation of the elements that have been lost, changing, if necessary, the most recent practice and laws, in such places where these may be in dissonance with the principles established, even if it means modifying decisions made by Synods or taking distance from indications given, in other times and for various reasons, by the Congregations of the Apostolic See.

40. *The sacraments, actions of the Church*

The Church in which God reveals himself constitutes, in some way, the sacrament from which the individual sacraments are derived. According to can. 673, the celebration of the sacraments is an action of the Church, that is, of the assembly of all the members of the people of God, of the Body of Christ "joined and held together by every supporting ligament, with the proper functioning of each part" (Eph. 4:16). This entails an active participation in the celebration by all the faithful. It is important that this participation of all the members of the people of God in the dynamic of the celebration be accomplished and manifested always in the celebration of the sacraments, which are the culminating actions of the life of the Church.

41. *The creation as sacrament*

Can. 667 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches affirms that the Church has the obligation to dispense the sacraments "so that the mystery of Christ is communicated under a visible sign", for in them "our Lord Jesus Christ sanctifies people by the power of the Holy Spirit, so that they become in a unique way true worshipers of God the Father and by which they are inserted into the Church, His Body". The sacraments thus communicate, above all, the mysteries of Christ, which means all that he accomplished on earth to carry out the plan hidden

from ages past in God who created the universe (cf. Eph. 3:9-11) "to sum up all things in Christ, in heaven and on earth" (Eph. 1:10), and render us "holy and without blemish before him in love" (Eph. 1:4-5).

The mysteries of Christ are communicated to us through visible signs. The sacraments are, therefore, the place in which created things are assumed in order to give thanks to God and thus reach the fullness of their meaning. The economy of divine grace dispensed to mankind is accomplished by deeds and words (cf. Acts 1:1), increasing the value of the "cosmic elements": the human body above all; then water, oil, bread, and wine; the instruments such as the Eucharistic cup; the sacred building with all that it represents and encloses within it, especially the cross and the holy icons; sacred places and times. Such elements are taken up by the Lord Jesus through the Holy Spirit, recapitulated by him and entrusted to the Church as instruments of salvific sacramentality. In fact, the grace of the Holy Spirit makes use of these for the redemption and sanctification of mankind and the cosmos (cf. Rom. 8:16-25) and for rendering the Father worship that is worthy. It is in this context that the liturgical gestures and benedictions acquire all their meaning. In the theology of the liturgy, and thus in the mystagogy of the people, all these are necessarily important material for reflection and explanation.

CHAPTER VII

THE SACRAMENTS OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION

42. The link between the sacraments of Initiation

An indication given by the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches that differs from the frequent use and even from the particular legislation of the last centuries is the affirmation of the strict link existing between the three sacraments of Christian Initiation, which also must result in the way of celebrating them. Initiation is, in reality, the one and indivisible celebration of the entrance into the life of Christ, into the community that lives in him. This entrance, initiated with the first call to the faith, reaches its culminating point in the Pascal Mystery of Christ, in whose death we are immersed to be raised in his resurrection which renders us children of God and the temple of the Spirit. "Anointed" by the Spirit for the work of the Kingdom, we are thus rendered fit to participate in the banquet of the Kingdom. This is the motivating factor in the composition of cann. 695 and 697 which prescribe the administration of the three sacraments of Baptism, Chrismation with the holy Myron, and Holy Communion in conjunction with or at least one not long after another.

According to the doctrine and practice of the ancient Church, inspired by the New Testament, the faithful who received the eschatological gift of the Spirit of the Risen accepted that the same Spirit operate in his or her person the assimilation to Christ the Lord. The baptismal rebirth as children of God, inheritors of the Kingdom, justified, redeemed and sanctified, entailed the full entrance into the people of God. The ultimate "sign" of this event was the admission to the banquet of the Kingdom. That indivisible sacrament was, therefore, necessarily conferred, with the most coherence, in a single celebrative context.

From this moment, the faithful were thus inserted into the people of God, with all the titles and functions that their new life in Christ and in the Spirit entailed, without exclusion. One celebration, therefore, because it was one, indivisible work of the Spirit of the Father and of the Son.

Such usage was practiced in the life of all the Churches in the first centuries⁴¹.

For historical and cultural reasons, such practices were abandoned by the Western Church, and the baptismal initiation was conferred to children in various successive moments. However, the ancient use was maintained intact and uninterrupted in the East. This link is so strong that, in quite a number of contexts, the term "Baptism" usually implies all three of the phases of Christian Initiation: this is the title attributed to them in many manuscript or printed euchologies.

This practice was changed during the last centuries in different Eastern Catholic Churches under external pressure, based on spiritual and pastoral meanings altered by Latins, comprehensible but extraneous to the organic progress and not in line with the dynamism of the Eastern patrimony. In places where the traditional practice has been lost, the application of the norms prescribed in the content of the Code will require a true reform, analogous to that which the conciliar Constitution on the sacred liturgy required for the Latin liturgy. Though without acting hastily, an in-depth study of the ancient practice, obtained from related manuscripts and printed texts which have been published by Eastern Catholics and also by Orthodox, should first be prepared. The practice still in use by the Orthodox should also be taken into account. The necessary instruction should be provided so that the motivations can be understood by all: clergy, theologians, and the Christian people. While the restored practice is being introduced, care should be taken to not interrupt the necessary, progressive catechesis of newly initiated children, as soon as they are ready to approach the comprehension of the mysteries of the faith, and to continue until they reach maturity. The participation by children in the brief but regular moments of the liturgical celebrations is already in itself a precious element of catechesis, because it introduces them concretely into the life of the Church, with an initiation that is not so much notionalistic nor rational but efficient, inserting them in a celebrative climate where the gestures introduce them into the invisible reality. The whole process will also require a creative effort to adequately connect the new practice in the context of the current

⁴¹ Cf. for example, the *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus (*SCh* 11) around the year 217; likewise the baptismal catecheses of the Fathers of the East and of the West and the subsequent mystagogical catecheses.

life. Though not an easy intervention, it is indispensable in order to truly revitalize one's own heritage, to the benefit of the universal Church.

43. *The theological meaning of the sacraments of Initiation*

In Baptism, the person is freed from sin, reborn to new life, re-clothed in Christ and incorporated in the Church⁴². In Chrismation with the holy Myron, he or she is signed with the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit⁴³. The full initiation is made final by the reception of the Eucharist, a sacrament not only of the communion of the individual with Christ, Head of the Mystical Body, but also of the communion among all the faithful, members of the Body who live the new life in Him. The nourishment of the Body and the Blood of the incarnated Word brings the Christian to perfection, in such a way that it is no longer he that lives but Christ who lives in him (cf. Gal. 2:20). The sacramental celebration of Christian Initiation is the visible gesture which confers the gift of benevolence offered by the heavenly Father to mankind in his incarnated Son, and communicates eternal life to whoever listens to the word of Christ and believes in Him who sent him (cf. Jn. 5:24).

44. *The importance of the preparation for Baptism and the role of the sponsor*

Baptism is a sacrament granted to those who believe and want to adhere to Christ. All Christian rituals, Eastern as well as Western, prescribe that prior to administering it, a preparation is required in which both the journey of the candidate toward the Lord and - immediately before the Baptism - his or her adhesion to Christ and corresponding renunciation of Satan and forces of evil are expressed. Of prime example are the baptismal homilies of Saint John Chrysostom or of his contemporary, Mar Theodore of Mopsuestia, which emphasize the urgency of this dimension of initiation into the mysteries of Christ.

The ritual formulas that express this attitude must correspond to the actual dispositions of the candidates, either of their own persons in the

⁴² Cf. CCEO can. 675 § 1.

⁴³ Cf. CCEO can. 692.

case of adults⁴⁴, or of those who assume the responsibility and will ensure a Christian education in the case of infants⁴⁵.

Corresponding to the same concern, "according to the most ancient tradition of the Churches the person who is to be baptized should have at least one sponsor", who has the obligation to present the candidate and make efforts such that, after Initiation, the baptized person may be ready to "lead a Christian life in harmony with baptism and to fulfill faithfully the obligations connected with it" (can. 684).

To guarantee all this, can. 686 § 2 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches underscores the requirement of a congruent preparation when it states: "The pastor is to see that the parents of the infant to be baptized and those who are given the function of sponsor, be instructed as to the meaning of this sacrament and the obligations connected with it and that they are prepared for an appropriate celebration of the sacrament". It would also be beneficial to become informed about the solutions that other Churches⁴⁶ have adopted in order to guarantee the seriousness of the conversion required by Christian Initiation.

45. *To distinguish the phases of the rite of Baptism*

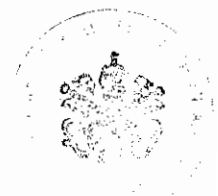
Christian Initiation is a process of conversion, punctuated by some ritual moments which realize the wise pedagogy of salvation.

Today, in the majority of the cases, the baptismal rite is celebrated together with the rites which prepare for it. It is precisely the nature of the progression of the itinerary of conversion which makes it beneficial to restore the ancient distinction in time between the preparatory part and that of the true and proper baptismal celebration. Re-establishing this separation will be even more meaningful when it concerns the Baptism of adults.

⁴⁴ Cf. CCEO can. 682.

⁴⁵ Cf. CCEO can. 681 § 1, 1°.

⁴⁶ Cf. for example, for the Latin Church, CIC can. 851.



46. *The minister of Baptism*

Differing from the Latin tradition reiterated in can. 861 § 1 of the Code of Canon Law, the ordinary administration of Baptism in all Eastern traditions, as referred to in the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches can. 677 § 1, is reserved to those who are clothed in priestly grace, that is, to bishops and presbyters, excluding deacons, on whom hands have been imposed "not unto the priesthood, but unto the ministry"⁴⁷.

In case of necessity rather, according to can. 677 § 2, baptism can also be licitly administered by the deacon, another cleric, members of institutes of consecrated life, and also "any other Christian faithful", but not just "any person with the right intention" as is indicated for the Latin Church in can. 861 § 2 of the Code of Canon Law. Such differentiation underlines that Baptism saves the individual introducing him or her into an ecclesiastical community. Therefore, only a member of the community can baptize.

The insertion into the ecclesiastical community also appears in the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches when it affirms that "its administration is the competence (...) of the proper pastor of the person to be baptized, or another priest with the permission of the same pastor or the local hierarch" (can. 677 § 1) and that "in the territory of another it is not licit for anyone to administer baptism without the required permission" (can. 678 § 1).

47. *Baptism is to be received in one's own rite*

With the exception of special circumstances, which would have to be authorized by the competent authorities, the practice of requesting Baptism in a rite other than one's own for motives such as esthetics, friendship with the minister, etc. is absolutely discouraged. Except for the case of lacking a minister of one's own rite, the celebration of Baptism should also visibly signify the entrance in one's own Church *sui iuris*. For this reason, can. 683 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches states that "Baptism must be celebrated according (to) the

⁴⁷ *Constitutiones Ecclesiae aegyptiacae* III, 2, cited in VATICAN COUNCIL II, Dogm. Const. on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 29.

liturgical prescriptions of the Church *sui iuris* in which according to the norm of law the person to be baptized is to be enrolled".

48. *The rite should be complete and by immersion*

The competent authorities of the different Churches *sui iuris* should take care to emanate appropriate directives such that changes or abbreviations are avoided which may be harmful or less expressive of the meaning of the various moments that constitute the rite: the preparatory acts of exorcisms or renunciation of Satan, of blessing the water and oil, of pre-baptismal anointing, and the concluding act of post-baptismal dressing. Many liturgical books provide for the usual administration of Baptism through the rite of triple immersion. Maintained throughout the traditions of the Eastern Churches, it is a meaningful and highly expressive rite which is still present and encouraged today in the Western Church⁴⁸, though too often abandoned for simple reasons of convenience. The competent authorities should therefore seek ways to restore it, with prudence but also with zeal.

49. *The meaning of Chrismation with Myron*

Chrismation with holy Myron, which is discussed by cann. 692-697 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, is the name given in the East to the sacrament which the Code of Canon Law calls Confirmation. Such diverse designations for the same sacrament may correspond to traditional understandings which are substantially identical but diversely accentuated: each, in fact, insists preferably on one aspect and underscores, in the Eastern Churches, the perfect initiation into the mystery of Christ, and, in the Latin Church, the capacity acquired by the individual's testimony of his or her faith.

Can. 692 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, according to Eastern traditions, does not require that the anointing be done by the imposition of the hand, differing from the prescriptions of the Latin liturgy⁴⁹.

⁴⁸ Cf. for example, CIC can. 854.

⁴⁹ Cf. CIC can. 880 § 1.

50. *The minister of Chrismation*

Can. 694 affirms that "according to the tradition of the Eastern Churches, chrismation with holy Myron is administered by a presbyter either in conjunction with baptism or separately", and can. 696 § 1 specifies that "all presbyters of the Eastern Churches can validly administer this sacrament either along with baptism or separately to all the Christian faithful of any Church *sui iuris* including the Latin Church".

Eastern presbyters are to use their faculty of chrismating the Latin faithful with great discretion and contacting, as much as possible, the competent Hierarchs of that Church. In fact, Confirmation in the Latin Church is usually administered to children separately and at the end of a developed catechesis which in itself is a part of the Christian Initiation. To chrismate the Latin faithful who have not received this formation risks damaging the organic whole of the Christian Initiation used in the Latin Church.

The Eastern practice differentiates itself from the Latin one, expressed in can. 882 of the Code of Canon Law which declares that "the ordinary minister of Confirmation is the bishop", even if a presbyter can administer it when he is provided this faculty "by virtue of either the common law or a special concession of competent authority". Born under different circumstances, the Latin legislation gives emphasis to the principle, pronounced by Ignatius of Antioch, of the necessary unity of the Church and of the presbytery around the Bishop⁵⁰. In the Eastern tradition this aspect is represented by the consecration of the holy Myron which is reserved to only the Bishop or, according to the norms of the particular law, also to only the Patriarch⁵¹, who celebrates this consecration with great solemnity. Such attribution to the Patriarch indicates the bond of communion existing, beyond every individual eparchy, within the Churches *sui iuris*. May these ancient traditions, in this regard, be faithfully preserved.

⁵⁰ Cf. IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH, *Letter to the Ephesians* III-VI: *SCh* 10 A, 60-62.

⁵¹ Cf. CCEO can. 693.

51. *Communion to the neophytes*

Can. 697 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches prescribe that the Eucharist be administered as soon as possible after the Baptism and Chrismation with holy Myron, according to the norms of the Church *sui iuris*. Can. 710 resumes the subject of participation of baptized infants in the Eucharist, and exhorts that the prescriptions of the liturgical books of the Church *sui iuris* be observed in its administration. This legislation, specific to the Eastern Churches, necessitates some clarification.

For reasons already seen, the norms regarding the Communion to neophytes are not found in the legislation of some Eastern Catholic Churches, which have often postponed the first Communion to the school age. Therefore, it will be the task of the competent authorities to adopt measures suitable for returning to the previous practice and to elaborate norms that are more conforming to their own tradition.

As for the prescriptions contained in the liturgical books to the same regard, it should be noted that, in the majority of the cases, whether of these or the Churches which preserve the ancient uses, they do not provide sufficient indications, considering that the Ritual of Baptism in general was conceived for adults and subsequently used for children, without introducing any specific modification in the Eastern Churches. The subject is usually addressed in the pastoral manuals for the sacraments. Some practical suggestions could be obtained from the practices of the Orthodox Churches.

Finally, the administration of the Divine Eucharist to infant neophytes is not limited to only the moment of the celebration of Initiation. Eucharist is the Bread of life, and infants need to be nourished constantly, from then on, to grow spiritually. The method of their participation in the Eucharist corresponds to their capacity: they will initially be different from the adults, inevitably less aware and not very rational, but they will progressively develop, through the grace and pedagogy of the sacrament, to grow until "mature manhood, to the extent of the full stature of Christ" (cf. Eph. 4:13). The sacrament is always a gift which operates efficiently, in different ways just as every person is different. Special celebrations which correspond to the various steps of human growth can possibly be of some use for the pedagogy of the faith and to accompany specifically the indispensable catechesis of children and young people, but it must be clear that the initiation into the Mystery of Christ is totally complete upon receiving the first three sacraments.

52. *The rites of entrance into monastic life*

Throughout the centuries, especially after the end of the persecutions, many Christians, organizing themselves in differentiated communities, have chosen to give testimony to their own radical adhesion to the Kingdom of God, some together forming cenobitic groups, others in forms of solitary or anacoretic life to dedicate themselves with more freedom for the *unum necessarium*.

The importance of the monastic life and the opportuneness of its regaining strength in the Eastern Catholic Churches have been underscored in numerous official documents. This emphasis can be seen in the conciliar decree *Unitatis Redintegratio* (n. 15); in the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, which dedicates seventy canons (cann. 433-503) to the subject; and in the amply developed content of the Apostolic Letter *Orientalis Lumen* (nn. 9-16).

Christians of the East give a common witness to the tradition of considering the initiation into monastic life strictly analogous to the baptismal initiation, with the help of formulas, symbols and gestures which recall those used for the initiation into Christian life.

The liturgical offices of monastic clothing are meant to emphasize that to receive the habit signifies becoming one with the risen Lord such that the monk can say with Paul: "I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20). The monk, in fact, puts on the newness of the life of the risen Lord and, by grace of the strength received from the Holy Spirit, undertakes the struggle against the powers of evil, so that the victory of Easter extends itself till the ends of the earth to the glory of the one Father.

The rituals of introduction into the monastic life in the different Eastern Churches are an integral part of the respective liturgical traditions and are precious sources for explaining the ultimate meaning of Christian monasticism.

It is, therefore, necessary to preserve these rituals, use them for the professions that are specifically monastic and be inspired by them also for professions of the religious Orders and Congregations of the Eastern Churches.

CHAPTER VIII

THE DIVINE LITURGY

53. *The Meaning of the Divine Liturgy*

The center of Christian worship is the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. This name, Divine Liturgy, used in the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches is not used exclusively. Used more specifically in the Churches of Greek origin, it is also found in other traditions, but together with other titles such as Sacrifice, Sanctification, Mysteries, Offering and Oblation, Eucharist or Thanksgiving, Breaking of the bread, and others.

Even if these terms evoke the sacrament of the Body and Blood of our Lord more directly, they also indicate the celebration in its entirety, articulated in two parts, the first of which is centered on the Word of God and the second on the eucharistic rite.

The conciliar Constitution on the sacred liturgy teaches us that Christ is present in his Word since it is He who speaks when Scripture is read in the Church⁵². It further specifies that the homily is an integral part of the liturgical action and insists that this ministry of preaching be fulfilled faithfully and in a fitting manner, drawing its content above all from the font of Sacred Scripture and the liturgy, the proclamation of the wonderful works of God in the history of salvation⁵³. Therefore, care should be taken that the homily is never omitted in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy with the people, at least on Sundays and holidays of obligation.

The richness of the second part of the Divine Liturgy, and in particular of Communion which is the culmination, is wonderfully expressed by these words of Nicholas Cabasilas: "So perfect is this Mystery, so far does it excel every other sacred rite that it leads to the very summit of good things. Here also is the final goal of every human

⁵² Cf. VATICAN COUNCIL II, Const. on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 2.

⁵³ Cf. *ibid.*, 35; and also n. 52.

endeavour. For in it we obtain God Himself, and God is united with us in the most perfect union. (...) Since it was not possible for us to ascend to Him and participate in that which is His, He came down to us and partook of that which is ours. So perfectly has He coalesced with that which He has taken that He imparts Himself to us by giving us what He has assumed from us. As we partake of His human Body and Blood we receive God Himself into our souls. It is thus God's Body and Blood which we receive, His soul, mind, and will, no less than those of His humanity"⁵⁴.

54. *The Anaphoras in the Divine Liturgy*

In the celebration of the divine Mysteries, the text of the Anaphora shines like a precious treasure. The Eastern Anaphoras date back to venerable antiquity: often attributed to the Apostles, according to the living awareness of the Churches, or to saints of the primitive Church, or to other important personages in the history of the Churches, the Anaphoras are, in the act of the offering, the proclamation of praise and thanksgiving to God, and the epiclesis, which is the invocation of the Holy Spirit.

From the treasure of the Anaphoras, rather numerous according to the various Churches, care should be taken to offer the possibility of using, as is deemed suitable, more texts of the Anaphoras, some of which are no longer in use today but should be restored. Considering that the Anaphora is a true masterpiece of mystagogical theology, it is appropriate to study the ways in which, at least in some circumstances, it could be pronounced aloud, so as to be heard by the faithful. The pastors should see to it that the people are formed according to that theology which is present in so pre-eminent a way in the Anaphora.

⁵⁴ CABASILAS NICHOLAS, *The Life in Christ*, IV, 10. 26: *SCh* 355, 270. 288 (English translation from CARMINO J. DE CATANZARO, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974, 116. 122).

55. *The different roles in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy*

The conciliar Constitution on the sacred liturgy declares that the Church "earnestly desires that Christ's faithful, when present at this mystery of faith, should not be there as strangers or silent spectators. On the contrary, through a good understanding of the rites and prayers they should take part in the sacred action, conscious of what they are doing, with devotion and full collaboration" (n. 48). Can. 699 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches takes up this same teaching, clarifying the specific role of each participant in the eucharistic celebrations: "Only bishops and presbyters have the power of celebrating the Divine Liturgy" (§ 1) - which means that it cannot be celebrated without them -; "deacons have their part in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy with bishops and presbyters according to the prescriptions of the liturgical book" (§ 2); "other Christian faithful, by virtue of baptism and chrismation with holy Myron, assembled in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, participate actively in the Sacrifice of Christ in the manner determined by the liturgical books or particular law, and do so more fully if they consume the Body and Blood of Christ from the same Sacrifice" (§ 3).

56. *The liturgy celebrated by the Bishop*

A text of the *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, inspired by the letters of St. Ignatius of Antioch, affirms that "the principal manifestation of the Church consists in the full, active participation of all God's holy people in the same liturgical celebrations, especially in the same Eucharist, in one prayer, at one altar, at which the bishop presides, surrounded by his college of priests and by his ministers" (n. 41). This requires that great care be taken of the eparchial liturgical life around the Bishop, such that the cathedral is the true "sanctuary" of every particular Church: thus, the liturgy at the cathedral should be celebrated in an exemplary way. It is marvelously coupled with the exemplary nature of the liturgical celebrations in monasteries which have always maintained, in the tradition of the Eastern Churches, a true osmosis with the liturgical celebrations of the cathedrals.

57. *Concelebration*

Can. 700 § 2 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches exhorts the concelebration together with the Bishop or with another priest "since in such a way the unity of the priesthood and sacrifice will be suitably manifested". Many conciliar texts underscore that, doing so, the unity of the whole Church is made manifest. It is, therefore, a very expressive usage. However, there can be reasons which advise against concelebration, particularly when the number of concelebrants is disproportionately greater than the presence of lay faithful. The liturgical celebration, as the "icon" of the Church, should respect the nature of the community hierarchically articulated, composed not only of ministers but the whole flock of those who, under their guidance, live in Christ. Care should be taken that the concelebrants are not of such quantity so as to have to overflow into the nave where the faithful are, and thus outside of the Sanctuary itself, or to occupy the space of the Sanctuary in such a way that impedes the dignified celebration of the rite. Of course, concelebration is nevertheless preferable to the so-called individual celebrations without the people. Individual, independent celebrations of the Eucharist on multiple altars in the same place at the same time are categorically prohibited. Such restriction is not applicable, obviously, to the simultaneous and synchronized celebration sometimes permitted, particularly in the Western Syrian and Ethiopian traditions.

Can. 701 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches establishes the ways in which the concelebration between bishops and presbyters should be carried out in the different Churches *sui iuris*. It is worth repeating here the exhortation to avoid any liturgical syncretism, but the appropriate vestments and insignia of their own Church *sui iuris* should be worn. It is a most eloquent way of showing the variety of the ecclesial traditions and their coming together in the unity of the Church. This is a meaningful symbol of the future unity in multiformity and an instrument to protect the Eastern Churches and their specificity against every assimilation, especially in places where they are in the minority.

Addressing the different forms of participation in the eucharistic celebration, the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches reminds us many times of the need to respect the prescriptions of the liturgical books and the particular law⁵⁵. This requirement also applies to concelebration,

⁵⁵ Cf. for example, can. 699 §§ 2 and 3.

considering that the ways of practicing it in the different Churches *sui iuris* and of the different ritual families vary. It is notable that the practice recently established in the Western liturgies was inspired largely by Byzantine usage, interpreted, though, in the light of their own concerns and thus with some different outcomes. Participation in the same eucharistic Sacrifice can express itself in various forms, each of which has a specific value that should be organically preserved and developed. Reference to the prescriptions of the liturgical books is an invitation to attentively examine the data of each tradition and formulate directives which respect the authentic lineage.

58. *Who should distribute the Eucharist*

Can. 709 § 1 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches establishes that it is the responsibility of the priest to distribute the Eucharist, or also the deacon if the particular law of the Church *sui iuris* so disposes. The subsequent paragraph grants the right to the Synod of Bishops of the patriarchal Church, or to the Council of Hierarchs, to establish norms by which other Christian faithful can also distribute the Eucharist.

Therefore, assigning to the deacon or even to other faithful the task of distributing the Divine Eucharist depends on the instructions of the particular law. It is indispensable to remember, however, that these instructions must be coherent with the specific context of the liturgical tradition in which they are inserted. It should be remembered that all the Eastern traditions emphasize the greatness of the mystery of holy Communion. An ancient Syro-Chaldean commentator describes the presentation of the sacred gifts to the faithful with the following words: "The Holy One comes forth on the plate and in the cup, in glory and majesty, accompanied by the presbyters and deacons, in grand procession. Millions of angels and servants of the fire of the Spirit go before the Body of Our Lord, glorifying him. All the people and all the sons of the Church rejoice when they see the Body come from the altar"⁵⁶. Therefore, reserving the distribution of the Eucharist normally to the priests has the scope of manifesting its highest sacredness. Even if this excludes enhancing the value of other criteria, also legitimate, and

⁵⁶ *Explanation of the Mysteries of the Church*, attributed to NARSAI OF NISIBI.

implies renouncing some convenience, a change of the traditional usage risks incurring a non-organic intrusion with respect to the spiritual framework to which it refers. Therefore, it is appropriate that the faculty of distributing the Eucharist by those other than the Bishop or the presbyter, or the deacon if so disposed by the particular law of each Church *sui iuris*, be exercised only in the case of true emergency.

59. *The Eucharist is to be distributed under both species*

The Eucharist should be distributed under both species of consecrated bread and wine. Thus, the usage of distributing the Communion under the species of Bread alone, as sometimes occurs today because of Latin influence, should be abandoned without delay. Such practice is to be considered a recent innovation, completely foreign to the Eastern tradition. The re-introduction of the regular distribution of the Eucharist *sub utraque specie* can be facilitated by the use of instruments that are fitting, observing the norms and the uses of the particular ritual tradition.

60. *The Eucharist is to be distributed in the Divine Liturgy*

The participation of the Christian faithful in the sacrifice of Christ is more complete if in the course of the celebration the faithful, after the priest's Communion, receive the Body of the Lord from the same Sacrifice. Such an arrangement, inspired by n. 55 of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, underscores the importance of holy Communion and, at the same time, the link between it and the offering of the eucharistic Sacrifice. For this reason, can. 713 § 1 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches establishes that "the Divine Eucharist is to be distributed in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, unless a just cause suggests otherwise". Such practice should be considered the only normal one, except for the case of Communion for the sick who are not present or Communion of the presanctified on non-liturgical days.

61. *The Eucharist distributed is to be that which was consecrated during the same celebration*

The rubrics of all liturgical books presuppose that the heavenly Bread distributed to the faithful is that which was consecrated during the same

celebration, without recourse to the reserved eucharist, except for cases of absolute necessity. The Supreme Pontiffs Benedict XIV⁵⁷ and Pius XII⁵⁸ emphatically reiterated such a prescription, which is in full harmony with the Eastern tradition. It is obvious that participants in a meal receive the food from the table at which they are present and not from another. Any usage to the contrary clouds the meaning of Eucharist, which not only signifies the private communion of the individual with the Lord Jesus, but also the mutual communion in the mystical Body of Christ on the part of all the communicants, participating in the same eucharistic Body of Christ. The correct usage corresponds in particular with the meaning of the rites of the breaking of the Bread, existing ever since the institution of Eucharist and so important as to become the technical expression indicating the eucharistic celebration already in the apostolic and sub-apostolic period: it is a question of the one, holy Bread broken and distributed, and the Blood of the one Cup, poured out for all and offered to all for salvation.

62. *The eucharistic fast*

Rigorous observation of the eucharistic fast was a unanimous tradition, even if diversified in its forms, in all the Eastern and Western Churches up until the first reforms undertaken in this area by Pope Pius XII. It expressed and continues to signify the concern for a proper spiritual preparation for receiving the Eucharist, life-giving Bread come down from heaven. In the desire to facilitate access to the Eucharist, such practice has been greatly reduced in the Latin Church. A similar example was followed by many Eastern Catholic Churches, while those non-Catholic maintained their customs, even if perhaps less strictly. The change in the discipline of the eucharistic fast has contributed to the development of a greater participation in the Eucharist, although it has sometimes contributed to weakening the awareness of the extraordinary value and meaning of the mystery celebrated. Can. 707 § 1 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches refers legislation in this regard to the

⁵⁷ Cf. BENEDICT XIV, Enc. Lett. *Certiores Effecti* (13 November 1742), 3: *Benedicti PP. XIV Bullarium* t. 1, p. 212.

⁵⁸ Cf. PIUS XII, Enc. Lett. *Mediator Dei* (20 November 1947), 118: *AAS* 39 (1947) 564-566.

particular law. An eventual restoration, at least partial, of the ancient norms for fasting in the Eastern Catholic Churches is valued opportune, taking into account the meaning of both the traditional practice, which does not always exactly coincide with the Latin sensibility, and of the need to correspond with the different conditions of life in the world today.

63. *The so-called "non-liturgical" days*

Can. 704 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches affirms that "the Divine Liturgy can be praiseworthy celebrated on any day except those which are excluded according to the prescriptions of the liturgical books of the Church *sui iuris* in which the priest is enrolled". To specify which days are non-liturgical, the canon thus refers to the prescriptions of the liturgical books. These prescriptions are not the same for the various Churches *sui iuris* or, more specifically, for the great families of Eastern Churches. It is necessary to recognize that these prescriptions, although stated in the liturgical books and accordingly in force in many Churches *sui iuris*, have too often dropped into disuse in recent times, also due to influence from the Latin tradition. Their disappearance often entails, besides the loss of the ancient tradition of non-liturgical days, abandoning the celebration of the liturgy of Presanctified. Considering that the joyous and festive dimension of the Eucharist, experienced as an event and not as a habit, was alive in Christian antiquity and is maintained in many Eastern liturgies, the forsaking of such practice contributes to diminishing the full meaning of the Divine Liturgy, which is celebrated in an integral and solemn way at the conclusion and as a seal of a whole journey of preparation, punctuated by celebrations of various types. To recuperate an element so significant in the heritage of the undivided Church, it is necessary to proceed toward a revival of the discipline of non-liturgical days where it has disappeared in relatively recent times.

64. *Feast days*

Can. 881 § 1 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches declares that "the Christian faithful are bound by the obligation to participate on Sundays and feast days in the Divine Liturgy, or according to the

prescriptions or legitimate customs of their own Church *sui iuris*, in the celebration of the divine praises", and § 2 completes it, adding that "in order for the Christian faithful to fulfill this obligation more easily, the available time runs from the evening of the vigil until the end of the Sunday or feast day". The Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches thus provides for the possibility, inspired by n. 15 of the *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, to satisfy the precept of Sunday either by participating in the Divine Liturgy, or by taking part in the Divine Office. Such a possibility emphasizes the importance of the Divine Office, and in a certain way renders concretely possible its correct celebration, at the proper hours, and in such a way that the texts correspond fully to the time in which they are celebrated. In fact, the daily cycle begins with Vespers and is extended into the night to culminate in the morning with the Divine Liturgy or Oblation. To celebrate the various parts of the Divine Office in times other than those foreseen by the entire structure of the text risks destroying the equilibrium of the different parts and diminishing the fullness of the eucharistic mystery, for which they are a preparation and of which they are a continuation. Authentic liturgical pastoral theology must bear in mind the whole of the problems and not be limited to simply imitating Western practice. The immediate fonts for restoring the usage should be the prescriptions of the liturgical books published according to the authentic traditions of the different Churches.

65. *Times and places of the celebration*

Regarding the time and place for the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, differing from the prescriptions of cann. 931-932 of the Code of Canon Law which are valid for the entire Latin Church, can. 707 § 1 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches does not present norms valid for all the Eastern Churches but rather, requires the different particular laws to establish norms in this regard. However, eucharistic celebrations outside of the sacred place should be limited to an indispensable minimum.

The precise hour of the celebration of the Divine Liturgy is also linked with the discipline of fasting, which is different in the various days and periods of the year.

In addition, the excessive multiplication of festive eucharistic celebrations should be avoided: on the one hand, such multiplication hinders the celebration of the Divine Office; on the other hand, an

assembly less dispersed and a greater concentration of faithful assure a greater dignity of the rite.

The presbyters should especially avoid celebrating the Divine Liturgy more than once a day without a specific pastoral reason. Practice deviating from this principle must be authorized and controlled by the episcopal authority.

Offerings to the celebrant for particular intentions in the Divine Liturgy are inserted in the broader context of the offering of self and of one's own life to the Father, of solidarity with the whole Church and especially, with the poor, of the need to assist the maintenance of the priest and the costs of worship. Offerings by the Christian faithful for the celebration of Divine Liturgies according to their own intentions⁵⁹, in the case of more celebrations in a day, should be attributed to purposes specified by the local Hierarchy.

66. *The liturgical vestments*

Putting on a particular vestment to accomplish a sacred act signifies leaving the usual dimensions of daily life to enter the presence of God in the celebration of the divine Mysteries, with symbolic reference to Paul's teaching: "For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ" (Gal. 3:27). The Armenian, Nerses Shnorhali, Catholicos from 1165 to 1173, writes: "Nobody believes the priestly habit to be useless and lacking mystery... It is a question of external observances of man for those who are in the service of the things of God. We speak also of the interior man, for which external worship is the figure of the luminous spiritual ornament"⁶⁰.

Indication for the liturgical vestments to be worn in the celebration must be specified by the particular law, and is usually found codified in the liturgical books or in other instructions of liturgical character which come from the competent authorities. Also in this area, the traditional usage should be preserved, maintaining all the value of the particular liturgical language and abstaining from the imitation of other Churches' usage. Only very grave reasons or exceptional circumstances can

⁵⁹ Cf. CCEO can. 715 § 1.

⁶⁰ NERSES SHNORHALI, *Encyclical letter*, Jerusalem edition 1871, p. 53.

authorize different practice. If undue changes in the liturgical vestments have been introduced, the traditional rules should be reinstated.

As for the non-liturgical dress of the clergy, it is appropriate that the individual Churches *sui iuris* return to the style of the traditional Eastern usage.

67. *The preparation of the bread and the wine*

Can. 706 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches reminds us that "the sacred gifts which are offered are bread made of wheat alone (...) and natural wine of the grape".

Can. 707 § 1 is concerned with the "preparation of the Eucharistic bread". Since the Christian Churches know different ways of preparing the bread destined for Eucharist, the Code requires the observation of the prescriptions of the various particular laws. The most notable difference in this regard is that which exists between leavened bread, traditionally used by most of the Eastern Churches, and unleavened bread, used by the Armenians and Latins. About the symbolism of one or the other use, much has been discussed in the past, often in polemic tones, sometimes attributing theological interpretations to them. Since in this arena each usage has its value, the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches prescribes that each Church *sui iuris* preserve that which it has inherited from its Fathers, because in such a way the complementary aspects of the eucharistic Mystery are expressed in symbolic form.

Other differentiations are noted in the form given to the bread destined for eucharistic celebrations and to the mark stamped on it, in the prayers which accompany the preparation, in the names with which it is designated, etc. Each one of these particulars is to be regulated according to the directions in the liturgical books.

As to the wine, it is necessary to point out that the rule presented by the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches differs from that of can. 924 § 1 of the Code of Canon Law which specifies that the wine is to be mixed with a small quantity of water. This mixing has not been mentioned in the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches because it is not in use in the Armenian Church and thus is not to be considered as a valid law for all the Eastern Churches.

The rite of Zeon (the supplemental addition of hot water in the cup before Communion), present in the Churches coming from the Constantinopolitan branch and unfortunately forsaken in some Greek-

Catholic Churches, should be recovered. The same applies for other numerous celebrative elements if they have fallen into disuse.

68. The liturgical vestments and bread from the particular rite are to be used

Regarding the preparation of the bread and the liturgical vestments, can. 707 § 2 states that "for a just cause and having removed any astonishment on the part of the Christian faithful, it is permissible to use the liturgical vestments and bread of another Church *sui iuris*". Two limits to this permission must be noted. The concession is granted so that the impossibility of procuring the bread or vestments should not impede the eucharistic celebration for the good of the faithful, which surpasses the necessary norms under normal circumstances. This permission should only be used in exceptional situations which cannot be generalized, such as the case of persecution and thus of clandestine celebration. It certainly does not dispense the obligation to do all that is possible so that such irregularity be avoided, and bread and vestments be according to the proper liturgical usage. It is meant even more for the case of the bread, in as much as the preparation of the bread for Eucharist is an integral part of the celebration and cannot be omitted without truly serious reasons. Therefore, excluding the Armenian liturgy, when *prospora* is lacking, normal fermented bread is to be used in the exceptional cases mentioned.

The second constraint is for any astonishment to be removed on the part of the Christian faithful. It is necessary to avoid innovation which risks being misunderstood because of its contrast with the traditional use known by the faithful. Such attention extends also to the sensitivity of the non-Catholic faithful, in particular of those belonging to the same Tradition.

69. The reference to the particular law does not imply minor importance

The whole of the prescriptions listed by can. 707 is relatively secondary with respect to the totality of the eucharistic sacrament. Nonetheless, it is laden with spiritual meanings belonging to a coherent system, enabling an optimal introduction to full knowledge of the eucharistic Mystery.

To remove some of these entails the risk of impoverishing the general framework. Their importance is reiterated in can. 713 § 2 which insists that "the Christian faithful are to observe faithfully the norms of the Church *sui iuris* in which they are enrolled, not only within the territorial boundaries of the same Church, but, inasmuch as it is possible, everywhere".

Note how can. 707 refers to the particular law of each Church *sui iuris*, which must establish accurate norms concerning the eucharistic celebrations. This does not mean to belittle the importance, but to express the desire that the specificity and diversity of the different authentic traditions be protected. It is fitting that the particular liturgical law express and guarantee the proper physiognomy and authenticity of each particular liturgical family or tradition.

CHAPTER IX

SACRED ORDINATION

70. *Sacred ministers and liturgy*

Can. 323 § 1 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches affirms that "clerics, who are also called sacred ministers, are Christian faithful who, chosen by the competent ecclesiastical authority, are deputed through a gift of the Holy Spirit received in sacred ordination to be ministers of the Church participating in the mission and power of Christ, the Pastor". Sacred ministers have a special link with the liturgy, because many of their functions are carried out in the liturgy, because they perform a function in it that is distinguished from the other faithful, and because of their frequent contact with it.

71. *Liturgical formation of sacred ministers*

In the formation of sacred ministers, care should be taken to promote progressive growth of the interior participation in the holy Mysteries and in Him who operates in them. In order to be mystagogues of the people, they must live in an exemplary way the same mystagogy. Their role in the liturgy is to be the font, food and model for a life of fullness received by the grace of the Lord. Moreover, they are to be perfectly formed toward a precise, in-depth and well-founded knowledge of the holy liturgy, in its theological, spiritual and ceremonial aspects.

The importance of the liturgical life is also emphasized in the canons that address seminaries. These affirm that the liturgy is to be the font and culmination of life (can. 346 § 2, 2°); that it is to be taught in virtue of its special importance as a necessary source of doctrine and of a truly Christian spirit (can. 350 § 3); and that the candidates of priesthood are to nourish their spiritual life from it (can. 346 § 2, 3°). It is, therefore, necessary that the liturgical life be celebrated with great care and always in its integral form in Eastern seminaries and in formation institutes of Eastern monks and religious, such that the candidates may be shaped by it and learn it in all its richness and completeness, giving due space not

only to the Eucharist but also to the Divine Office. The liturgy is to be the true font of spirituality by which the candidates are formed, the element that unifies all that they learn, and the place in which doctrine becomes celebration of praise and thanksgiving and life is transformed by grace. Such prominence given to the liturgy will allow the candidates to draw fully as much as is necessary for their interior life and will prevent their seeking it in environments foreign to the coherence of their own heritage. Can. 343 prescribes that all the candidates of priesthood are to be formed according to their own rite, even if they have been admitted into a seminary of another Church *sui iuris* or into a common seminary for several Churches *sui iuris*, rebuking any custom to the contrary. The same applies to all dimensions of the heritage of each Eastern Church: theological, spiritual and disciplinary, but in an eminent way for the liturgical dimension.

72. *Articulations of Sacred Ordination*

The Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches explains that the clergy, joined among themselves by hierarchical communion and constituted in various degrees of the Order by their sacred ordination, participate in diverse ways in the one divinely instituted ecclesiastical ministry⁶¹. However, it also foresees the possibility, in addition to these, of other ministers called minor Orders.

Can. 325 specifies that "in virtue of sacred ordination clerics are distinguished as bishops, presbyters and deacons." Can. 327 adds that if, in addition to these, other ministers are also admitted or instituted for the service of the people of God or to exercise functions of the sacred liturgy, they are to be constituted in minor Orders and are generally called minor clerics. The canon establishes that their constitution is governed "only by the particular law of their own Church *sui iuris*". The intent of the Code is for the tradition of each individual Eastern Church *sui iuris* to be respected.

⁶¹ Cf. CCEO can. 324 and 326.

73. *Whoever is enrolled in a minor Order is no longer a lay person*

While the Code of Canon Law speaks of ministries that can be permanently assumed by the laity, "through the prescribed liturgical rite" (can. 230 § 1), the minor Orders, rather, are inserted in the ecclesiastical Hierarchy according to the level of each one. Whoever has received these orders, therefore, is no longer a lay person, but becomes a member of what the liturgical books of most Eastern Churches call the "clergy" or "Sacred Orders". The difference between minor Orders and ministries entails consequences also in the way of interpreting can. 358 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches: it affirms that a candidate "is enrolled as a cleric in the eparchy for whose service he is ordained unless, according to the norm of the particular law of his own Church *sui iuris*, he has already been enrolled in the same eparchy". This reference to the norms of the particular law echoes can. 327, which establishes that those "constituted in minor orders, generally called minor clerics (...) are governed only by the particular law of their own Church *sui iuris*". It would be beneficial, therefore, that the enrollment in the clergy of the different eparchies happen at the moment of the constitution in a minor Order, so as to assume the minister from that moment into a full and stable form of service for the eparchy.

74. *The ancient practice of minor Orders is to be maintained*

It does not seem appropriate that the different Churches *sui iuris* change their customs regarding minor Orders, once shared by all the Churches: this has, in fact, its own special meaning. Far from abandoning them, the reforms of the particular laws of the different Churches should rather restore them to greater significance and vitality. This is also recommended for reasons of ecumenical nature: if the Eastern Catholic Churches have a special duty of fostering unity among all Eastern Churches, among other ways, through religious fidelity to the ancient traditions⁶², it would not seem helpful to introduce a differentiation of usage with respect to the Orthodox Churches, all participating in the same common origin. Every change that has been

⁶² Cf. CCEO can. 903.

improperly introduced in more or less recent times should be re-examined based on these principles.

75. *A real and coherent practice of the Orders is sought*

The minor Orders and the diaconate are not mere formalities in preparation for presbyterial ordination. They provide a specific service in the Church, and as such are to be effectively exercised in a definitive way by those who do not intend to enter the presbyterate, and in a sufficiently ample way by those who are to be ordained presbyters. This is especially valid for the diaconate. In this sense, misgivings should not be had toward conferring minor Orders and even the diaconate on those who comport themselves well, are suitable and appropriately prepared for the responsibility they assume, and declare themselves available for the service of the Church, even if they must continue to live with their families and practice their own trades. Thus, the ministers necessary for a dignified and fitting celebration of the liturgy are obtained, avoiding the practice, different also in this case from the Latin Church in which it is no longer in use, of having ministers of a higher range perform the liturgical functions that should be reserved to those of lower range (the most frequent case is that of presbyters functioning as deacons), or of permanently appointing to the laity liturgical tasks expected of a minister: practices to be eliminated.

76. *The diaconate*

The diaconate was instituted not for priesthood but for the service of the bishops and presbyters. Deacons were, in fact, once considered as their hands and eyes; or, as expressed by Ignatius of Antioch, the deacons manifest in harmony with them to the faithful people "the commandment of the Lord"⁶³. A similar perspective, preserved in the Orthodox Churches and in the process of being recuperated in the Latin community, is to also be placed in full light in the Eastern Catholic Churches. The re-establishment of its liturgical and extra-liturgical mission appears, in fact, to be very beneficial.

⁶³ Cf. IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH, *Letter to the Smyrnaeans* VIII, 1: *SCh* 10 A, 138.

77. The right to ordain clerics enrolled in a certain eparchy

Can. 748 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches indicates norms that regulate the right to ordain clerics enrolled in a certain eparchy. In § 2, it establishes that an eparchial bishop cannot ordain a candidate subject to him who is enrolled in another Church *sui iuris* without the permission of the Apostolic See or, in some cases, of the Patriarch. The obligation of this permission concerns only the licitness of the ordination celebration and more appropriately refers to the case in which the celebration takes place in a liturgical rite different from that of the one to which the candidate belongs, or when the ordaining eparchial Bishop asks permission to celebrate the ordination in the rite of the candidate. Beyond the rite of the celebration itself, the bishop of the eparchy or diocese where the candidate is to be enrolled maintains the full right of granting dimissorial letters to a Bishop belonging to the candidate's Church *sui iuris*, so that the sacred ordination proceeds observing the liturgical prescriptions of the proper rite.

78. Limits for granting Eastern honors

Clerics are to take into account the proviso of can. 388 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches regarding the use of rights and insignia associated with dignities conferred upon them. In addition, dignities used in the Eastern Churches are not to be granted to clerics not belonging to the Church *sui iuris* which confers them. Those dignities, and the associated rights, which have been received from the Latin usage prior to the conciliar reform are to be abolished. In fact, the attribution of such honors should not be reduced to pure superficiality, which is harmful to the singular dignity of the Eastern liturgies.

Moreover, it is not appropriate to confer monastic titles, with the associated insignia and attire, to secular clergy. This applies even more so to married clergy.

CHAPTER X

MARRIAGE

79. *Christian Marriage*

Referring to matrimonial life, Saint Paul, citing the book of Genesis⁶⁴, adds: "This is a great mystery, I speak in reference to Christ and the Church" (Eph. 5:32). Affirmations unceasingly repeated in all the Churches, they introduce us into the understanding of the multifold richness of married life.

Married life evokes the entire act of creation of the universe, which finds its culmination in man created in the image and likeness of his Creator, and underscores the relational dimension: the person is not made to be alone. Called to work and dominate the earth, he is in need of a helper who is similar to him, with whom he forms one body.

A mystery even more profound if "in reference to Christ and the Church": in the mystery of Christ, in fact, the relationship of the created with her Lord is fully unveiled, with the one who is greater than she and in whose image she was created, who covered her with his glory before the fall, who mysteriously accompanies her through the days of this life and who will directly illuminate her in the heavenly Jerusalem (cf. Rev. 21:23).

The liturgical texts express this relational dimension in several formulas asking peace, perfect love, harmony, and abundance of goods; followed by moderation, chastity, irreproachable behavior, truth; and also fidelity to their promise and stability in the holy union that comes from the Lord, according to a model that should not only characterize married life, but also inspire the whole family of humanity's living together, following the example of the Lord who came to destroy enmity through himself, gather in unity that which was divided and reconcile all with God, taking the Church as his wife, handing himself over to her, purifying her so as to make her holy and without blemish (cf. Eph. 5:25-27).

⁶⁴ "That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body" (Gen. 2:24).

The relationship of love between husband and wife becomes fertile and issues in participating in the work of creation through the generation of children, in fulfillment of the promise to Abraham, chosen by God to become father of a multitude of peoples, all called to offer worship in spirit and truth to the living God.

80. *The obligation of preparation*

Can. 783 § 1 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches reminds the pastors of souls about their obligation to take care of the faithful who are preparing for the matrimonial state, so that they may get to know and be informed about the meaning of Christian Marriage, about its characteristics of union and indissolubility in the image of the indefectible union of Christ with the Church and about its duties of union between them and toward their offspring (can. 776 §§ 1 and 2).

Can. 784 refers to the particular law of the Churches *sui iuris* for the rules for the examination of the parties and the inquiries concerning their Baptism and freedom to marry. It should be noted that, differing from the Latin Code (can. 1065), the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches uses only the term Baptism and does not allude to Chrismation with holy Myron. As previously mentioned, Chrismation with holy Myron must be administered in conjunction with Baptism in the Eastern tradition⁶⁵.

81. *The consent and form of the Marriage*

An indispensable element for constituting a Marriage is the consent with which a man and a woman mutually give and receive each other (can. 817). The internal consent of the mind is presumed to be in agreement with the words or signs employed in celebrating the Matrimony (can. 824 § 1).

Only those Marriages are valid which are celebrated with the sacred rite, with the presence and blessing of the local Hierarch or the local parish priest or a priest to whom the faculty of blessing the Marriage has been given by either of them (can. 828 §§ 1 and 2). The Marriage can be validly and licitly celebrated in the presence of witnesses alone when

⁶⁵ Cf. CCEO can. 695.

a priest who is competent according to the norm of the law cannot be present or accessed without grave inconvenience, or in danger of death, or if it is prudently foreseen that such circumstances will continue for at least a month. As much as possible in such cases, another priest, even non-Catholic, is to be called to bless the Marriage (can. 832 §§ 1 and 2).

82. *The obligation of the sacred rite*

It should be noted that the obligation of the sacred rite, and thus of the priestly blessing, for the validity of the Marriage is specific to Eastern law. In the Latin Church, simply the presence of the local Ordinary, or the parish priest, or a priest or deacon delegated by either of them is required⁶⁶. In the Eastern tradition, the priest, in addition to assisting, must bless the Marriage. To bless means to act as the true minister of the sacrament, in virtue of his priestly power to sanctify, so that the spouses may be united by God in the image of the flawless nuptial union of Christ with the Church and be consecrated to each other by sacramental grace.

Can. 832 § 3 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Church also specifies that, if for extraordinary circumstances, Marriage is celebrated only in the presence of witnesses, the spouses must receive the blessing of the Marriage from the priest as soon as possible.

83. *Competencies for blessing the Marriage*

As for the competency of blessing the Marriage, both the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches and the Code of Canon Law prescribe norms of the same tone: the Hierarch or the local parish priest may "validly bless the marriage of parties anywhere within the boundaries of their territory, whether they are subjects or non-subjects, provided that at least one of the parties is enrolled in his Church *sui iuris*"⁶⁷.

As for the delegation to bless a Marriage, can. 830 § 1 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches establishes that the local Hierarch and parish priest "can give the faculty to bless a determined marriage within

⁶⁶ Cf. CIC can. 1108 § 1.

⁶⁷ CCEO can. 829 § 1; cf. also CIC can. 1109.

their own territorial boundaries to priests of any Church *sui iuris*, even the Latin Church". The local Ordinary or parish priest of the Latin rite can also delegate to Eastern priests the faculty to assist and bless the Marriage of Latin faithful⁶⁸.

It is always necessary to take into account that, with the exception of the case in which the Hierarch or the parish priest are of another Church *sui iuris*, with respect to the norm of can. 916 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, the celebration must occur, *ad licitatem*, according to the rites of the spouses, or of one of them if it is an inter-ritual marriage⁶⁹. Therefore, a celebration in another rite is illicit, but can be authorized by the Apostolic See on a case by case basis.

Can. 831 § 2 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches specifies that the Marriage must be celebrated in the presence of the parish priest of the groom, unless the particular law determines otherwise or unless excused by a just cause.

In the case of mixed Marriages between Eastern Catholics and Orthodox, the obligation to observe the form, that is, the norm of celebrating the Marriage in the presence of the local Hierarch or local parish priest or one delegated by them, is required only for liceity. For their validity, however, only the blessing of a priest is required⁷⁰.

84. *The prescriptions of the liturgical books is to be observed*

"Outside the case of necessity, in the celebration of marriage the prescriptions of the liturgical books and the legitimate customs are to be observed in the celebration of marriage" (can. 836). In reviewing and eventually updating the liturgical prescriptions for these celebrations, the competent authorities of each Church *sui iuris* are to carefully safeguard the specific features of their own heritage which show the particular prominence of the meaning of the matrimonial institution in the framework of the history of salvation and, especially, expresses in theological terms the strict relation between it and the nuptial mystery existing between Christ and his Church.

⁶⁸ Cf. CIC can. 1111 § 1.

⁶⁹ Cf. CCEO can. 40 § 3.

⁷⁰ Cf. CCEO can. 834 § 2.

85. *Engagements*

Can. 782 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches addresses the Engagements which precede Marriage, affirming that they are governed by the particular law (§ 1). The canon specifies that action to seek the celebration of Marriage does not arise from the promise of Marriage. In the practice existing for centuries - and still used in many Churches - the Engagement, often called the "rite of the rings", is usually celebrated together with the matrimonial rite itself, called the "rite of the crowns".

The specific meaning of the rite of engagement is to express the consent of the future spouses, while that of the crowns has more directly the scope of introducing them into the fullness of matrimonial life. The rite of Engagement does not consist of simple promises but rather of a definitive pledge. Therefore, it is not appropriate for the Engagements to be celebrated superficially or at the beginning of plans for matrimony. Specific liturgical rites for the first steps of realizing these projects - less solemn and less definitive - exist in various Churches and are a part of the tradition, currently not practiced, of others. A better understanding and eventual restoration of these rites could contribute to the sanctification of the different moments in the journey of Christian couples up through its full completion.

CHAPTER XI

PENANCE

86. *The meaning of Penance*

John the Baptist preached in the desert of Judea, saying: "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt. 3:2). The same formula was used by Jesus Christ in the beginning of his public life (cf. Mt. 4:17). Peter also initiated his apostolic ministry exhorting to conversion those who witnessed the descent of the Spirit on Pentecost morning (cf. Acts 2:38). It is precisely this mission that Christ entrusted to the Apostles the evening of his resurrection, when he appeared and taught them that "repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, would be preached in his name to all the nations" (Lk. 24:47) and he sent them in mission, saying: "Receive the holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained" (Jn. 20:22-23).

Conversion of the heart, with which man responds to the call of God and changes the direction of his life, turning to the Lord, entails many dimensions, among which are compunction, penitence, and reparation; it involves both thought and behavior and is at the center of all Christian life. In fact, "all have sinned and are deprived of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23) but, by participating in the death and resurrection of Christ, can obtain remission of their sins, dying to themselves and living for God (cf. Rom. 6:11).

87. *The penitential attitude permeates all Christian worship*

The penitential orientation which accompanies all Christian life constantly appears in every manifestation of worship; in fact, it demands truth (cf. Ps. 50[51]:6) and thus, implies unceasing acknowledgment of one's sins and of the need to change ways. Such an attitude is found throughout the liturgical year and in every hour of the day, but in a particularly exigent way during the times of preparations for the feasts, above all in the one preceding Easter. For this reason, all the liturgies of the East as in the West ever since times immemorial call for Psalm 50[51] to be prayed even several times a day, the psalm with which

forgiveness and the gift of the Holy Spirit is invoked. The penitential attitude notably appears in many sacraments. Baptism, in fact, is given to us for the "blessed purification" of sins⁷¹, in the Divine Liturgy we offer "spiritual worship for our own sins and the faults of your people"⁷², approaching the Holy Communion in which we receive "the Body and the Blood of the Lord broken and shed for the remission of sins"⁷³; the Anointing of the sick also procures the remission of sins (cf. Jas. 5:15). In various Eastern Churches, there are moments of liturgical prayer to which penitential value is particularly attributed as is also, in a certain way, a power of reconciliation. Penance in the ancient tradition did not obtain its fruit of salvation only in the liturgical setting, because there are other actions (fasts, alms, pilgrimages, etc.) which already obtain from God a certain grace of forgiveness and there are places (monasteries, sketes, cells, deserts, etc.) in which the ineffable gift of *penthos*, or mourning for one's own sins, reveals through tears the possibility to be reborn every day in the newness of life in the Spirit.

88. *The sacrament of Penance and its ordinary celebration*

With motherly condescendence the Church continuously comes to meet human frailty allowing for new penitence after Baptism. In the framework of a life ever characterized by the full realization of the baptismal powers and of adhering to Christ, the sacrament of Penance occupies a privileged position and, in a special way, prepares for receiving the Divine Eucharist. In it, as affirmed by can. 718 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, the faithful who have committed sins after Baptism and resolve to lead a new life, "through the ministry of the priest, having themselves made a confession and accepted an appropriate penance, obtain forgiveness from God and at the same time are reconciled with the Church". This confession, individual and integral, with absolution, constitutes the only ordinary means by which

⁷¹ Prayer after the dressing in the Byzantine ritual of Baptism.

⁷² Prayer of the Proskomide in the Byzantine Divine Liturgies of Saint Basil and Saint John Chrysostom.

⁷³ Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil and Saint John Chrysostom.

the Christian faithful aware of a serious sin can obtain omission⁷⁴. Even if serious sins have not been committed, it is strongly recommended that all the Christian faithful frequently receive this sacrament, especially during times of fasts and penance⁷⁵.

89. *Communitarian value of Penance*

Individual confession is contained within a context that is by its nature exquisitely ecclesial and thus communitarian, first of all because reconciliation with God is also reconciliation with the Church. Moreover, in all the Eastern Churches, the sacrament is traditionally administered in a framework of prayers, declarations, admonitions and absolutions, which can praiseworthy be celebrated by an assembly of faithful. Such practice is suggested, at least indirectly, when the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches affirms that the proper place of its celebration is the church⁷⁶ and corresponds to the Eastern traditional usage of celebrating it not in a confessional similar to that used in the Latin Church but in the same sacred building and, in some traditions, in front of an icon of Christ. It will be the task of the authorities of the individual Churches *sui iuris* to attentively examine their liturgical books, even those of the past, to find the formulas which best express the richness of their own traditions in this specific field.

90. *The meaning and value of individual confession*

The Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches establishes that absolution cannot be imparted to multiple penitents at the same time without prior individual confession, except for the extraordinary circumstances listed in can. 720 § 2, and with certain conditions specified in can. 721 § 1. This norm emphasizes the value of individual confession in the whole of sacramental Penance. The awareness and confession of one's own sins are the conditions for rendering worship to

⁷⁴ Cf. CCEO can. 720 § 1.

⁷⁵ Cf. CCEO can. 719.

⁷⁶ Cf. CCEO can. 736 § 1.

God in truth. To forgive sins belongs to God alone. Therefore, as recalled by various Eastern rituals, the confession of sins is directed above all to God. On the other hand, after his resurrection, Christ entrusted to the Apostles the task of guiding his sheep toward the Kingdom of Heaven, when he gave them the Holy Spirit saying: "Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained" (Jn. 20:23). The confessor is thus placed in a position of knowing what is to be bound and what is to be loosed (cf. Mt. 16:19), which is protected by the sacramental secret. Therefore, the more individual aspect of the sacrament of Penance, traditional in the Eastern Churches, is to be maintained, encouraged and eventually recuperated where it has not been sufficiently practiced.

CHAPTER XII

ANOINTING OF THE SICK

91. *The healing of the sick, a sign of the coming of the Kingdom*

When asked by the disciples of John the Baptist if he was the Messiah that was to come, Jesus said in reply: "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed" (Mt. 11:4-5). All the Gospels refer to the numerous examples of the Lord's active care for the sick, and a reflection by the evangelist Matthew (cf. Mt. 8:17) helps us to understand its significance: the healing of the sick is fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah⁷⁷. The Savior, curing the sick and raising the dead, reveals how he, by the Holy Spirit (cf. Mt. 12:28), snatches from Satan his evil power over mankind, and restores the Kingdom to the Father (cf. 1 Cor. 15:24,28).

As manifestation and sign of the salvation present in the person of Jesus, the curing of the sick is also the task of the Church in the Holy Spirit who extends the work of the Word incarnate. In fact, Christ indicates this when he sends his disciples on mission saying to them: "Cure the sick (...) cleanse lepers" (Mt. 10:8); or when, before his Ascension, he describes the signs that will accompany those who believe: "In my name (...) they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover" (Mk. 16:17-18). The classical text from the letter of St. James, "Is anyone among you sick? He should summon the presbyters of the church, and they should pray over him and anoint [him] with the oil in the name of the Lord" (Jas. 5:14), is in the same line and at the base of the sacramental elaboration of the rite of the Anointing of the sick.

92. *The meaning of the sacrament*

The Anointing of the sick is accompanied by prayer for their healing. Its meaning is intrinsically linked with its quality as a sign that expresses

⁷⁷ "Yet it was our infirmities that he bore, our sufferings that he endured" (Is. 53:4).

the complete healing of the person and the benevolence of the heavenly Father offered to man undermined as he is, in the body as in the soul, by sickness and sin; this healing is the work of Christ, the physician of our souls and bodies. In fact, when he cures the paralytic, he explains to the scribes the meaning of the miracle: "that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" (Mt. 9:6). The oil with which the sick are anointed thus signifies the spiritual medicine offered by the divine mercy to man afflicted by the countless miseries of life. It is a sacrament of the Church and draws its value from the prayer proclaimed with faith by the Church and the presbyters who represent her. The faith which must accompany the anointing expresses the confidence that the believers have in the Lord who stops at nothing to bring us to his Kingdom and grants our supplications with all that we need so that, participating in his death, we may also partake in his resurrection.

93. *Ways of celebration*

The Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches strongly recommends the administration of the Anointing to the sick every time they are gravely ill (can. 738) and indicates that such ministry is reserved only to priests (can. 739 § 1). It then reminds us of the usage in some Eastern Churches to assemble several priests for its celebration and exhorts that the custom is to be preserved wherever possible (can. 737 § 2). In fact, the concelebration of several priests better expresses the solicitude of the entire ecclesial community toward the sick, to affront and surpass together with him or her the dangers of the soul and the body. As to the liturgical rites to be observed, the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches prescribes that the oil to be used in the sacrament of Anointing the sick must be blessed during the celebration of the sacrament and specifically by the priest administering it, unless the particular law of the Church *sui iuris* determines otherwise (can. 741). It also requires that the "words, order and manner of anointing are to be carefully carried out according to the prescriptions of the liturgical books", although "in case of necessity only the anointing with the proper formula suffices" (can. 742).

94. *Characteristics of the Anointing in Eastern liturgies*

In the Eastern Churches, the celebration of the sacrament of the Anointing of the sick is sometimes rather complex and somewhat prolonged. In reality, this notable duration, different from the brevity of the Western rituals, underscores the mystagogical aspect of prayer which entails contemplation of the wonders of the Lord, proclaimed in various gospel texts, from which strength and consolation are drawn. Supplication is made for the Lord to grant salvation of the body and soul to the sick, as much in the present circumstances as in the end times, when he will render his faithful participants in the fullness of divine life. If conditions require, the authorities of the individual Churches can indicate the parts of the text to be used for celebrations in the house of the sick, when they are gravely ill, or in hospitals. However, it is better for the full formula to be normally used when the sacrament is administered in the church, as already occurs and is recommended, and to many sick people, if possible. In this way, the sacrament maintains its extraordinary catechetical value.

CHAPTER XIII

THE DIVINE PRAISES

95. *Christian prayer*

Writing to the Ephesians, Paul the Apostle offers an indicative framework of the elements which should characterize the way in which believers live and especially their prayerful relationship with God: "Be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another [in] psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and playing to the Lord in your hearts, giving thanks always and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father" (Eph. 5:18-20). Christian prayer always has its source in the Holy Spirit, who bestows rivers of living water that flow from the glorified Christ (cf. Jn. 7:38-39); it is the Spirit who alone knows the secrets of God (cf. 1 Cor. 2:11), the only one who knows what and how to pray and intercedes for us in prayer (cf. Rom. 8:26-27).

The believer responds to this gift, is ready to listen to the word of God and offers the readiness of his or her heart to believe that Christ is the Son of God, sent by the Father to accomplish our salvation (cf. Jn. 6:29). The Apostle, in fact, bids us to sing praises to the Lord in our hearts, referring by this expression not just to the abode of sentiments, but to the inmost center of every human being, as shown by Jesus' reprimand of those who surrounded him: "This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me" (Mt. 15:8).

The Old Testament already calls for prayer seven times a day (cf. Ps. 118[119]:164) so that it is extended to the entire day. The same precept is insistently reiterated in the New Testament, where the Lord reminds us of the need to "pray always, without becoming weary" (Lk. 18:1).

96. *The meaning of the Divine Praises*

"Do not be negligent of yourselves, do not deprive the Savior of his own limbs, do not divide his body, do not scatter his members, do not prefer the needs of this world to the word of God, but reunite every day, morning and evening, singing psalms and praying in the house of the

Lord"⁷⁸. The Divine Praises continuously rekindle the spirit of vigilance in the desire for the return of the Lord and sanctify the whole day; recalling the memory of the presence of the Lord, they distribute his grace, permeating and inserting all of existence into the trinitarian life. They sanctify the believer in the dimension of time in which he or she lives, throughout the hours, days, weeks, months and years, as true prayer without interruption, according to the apostolic command. The term itself, "Divine Praises" - related to expressions frequently used in Sacred Scripture and liturgical texts, such as 'sacrifice of praise', 'spiritual sacrifice', 'rational sacrifice' - given, in some churches, to the worship that extends to the various hours of the day, points out the religious dimension which transforms the life of man and puts it in personal communion with the Trinity. The unanimous Christian tradition of the East and West has always recognized the multiple forms assumed by monastic life as the privileged place in which this dimension is realized.

The Divine Praises are each Church's school of prayer, instructing in the ancient way of glorifying God in Christ as one Body, in union with and by the example of its Head.

97. Components of the Divine Praises and their importance for knowledge of Eastern spirituality

The celebration of the prayer of time is interwoven with Sacred Scripture, the Word given by God for "teaching, for refutation, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that one who belongs to God may be competent, equipped for every good work" (2 Tm. 3:16-17). The table of the Word is lavishly prepared not only through the Lectionaries, which gather the biblical texts to be proclaimed and organically arrange them in the order of the liturgical year, but also through the very rich collection of liturgical hymns, of which all the Eastern Churches can be justly proud, which are but the "continuation of the Word which is read, understood, assimilated and finally sung (...)

⁷⁸ *Apostolic Constitutions* II, 59, 2: *SCh* 320, 324.

sublime paraphrases of the biblical text, filtered and personalized through the individual's experience and that of the community"⁷⁹.

A rich and prodigiously developed hymnody and euchology constitute probably the most original part of the Eastern liturgical celebrations. Multiple influences, predominantly Syrian and Hellenic, mutually establish and enrich each other to lead to contemplation of the Christian Mystery, according to the global vision of the Fathers of the Church. Compiled by numerous authors, especially by monks who throughout the centuries have unceasingly dedicated themselves to prayer, the texts of the Divine Praises transmit to us as inheritance the very rich and inalienable patrimony of spiritual life. They correspond to the specific features of each of the Eastern Churches, in which they are still deeply rooted. Like the Sacred Scripture, they need to be scrutinized and meditated to reveal the precious pearls they contain. The Divine Praises are, therefore, a privileged place for a study of the Christian spirituality which begins with the prayer of the Church.

98. The communitarian celebration of the Divine Praises is to be restored according to the liturgical books

The Eastern Catholic Churches have often run the risk of omitting the communal and solemn celebration of the Divine Praises, substituting it with individual recitation of the Divine Office, on the part of the clergy, while the daily celebration of the Eucharist has remained often almost the only form of communal liturgy. Where such practice of celebrating the Divine Praises with the people has diminished, if not completely disappeared, the ancient tradition should be restored without delay, so as not to deprive the faithful of a privileged source of prayer, nourished by treasures of authentic doctrine.

It is desired that a renewal of monasticism in the Eastern Catholic Churches, felt as urgent in many places, allow monasteries to once again become the place in which the Divine Praises resound in a privileged and solemn way. Calling upon the time when the Divine Praises were upheld with special care in the East, not only by the monastic communities, but also by the parishes, the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches

⁷⁹ JOHN PAUL II, Ap. Lett. *Orientalis Lumen* (2 May 1995), 10: AAS 87 (1995) 755-756.

reminds us of the obligation - often easily forgotten or abandoned - to celebrate them in the cathedrals, parishes, rectorial churches, religious communities and seminaries⁸⁰. It is necessary to observe the prescriptions of the liturgical books (can. 309), but a superficial observance is not sufficient: those responsible must do their best for the faithful to understand the meaning and value of this prayer, love it, take part and find spiritual nourishment in it⁸¹. They ought to be thus formed through a true mystagogical program, which allows them to attain nourishment for their own spiritual life from the celebration of the various moments of the liturgical year.

99. *Individual prayer of the Divine Praises*

Can. 377 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches establishes that "all clerics must celebrate the divine praises according to the particular law of their own Church *sui iuris*". It is, therefore, an obligation for the clergy. The ideal form of celebration, better manifesting the value of prayer by the Church and for the Church, is certainly communal, which is to be realized and encouraged as a priority. When objective reasons impede a communal form of celebration, clerics are to at least pray individually with the sacred texts of the Divine Praises, constantly interceding in the name of all for the people entrusted to them, for the needs of the Church and the whole world, as befits a good pastor. The authorities of the Churches *sui iuris* are to establish reasonable norms to regulate such individual prayer, giving preference, after careful study in the selection process of the texts, to the parts which are traditionally more important with respect to the structure of each Church's own liturgy, and taking into account the real possibilities of the clergy. The texts thus elaborated could also be of use, next to the more complete and traditional forms of the Divine Praises, for nurturing the prayer of individuals, families, or groups of the lay faithful.

⁸⁰ Cf. CCEO can. 199 § 2; 377; 473.

⁸¹ Cf. CCEO can. 289 § 2 and 346 § 2, 3*.

CHAPTER XIV

SACRED PLACES, GESTURES AND OBJECTS

100. *Liturgical prayer involves the total person*

The human person in his or her totality becomes illuminated by God and in the adoption as son attains full relation with him (cf. Jn. 1:13). God asks us to love him with all our heart, all our soul, and all our strength. No part of the person is excluded, rather every part is integral to the others: soul, spirit, heart, mind and body come together to form the spiritual building raised for the Lord. The person, priest of creation, takes everything into his or her being, giving voice to all inanimate reality for the praise of the Creator. In a particular way, with the Incarnation of the Son of God, humanity is assumed by the Word, and the divine sanctifies and consecrates the universe. Here lies the Christian meaning of the space, gestures, and objects which interact with the believer in divine worship.

101. *Sacrifices and oblations*

The offering of sacrifices and oblations is found in the Scripture ever since the first days of human life, in the sacrifices of Cain and Abel. Through them, the person is opened to the encounter with God; but in order for the offering to be pleasing, a pure heart is necessary, according to the rule that applies to the whole economy of salvation. This condition is perfectly fulfilled in the New Alliance when Christ offers "in truth" a sacrifice and worship pleasing to God, and when this his gesture is repeated in his name by the Apostles and the Church. The one source and culmination of sacrifice is that of Calvary, which is rendered present in the eucharistic offering and continuously nurtures the faithful.

This attitude is also expressed in other forms, extremely articulate even if considered minor. The offering of incense, which traces its origins to Old Testament worship, occupies an important place, especially in the Eastern Churches, with particular reference to Psalm 140[141]2: "Let my prayer rise like incense before you; the lifting up of

my hands, like the evening sacrifice". Such liturgical uses have been preserved in the Christian liturgy: just as, in fact, the Church maintains the Old Testament with veneration, re-reading it in the light of the Gospel of Christ, so also with the same spirit does She regard the gestures and Old Testament rites, which find their full meaning in the Lord Jesus. The Apostle Paul already indicated the symbolic value of the incense when he explained to the Ephesians that Christ "gave himself for us as an offering to God, a gift of pleasing fragrance" (Eph. 5:2) and to the Philippians that their gifts are a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God (cf. Phil. 4:18), or showed to them that the offering of incense signifies the sacrifices and offerings of faith (cf. Phil. 2:17). It is thus perceived that, for the Christian, authentic worship is a life lived according to God.

The Eastern Catholic Churches are to jealously maintain and practice as much as possible the use of incense in the celebrations, even daily, because it belongs in a special way to their own tradition. Every custom to the contrary is to be modified.

102. *The temple*

Jesus teaches the Samaritan woman that God is worshipped neither in Jerusalem nor on Mount Gerizim, but in Spirit and truth (cf. Jn. 4:21,24). The temple loses its value as the center of worship because with the death of Jesus, its veil was torn in two from top to bottom (cf. Mt. 27:51). The image and shadow of future times, it acquires fullness of meaning in the New Alliance (cf. Mt. 5,17). The Church is the new temple, built with living stones; Christ has, in fact, destroyed the wall of separation which divided men and built them together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit (cf. Eph. 2:14,22). Then in the heavenly Jerusalem, there will no longer be a temple but in its midst "the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Rev. 22:3) will be found, and the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb will themselves be the temple (cf. Rev. 21:22).

The sacred building in the time of the Church is a sign which shows us the way toward Him who is the Lord of the heavenly and earthly creation, the Lord of the Seraphim, King of Israel, the Holy One, who came to live among us in order to lead us to his Kingdom, because "our citizenship is in heaven" (Phil. 3:20). The physical church is a sign of the heavenly altar and of the sanctuary where Christ has penetrated, not the one made by the hands of man, which is a copy of the true one, "but

heaven itself, that he might now appear before God on our behalf" (Heb. 9:24). The sanctuary thus transfers us to a different world, to the presence of God. This relation between two worlds, the heavenly and the terrestrial, is affirmed often in all the Christian liturgies. For example, a wide-spread eucharistic formula asks "the merciful God to receive our gifts as a fragrance of spiritual sweetness on his holy and celestial and spiritual altar"⁸². It involves a sacred dimension, different from the stark human reality; we are introduced into this dimension by the liturgical mystery, in which humanity recuperates the cloak of divine glory that covered it before the fall of sin. The organic relation which occurs in the Eastern Churches between the nave and the sanctuary symbolizes our present situation in which we see indistinctly, as in a mirror (cf. 1 Cor. 13:12), since the whole Church is still on her way toward the glorious revelation of her Lord. In this way, the present life is transformed and conformed to the image of the Lord, "from glory to glory" (2 Cor. 3:18), beyond the worldly concerns, toward a future life in which we shall see God "face to face" (1 Cor. 13:12).

103. *The altar*

The altar is another expression of worship, linked with the offering of sacrifice to God. Leaving the ark, "Noah built an altar to the Lord, and (...) he offered holocausts on the altar" (Gen 8:20). Sacrifice is a symbolic gesture, present in all religions, which expresses gratitude for the benefits received, submission, invocation, and propitiation. An important element of worship in ancient Israel, the altar was finally placed in one central location, first in the meeting tent in the time of Moses and then, in the temple of Solomon.

Christ also refers to it when he reprimands the leaders of the people, saying: "Which is greater, the gift, or the altar that makes the gift sacred? One who swears by the altar swears by it and all that is upon it; one who swears by the temple swears by it and by him who dwells in it; one who swears by heaven swears by the throne of God and by him who is seated on it" (Mt. 23:19-22).

⁸² Cf. for example the Litany before the Our Father in the Divine Liturgies of the Churches of Constantinopolitan tradition.

In the mystagogy of the Eastern Fathers, the Christian altar acquires perfection of its multiple symbology in the dynamic of liturgical celebration, simultaneously representing all the levels of sacred typology, from its prefiguration in the Old Alliance to its fulfillment in the New. Thus, the Christian altar is at the same time the fulfillment of the *Sancta Sanctorum* of the ancient temple, the Golgotha altar of the new sacrifice and the table of the last supper which prefigured it, the tomb of the Lord, the place of the resurrection, the font of every sacramental grace which comes from the altar to us, and the altar of the heavenly liturgy of which the Church's liturgy is an icon, "heaven on earth in which God, who is beyond the heavens, lives and walks"⁸³.

104. *The Sanctuary*

In the Eastern Churches, sacred space is divided into various functional areas organically connected. It is an image of the Church of God, sacred convocation of faithful pilgrims toward the promised land. Each member occupies a specific place, corresponding to his or her mission.

The sanctuary is separated from the nave by a veil, gate or iconostasis, because it is the most sacred place: it contains the altar on which the Divine Liturgy is celebrated and the Oblation is offered. Only those who are entrusted with the sacred ministry can enter the sanctuary to complete the sacred acts.

Processions and other movements establish a relation between the nave and the sanctuary, gradually and pedagogically directing the faithful toward the altar. The Gospel always remains on the altar, from which it is solemnly taken for the celebration of the Word. It is to the altar that the gifts are brought at the beginning of the eucharistic part of the celebration to be offered to the Lord. Then, from the altar, the same gifts will solemnly leave the sanctuary to be communicated to the faithful, signifying the raising of the veil which covers the mystery of God, in revelation and, especially, in the Incarnation and Pascal Mystery of the Son.

⁸³ GERMANUS OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *Historia ecclesiastica et mystica contemplatio*: PG 98, 384 B.

105. *The ambo*

In the Eastern tradition, the ambo has different forms with relatively homogeneous signification. In the Greek Christian tradition, it could consist of a fixed structure elevated from the floor and dominating the nave of the Church. From the ambo, the Gospel was proclaimed, the homily could be given, and the cantor could perform his ministry. The equivalent in the Syrian Churches is the *Bêma*, a platform erected in the center of the Church, with the chairs of the Bishop and the presbyters, a small altar with the Cross, the Gospel book and candles, referred to as "Golgotha". From the *Bêma*, the deacon proclaims the Gospel, and the homily is given. As indicated by the terms ("ambo" refers to the elevation, "Golgotha" refers to the death and burial of the Lord), the symbolism of the ambo recalls the empty tomb of the Lord, from which he was raised, but that remains as a "sign" from which the "angel of the resurrection", the deacon, continuously proclaims the Gospel of our resurrection⁸⁴.

Therefore, it is important that in restoring old churches or constructing new ones, those responsible should attentively study the symbology expressed in them, while taking into account and foreseeing the possibility of re-establishing the usage in conformity to their proper tradition.

106. *The narthex and the baptistry*

Other places complete the total space of the sacred buildings in the Eastern Churches: they are the narthex and the baptistry.

The narthex is located at the entrance of the church, where various celebrations take place, such as those reserved to the catechumens and penitents, less solemn or more penitential prayers, processions, celebrations of the Minor Hours of the Divine Praises, or others.

The baptistry is also called the *Kolymbêthra*, the pool of immersion in the death of Christ, or the river "Jordan", sanctified by the Baptism of the Lord in the Holy Spirit, which thus becomes the water of death to sin. The ancient traditions of the East and the West show great variety in the form of the baptistry. However, they all had the common

⁸⁴ Cf. *ibid.*: PG 98, 392 A.

characteristic of representing the tomb in which, immersed to die together with Christ, the baptized re-emerges resurrected together with Him by the work of the Spirit of the Father.

The baptistry should normally be placed outside the Church proper, because it is only after the Baptism and Chrismation with holy Myron that the neophyte becomes fully part of the Church and thus can enter the temple of which it is a symbol. Where it is impossible to place the baptistry outside, because of the structure of the old buildings, then it should at least be located near the entrance of the church.

107. *Prayer facing the east*

Ever since ancient times, it has been customary in the prayer of the Eastern Churches to prostrate oneself to the ground, turning toward the east; the buildings themselves were constructed such that the altar would face the east. Saint John of Damascus explains the meaning of this tradition: "It is not for simplicity nor by chance that we pray turned toward the regions of the east (...). Since God is intelligible light (1 Jn. 1:5), and in the Scripture, Christ is called the Sun of justice (Mal. 3:20) and the East (Zec. 3:8 of the LXX), it is necessary to dedicate the east to him in order to render him worship. The Scripture says: 'Then the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and he placed there the man whom he had formed' (Gen. 2:8). (...) In search of the ancient homeland and tending toward it, we worship God. Even the tent of Moses had its curtain veil and propitiatory facing the east. And the tribe of Judah, in as much as it was the most notable, encamped on the east side (cf. Nm. 2:3). In the temple of Solomon, the Lord's gate was facing the east (cf. Ez. 44:1). Finally, the Lord placed on the cross looked toward the west, and so we prostrate ourselves in his direction, facing him. When he ascended to heaven, he was raised toward the east, and thus his disciples adored him, and thus he will return, in the same way as they saw him go to heaven (cf. Acts 1:11), as the Lord himself said: 'For just as lightning comes from the east and is seen as far as the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be' (Mt. 24:27). Waiting for him,

we prostrate ourselves toward the east. It is an unwritten tradition, deriving from the Apostles"⁸⁵.

This rich and fascinating interpretation also explains the reason for which the celebrant who presides in the liturgical celebration prays facing the east, just as the people who participate. It is not a question, as is often claimed, of presiding the celebration with the back turned to the people, but rather of guiding the people in pilgrimage toward the Kingdom, invoked in prayer until the return of the Lord.

Such practice, threatened in numerous Eastern Catholic Churches by a new and recent Latin influence, is thus of profound value and should be safeguarded as truly coherent with the Eastern liturgical spirituality.

108. *Sacred images*

Sacred images are of great importance, at least in some Eastern Churches. They offer to the eyes of the faithful a vision of the marvels God has accomplished on earth, in a special way through the work of the incarnate Word, but also through the saints and the Church. It is precisely for this reason that they are deemed of great importance in the liturgical life. One of the salient characteristics of the liturgy, in fact, is to celebrate, remember and render present the various moments in which our salvation is mystically realized. Representing the history of these events through images can thus greatly help to evoke and fix them in the heart and mind of those who contemplate them. In fact, every detail of this sacred history constitutes an act of divine power. The specific meaning of the icons, with respect to other images, consists in evoking and representing not the daily, human aspects as seen by the earthly eye, but the absolute Christian newness of "what eye has not seen, and ear has not heard, and what has not entered the human heart", and that the Lord has prepared "for those who love him" (1 Cor. 2:9), making them be reborn from above and showing them the Kingdom of God (cf. Jn. 3:2). Expressing the heavenly dimension of the personages they represent endows icons with a sacred nature and, in a certain way, with participation in the divine. For this reason, icons are direct objects of

⁸⁵ JOHN OF DAMASCUS, *Expositio accurata fidei orthodoxae* IV, 12: PG 94, 1133-1136.

worship and are venerated as the images of the Lord, his works and the saints represented are venerated.

Through the centuries, the Eastern Churches as well as the Western ones have elaborated techniques, forms and coherent systems of sacred representation to express their faith and bring it near to mankind. While Western Christian art of the last centuries has gradually developed in a naturalistic line, the Eastern Churches have remained more faithful to the ancient way of evoking and representing the heavenly realities. Numerous and diversified schools continue this tradition even today and produce icons, frescos, fabrics or other objects in continuity with the ancient models, often without ignoring the present cultural sensibility. Their high content of faith and art has been rediscovered by the West itself.

Many Eastern Catholic Churches have often been subjected in this field to Western ways which are sometimes not of high quality, perhaps more simple but foreign to the requirements and significance of their own traditions. An organic recuperation of the proper usages is essential in order to avoid hybridisms and contradictions within the celebrations: the dispositions of the space, images, liturgical vestments, and furnishings are not left to the taste of each individual or group but must correspond to the intrinsic requirements of the celebrations and should be coherent with respect to each other.

109. The obligation of fidelity to the tradition

It cannot be denied that the Eastern Catholic Churches have been exposed, in rather recent times, to the influence of sacred art styles completely foreign to their heritage, concerning both the external form of sacred buildings and the arrangement of the interior space and sacred images. Yet, from the preceding observations emerges a harmonious unity of words, gestures, space, and objects proper and specific to each of the Eastern liturgies. Continuous reference must be made to this aspect when planning new places of worship. To do so naturally requires on the part of the clergy an in-depth knowledge of their own tradition and a constant, well established, and systematic formation of the faithful so that they may be able to fully perceive the richness of the signs entrusted to them. Fidelity does not imply anachronistic fixation, as the evolution of sacred art - even in the East - demonstrates, but rather,

development that is fully coherent with the profound and immutable meaning of how it is celebrated in the liturgy.

110. *The Commission of sacred art*

The various Churches *sui iuris* will have to find and form their own experts in this field, and where necessary institute without further delay commissions of sacred art, where they do not already exist, with the precise task of ensuring that the projects for new churches or chapels and the associated furnishings, as well as restorations of older ones, correspond to the criteria and meanings of their own liturgical tradition. In addition, it will be their responsibility to examine the existing sacred buildings, suggesting improvements or proposing possible interventions.

111. *The formation of a Central Office for sacred art*

An Office for sacred art has been formed by the Congregation for the Eastern Churches, in collaboration with the Pontifical Commission for the Cultural Goods of the Church, with the task of helping the Eastern Catholic Churches protect the patrimony of their own sacred art, providing indications for the construction of new churches and for the systemization of the interior space or restoration of existing space. The Hierarchs, especially if experts are lacking in their own territory, can consult the Office when they plan to undertake one of the interventions listed.

CONCLUSION

112. *Final considerations*

The scope of the present Instruction is to assist the Eastern Churches which are in full communion with the Church of Rome with their work directed toward giving the liturgical celebrations the central place due them in ecclesial life, in full fidelity to the specific features of their own traditions.

The insistence on the full recuperation of Tradition does not mean to function to the detriment of changes necessary for the sensibility of the contemporary culture: rather, it will be opportune in the future to address this perspective in more detail, in the lively hope that it can also account for the experiences that the Orthodox Churches will acquire in this field, especially in those territories where they are particularly moved to do so.

Meanwhile, it seemed of primary importance to underscore some general criteria aimed, above all, at recovering a full celebrative coherence in the liturgy in the Eastern Catholic Churches, in such a way that the whole Church is enriched by their specific heritages.

The indications contained here can be completed by the reflection and contribution of the individual Churches *sui iuris*, dedicating the necessary attention to them by studying how they should be applied in the various individual traditions and conditions.

In composing the text of the Instruction, the Congregation for the Eastern Churches drew from its vast experience acquired through decades of work in the liturgical sector, thanks to the praise-worthy activity of the Liturgical Commission operating within the Congregation, and that led also to the publishing of liturgical texts appreciated not only by Eastern Catholic Churches, which were the primary recipients, but also by researchers and by Orthodox brethren themselves. Recognition is also given to the Consultors of the Commission, who have dedicated and continue to dedicate time and competency to the service of the Churches of the East.

May Mary, the most beautiful fruit of the Redemption, the humble maidservant ready to accomplish the will of the Father, the holy ark of the Son who assumes human nature, the temple overshadowed by the power of the Holy Spirit, she who received the Word of God keeping him in her heart and who magnified the greatness and the goodness of the Lord raising her song of praise to Him, the Mother of the Church, sustain the zeal of the Eastern Catholic Churches ready to make their liturgical heritage flourish and lead their path toward the perfect heavenly liturgy on the day in which, upon the Lord's return, humanity will be allowed to see God as He is, in unceasing adoration of the most holy Trinity.

From the See of the Congregation for the Eastern Churches, 6 January 1996, Solemnity of the Lord's Epiphany.

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