VOCATIONAL
DISCERNMENT

SECULAR INSTITUTE
LAY SERVANTS OF JESUS CHRIST PRIEST

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TOPIC 4

THE SACRAMENTAL ECONOMY

METHODOLOGY

Guide to study the texts personally:

1. Read the text and underline the ideas you want to highlight or the doubts that arise. Take note of them.

2. Bring to prayer the underlined ideas that you would highlight and the doubts about the text. Explain what calls you feel God is making to you for your daily life.

3. What commitment emerges from these calls? How can you bring them to life? Where do you find resistance?

Presentation of the questions worked on to the person in charge of the formation process.

THE SACRAMENTAL ECONOMY

(Catechism of the Catholic Church)

1076. On the day of Pentecost, through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the Church manifests herself to the world (cf. SC 6; LG 2). The gift of the Spirit inaugurates a new time in the "dispensation of the mystery": the time of the Church, during which Christ manifests, makes present and communicates his work of salvation through the Liturgy of his Church, "until he comes" (1 Cor 11:26). During this time of the Church, Christ lives and acts in his Church and with her in a new way, that of this new time. He acts for the sacraments; this is what the common Tradition of East and West calls "the sacramental Economy"; this consists in the communication (or "dispensation") of the fruits of Christ's Paschal Mystery in the celebration of the Church's "sacramental" liturgy.

Therefore, it is necessary to explain first this "sacramental dispensation" (chapter one). In this way the nature and essential aspects of the liturgical celebration will appear more clearly (chapter two).

CHAPTER ONE: THE PASCHAL MYSTERY IN THE TIME OF THE CHURCH

1. 1.THE LITURGY, THE WORK OF THE HOLY TRINITY

I. The Father, Source and Purpose of the Liturgy

1077. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all kinds of spiritual blessings, in heaven, in Christ; because he chose us in him before the creation of the world, to be holy and immaculate in his presence, in love; choosing us beforehand to be his adopted children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace with which he has graced us in the Beloved" (Eph 1:3-6).

1078. To bless is a divine action that gives life and whose source is the Father. His blessing is both word and gift ("bene-dictio", "eu-logia"). Applied to man, this term means worship and surrender to one's Creator in thanksgiving.

1079. From the beginning until the consummation of time, all the work of God is a blessing. From the liturgical poem of the first creation to the canticles of the heavenly Jerusalem, inspired authors proclaim the plan of salvation as an immense divine blessing.

1080. From the beginning, God blesses living beings, especially men and women. The covenant with Noah and with all animate beings renews this blessing of fruitfulness, despite man's sin by which

the earth is "cursed". But it is from Abraham that the divine blessing penetrates human history, which was on its way to death, to bring it back to life, to its source: through the faith of the "father of believers" who receives the blessing, the history of salvation is inaugurated.

1081. Divine blessings are manifested in marvelous and saving events: the birth of Isaac, the exodus from Egypt (Passover and Exodus), the gift of the Promised Land, the election of David, the presence of God in the temple, the purifying exile and the return of a "little remnant". The Law, the Prophets and the Psalms that weave the liturgy of the chosen people both recall these divine blessings and respond to them with the blessings of praise and thanksgiving.

1082. In the Church's liturgy, the divine blessing is fully revealed and communicated: the Father is recognized and adored as the source and end of all the blessings of creation and salvation; in his Word, incarnate, dead and risen for us, he fills us with his blessings and through him he pours into our hearts the gift that contains all gifts: the Holy Spirit.

1083. It is therefore understandable that as a response of faith and love to the "spiritual blessings" with which the Father enriches us, the Christian liturgy has a twofold dimension. On the one hand, the Church, united to her Lord and "under the action of the Holy Spirit" (Lk 10:21), blesses the Father "for his unspeakable gift" (2 Cor 9:15) through adoration, praise and thanksgiving. On the other hand, and until the consummation of God's plan, the Church does not cease to present to the Father "the offering of her own gifts" and to implore that the Holy Spirit come upon this offering, upon herself, upon the faithful and upon the whole world, so that through communion in the death and resurrection of Christ the Priest and by the power of the Spirit these divine blessings may bear fruit of God. life "to the praise of the glory of his grace" (Eph 1:6).

II. The Work of Christ in the Liturgy

Christ glorified...

1084. "Sitting at the right hand of the Father" and pouring out the Holy Spirit on his Body which is the Church, Christ now acts through the sacraments instituted by him to communicate his grace. The sacraments are sensible signs (words and actions), accessible to our humanity today. They effectually realize the grace they signify by virtue of the action of Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit.

1085. In the Church's liturgy, Christ signifies and fulfills his paschal mystery principally. During his earthly life, Jesus proclaimed the paschal mystery by his teaching and anticipated the paschal mystery by his actions. When his hour came (cf. Jn 13:1; 17:1), he experienced the only event in history that does not happen: Jesus dies, is buried, rises from the dead and sits at the right hand of the Father "once for all" (Rom 6:10; Heb 7:27; 9:12). It is a real event, which happened in our history, but absolutely singular: all other events happen once, and then they happen and are absorbed by the past. The paschal mystery of Christ, on the contrary, cannot remain only in the past, for by his death he destroyed death, and all that Christ is and all that he did and suffered for men participates in divine eternity and thus dominates all times and remains permanently present in them. The event of the Cross and the Resurrection remains and draws everything to Life.

... from the Church of the Apostles...

1086."For this reason, as Christ was sent by the Father, he himself also sent the Apostles, filled with the Holy Spirit, not only so that, in preaching the Gospel to every creature, they would proclaim that the Son of God, by his death and resurrection, has freed us from the power

of Satan and death and has led us into the kingdom of the Father, but also that they might accomplish the work of salvation which they proclaimed through the sacrifice and the sacraments around which the whole liturgical life revolves" (SC 6).

1087. Thus, the Risen Christ, by giving the Holy Spirit to the Apostles, entrusts to them his power of sanctification (cf. Jn 20:21-23); they become sacramental signs of Christ. By the power of the Holy Spirit Himself they entrust this power to their successors. This "apostolic succession" structures the whole liturgical life of the Church. It is itself sacramental, transmitted by the sacrament of Holy Orders.

... it is present in the earthly liturgy...

1088. "To accomplish so great a work"—the dispensation or communication of his work of salvation—"Christ is always present in his Church, especially in liturgical acts. He is present in the sacrifice of the Mass, not only in the person of the minister, "offering himself now by the ministry of priests the same who was then offered on the Cross", but also, above all, under the Eucharistic species. He is present with his virtue in the sacraments, so that when someone baptizes, it is Christ who baptizes. He is present in his Word, for it is he himself who speaks when Sacred Scripture is read in the Church. Finally, he is present when the Church supplicates and sings psalms, the same one who promised: 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them' (Mt 18:20)" (SC 7).

1089."In fact, in so great a work by which God is perfectly glorified and men sanctified, Christ always associates with himself the Church, his beloved Bride, who invokes her Lord and through him worships the Eternal Father" (SC 7).

... which participates in the heavenly liturgy.

1090. "In the earthly liturgy we foretaste and participate in that heavenly liturgy which is celebrated in the holy city, Jerusalem, to which we go as pilgrims, where Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father, as minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle; we sang a hymn of glory to the Lord with all the heavenly host; venerating the memory of the saints, we hope to participate with them and accompany them; we wait for the Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ, until He is revealed, our life, and we are revealed with Him in glory" (SC 8; cf. LG 50).

III. The Holy Spirit and the Church in the Liturgy

1091. In the liturgy, the Holy Spirit is the pedagogue of the faith of the People of God, the architect of the "masterpieces of God" which are the sacraments of the New Covenant. The desire and work of the Spirit at the heart of the Church is that we live from the life of the risen Christ. When he finds in us the response of faith that he has aroused, then true cooperation takes place. Through it, liturgy becomes the common work of the Holy Spirit and of the Church.

1092. In this sacramental dispensation of the mystery of Christ, the Holy Spirit acts in the same way as in the other times of the economy of salvation: he prepares the Church for the encounter with her Lord, he recalls and manifests Christ to the faith of the assembly; it makes present and actualizes the mystery of Christ by its transforming power; finally, the Spirit of communion unites the Church to the life and mission of Christ.

The Holy Spirit Prepares to Receive Christ

1093. In the sacramental economy, the Holy Spirit realizes the figures of the Old Covenant. Since the Church of Christ was "wonderfully prepared in the history of the people of Israel and in the Old Covenant" (LG 2), the Church's liturgy preserves as an integral and irreplaceable part, making it its own, some elements of the worship of the Old Covenant:

- mainly the reading of the Old Testament;
- the prayer of the Psalms;
- and above all the memory of the salvific events and significant realities that found their fulfilment in the mystery of Christ (the Promise and the Covenant; the Exodus and Easter; the Kingdom and the Temple; the Exile and the Return).

1094. It is on this harmony of the two Testaments (cf. DV 14-16) that the Lord's Paschal catechesis (cf. Lk 24:13-49) is articulated, followed by that of the Apostles and the Fathers of the Church. This catechesis reveals what remained hidden under the letter of the Old Testament: the mystery of Christ. It is called "typological" catechesis, because it reveals the newness of Christ from the "figures" (types) that announced him in the deeds, words and symbols of the First Covenant. By this re-reading in the Spirit of Truth starting from Christ, the figures are explained (cf. 2 Cor 3:14-16). Thus, the flood and Noah's ark foreshadowed salvation through Baptism (cf. 1 Pt 3:21), as did the cloud, and the crossing of the Red Sea; the water of the rock was the figure of Christ's spiritual gifts (cf. 1 Cor 10:1-6); the manna from the desert prefigured the Eucharist, "the true Bread from heaven" (Jn 6:32).

1095. For this reason, the Church, especially during the seasons of Advent, Lent and especially on Easter night, rereads and relives all these events of salvation history in the "today" of her Liturgy. But this also requires that catechesis help the faithful to open themselves to this "spiritual" understanding of the economy of salvation, as the Church's liturgy manifests it and makes it live for us.

1096. Jewish Liturgy and Christian Liturgy. A better understanding of the faith and religious life of the Jewish people as they are professed and lived even today can help to better understand certain aspects of the Christian liturgy. For Jews and Christians, Sacred Scripture is an essential part of their respective liturgies: for the proclamation of the Word of God, the response to this Word, the adoration of praise and intercession for the living and the dead, the recourse to divine mercy. The liturgy of the Word, in its proper structure, has its origin in Jewish prayer. The Prayer of the Hours, and other liturgical texts and formularies have their parallels in it as well, as do the very formulas of our most venerable prayers, for example, the Lord's Prayer. The Eucharistic prayers are also inspired by models from the Jewish tradition. The relationship between the Jewish liturgy and the Christian liturgy, but also the difference in their contents, are particularly visible on the great feasts of the liturgical year such as Easter. Christians and Jews celebrate Easter: the Passover of history, oriented towards the future in the Jews; Easter brought about in the death and resurrection of Christ in Christians, although always awaiting the definitive consummation.

1097. In the liturgy of the New Covenant, every liturgical action, especially the celebration of the Eucharist and the sacraments, is an encounter between Christ and the Church. The liturgical assembly receives its unity from the "communion of the Holy Spirit" which ga-

thers the children of God into the one Body of Christ. This meeting overflows human, racial, cultural and social affinities.

1098. The assembly must prepare itself to meet its Lord, it must be "a people well disposed" (cf. Lk 1:17). This preparation of hearts is the common work of the Holy Spirit and of the assembly, in particular of its ministers. The grace of the Holy Spirit tends to arouse faith, conversion of heart and adherence to the Father's will. These dispositions precede the acceptance of the other graces offered in the celebration itself and the fruits of new life that it is called to produce.

The Holy Spirit Recalls the Mystery of Christ

1099. The Spirit and the Church cooperate in the manifestation of Christ and his work of salvation in the liturgy. Especially in the Eucharist, and similarly in the other sacraments, the liturgy is a Memorial of the Mystery of salvation. The Holy Spirit is the living memory of the Church (cf. Jn 14:26).

1100. The Word of God. The Holy Spirit first reminds the liturgical assembly of the meaning of the event of salvation by giving life to the Word of God that is proclaimed to be received and lived:

> *"The importance of Sacred Scripture in the celebration of the liturgy is of the utmost importance. In fact, from it are taken the readings that are later explained in the homily, and the psalms that are sung; the prayers, prayers and liturgical hymns are impregnated with his breath and inspiration; from it actions and signs receive their meaning" (SC 24).*

1101. It is the Holy Spirit who gives to the lectors and listeners, according to the dispositions of their hearts, the spiritual understanding of the Word of God. Through the words, actions and symbols that make up the fabric of a celebration, the Holy Spirit places the faithful and ministers in a living relationship with Christ, the Word and Image of the Father, so that they can pass on to their lives the meaning of what they hear, contemplate and do in the celebration.

1102. "Faith is raised up in the hearts of non-believers and nourished in the hearts of believers by the word [...] of salvation. With faith the community of believers begins and develops" (PO 4). The proclamation of the Word of God is not reduced to a teaching: it demands a response of faith, as consent and commitment, with a view to the Covenant between God and his people. It is also the Holy Spirit who gives the grace of faith, strengthens it and makes it grow in the community. The liturgical assembly is first and foremost communion in faith.

1103. The anamnesis. The liturgical celebration always refers to God's saving interventions in history. "The plan of revelation is accomplished by intrinsically bound deeds and words; [...] words proclaim the works and explain their mystery" (DV 2). In the liturgy of the Word, the Holy Spirit "reminds the assembly" of all that Christ has done for us. According to the nature of the liturgical actions and ritual traditions of the Churches, the celebration "commemorates" the wonders of God in a more or less developed Anamnesis. The Holy Spirit, who thus awakens the memory of the Church, then arouses thanksgiving and praise (Doxology).

The Holy Spirit actualizes the Mystery of Christ

1104. The Christian liturgy not only recalls the events that saved us, but actualizes them, makes them present. The paschal mystery of Christ is celebrated, not repeated; it is the celebrations that are repeated; in each of them there is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit who actualizes the one Mystery.

1105. The Epiclesis ("invocation upon") is the intercession by which the priest begs the Father to send the sanctifying Spirit so that the offerings may become the Body and Blood of Christ and that the faithful, in receiving them, may themselves become a living offering to God.

1106. Together with the Anamnesis, the Epiclesis is the centre of every sacramental celebration, and especially of the Eucharist:

> *"You ask how bread becomes the Body of Christ and wine [...] in Sangre de Cristo. I answer you: the Holy Spirit breaks through and accomplishes that which surpasses every word and every thought [...] Let it be enough for you to hear that it is by the action of the Holy Spirit, just as thanks to the Blessed Virgin and to the Spirit himself, the Lord, by himself and in himself, took on human flesh" (St. John Damascene, Expositio fidei, 86 [De fide orthodoxa, 4, 13]).*

1107. The transforming power of the Holy Spirit in the liturgy hastens the coming of the Kingdom and the consummation of the mystery of salvation. In expectation and in hope he makes us truly anticipate full communion with the Holy Trinity. Sent by the Father, who listens to the epiclesis of the Church, the Spirit gives life to those who welcome him, and constitutes for them, from now on, "the earnest money" of his inheritance (cf. Eph 1:14; 2 Cor 1:22).

Communion in the Holy Spirit

1108. The purpose of the Holy Spirit's mission in every liturgical action is to bring him into communion with Christ in order to form his Body. The Holy Spirit is like the sap of the Father's vineyard that bears fruit in the branches (cf. Jn 15:1-17; Gal 5:22). In the liturgy the most intimate cooperation between the Holy Spirit and the Church takes place. The Spirit of communion unfailingly remains in the Church, and for this reason the Church is the great sacrament of divine communion that brings together the scattered children of God. The fruit of the Spirit in the liturgy is inseparably communion with the Holy Trinity and fraternal communion (cf. 1 Jn 1:3-7).

1109. The Epiclesis is also a prayer for the full effect of the assembly's communion with the mystery of Christ. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father and the communion of the Holy Spirit" (2 Cor 13:13) must always remain with us and bear fruit beyond the Eucharistic celebration. The Church, therefore, asks the Father to send the Holy Spirit to make the lives of the faithful a living offering to God through spiritual transformation in the image of Christ, concern for the unity of the Church and participation in her mission through the witness and service of charity.

2. THE PASCHAL MYSTERY IN THE SACRAMENTS OF THE CHURCH

1113. The whole liturgical life of the Church revolves around the Eucharistic Sacrifice and the sacraments (cf. SC 6). There are seven sacraments in the Church: Baptism, Confirmation or Chrismation, Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders and Matrimony (cf. DS 860; 1310; 1601). This article deals with what is common to the seven sacraments of the Church from the doctrinal point of view. What is common to them under the aspect of celebration will be explained in the second chapter, and what is proper to each of them will be the subject of the second section.

I. Sacraments of Christ

1114. "Adhering to the doctrine of the Holy Scriptures, to the apostolic traditions [...] and apparently unanimous of the Fathers", we profess that "the sacraments of the new Law [...] they were all instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ" (DS 1600-1601).

1115. The words and actions of Jesus during his hidden life and his public ministry were already salvific. They anticipated the power of his paschal mystery. They announced and prepared what He would give to the Church when everything was fulfilled. The mysteries of Christ's life are the foundations of what henceforth, through the ministers of his Church, Christ dispenses in the sacraments, because "the [...] who was visible in our Saviour has passed into his mysteries" (St. Leo the Great, Sermo 74:2).

1116. The sacraments, as "powers that flow forth" from the Body of Christ (cf. Lk 5:17; 6:19; 8:46), always alive and life-giving, and as actions of the Holy Spirit at work in his Body which is the Church, are "God's masterpieces" in the new and eternal Covenant.

II. Sacraments of the Church

1117. Through the Spirit who leads her "into the whole truth" (Jn 16:13), the Church gradually recognized this treasure received from Christ and clarified its "dispensation", as she did with the canon of the Sacred Scriptures and with the doctrine of the faith, as a faithful dispenser of the mysteries of God (cf. Mt 13:52; 1 Cor 4:1). Thus, the Church has specified throughout the centuries that, among her liturgical celebrations, there are seven that are, in the proper sense of the term, sacraments instituted by the Lord.

1118. The sacraments are "of the Church" in the double sense that they exist "through her" and "for her". They exist "through the Church" because she is the sacrament of Christ's action that acts in her thanks to the mission of the Holy Spirit. And they exist "for the Church," because they are "sacraments . . . which constitute the Church" (St. Augustine, De civitate Dei 22, 17; St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae 3, q. 64, a. 2 ad 3), since they manifest and communicate to men, especially in the Eucharist, the mystery of the communion of God Love, one in three Persons.

1119. Forming with Christ the Head "as one [...] mystical person" (Pius XII, enc. Mystici Corporis), the Church acts in the sacraments as an "organically structured" "priestly community" (LG 11): thanks to Baptism and Confirmation, the priestly people are made fit to celebrate the liturgy; on the other hand, some of the faithful "who have received the sacrament of Holy Orders are instituted in the name of Christ to be the Pastors of the Church with the word and grace of God" (LG 11).

1120. EThe ordained ministry or ministerial priesthood (LG 10) is at the service of the baptismal priesthood. It guarantees that, in the sacraments, it is Christ who acts through the Holy Spirit on behalf of the Church. The mission of salvation entrusted by the Father to his incarnate Son is entrusted to the Apostles and by them to their successors: they receive the Spirit of Jesus to act in his name and in his person (cf. Jn 20:21-23; Lk 24:47; Mt 28:18-20). Thus, the ordained minister is the sacramental bond that unites the liturgical action to what the Apostles said and did, and through them to what Christ, the source and foundation of the sacraments, said and did.

1121. The three sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Orders confer, in addition to grace, a sacramental character or "seal" by which the Christian participates in the priesthood of Christ and forms part of the Church according to different states and functions. This configuration to Christ and to the Church, brought about by the Spirit, is indelible (Council of Trent: DS 1609); it remains forever in the Christian as a positive disposition for grace, as a promise and guarantee of divine protection, and as a vocation to divine worship and to the service of the Church. Therefore, these sacraments cannot be repeated.

III. Sacraments of Faith

1122. Christ sent his Apostles so that "in his name they might proclaim conversion to all nations for the forgiveness of sins" (Lk 24:47). "Make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Mt 28:19). The mission of baptizing, therefore, the sacramental mission, is involved in the mission of evangelizing, because the sacrament is prepared by the Word of God and by faith which is consent to this Word:

"The People of God are gathered together above all by the word of the living God... He needs the preaching of the word for the very ministry of the sacraments. In fact, they are sacraments of the faith that is born and nourished by the word" (PO 4).

1123. "The sacraments are ordered to the sanctification of men, to the building up of the Body of Christ, and ultimately to the worship of God, but as signs they also have an instructive purpose. Not only do they suppose faith, they also strengthen it, nourish it and express it in words and actions; because they are called sacraments of faith" (SC 59).

1124. The faith of the Church precedes the faith of the faithful, who are invited to adhere to her. When the Church celebrates the sacraments she confesses the faith received from the apostles, hence the old adage: Lex orandi, lex credendi (or: Legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi). "The law of prayer determines the law of faith" (Indiculus, c. 8: DS 246), according to Prosper of Aquitaine, (fifth century). The law of prayer is the law of faith. The Church believes as it prays. The liturgy is a constitutive element of holy and living Tradition (cf. DV 8).

1125. For this reason, no sacramental rite can be modified or manipulated at the will of the minister or the community. Even the supreme authority of the Church cannot change the liturgy at will, but only by virtue of the service of faith and religious respect for the mystery of the liturgy.

1126. Moreover, since the sacraments express and develop the communion of faith in the Church, the lex orandi is one of the essential criteria of dialogue that seeks to restore Christian unity (cf. UR 2 and 15)

IV. Sacraments of Salvation

1127. Celebrated worthily in faith, the sacraments confer the grace they signify (cf. Council of Trent: DS 1605 and 1606). They are efficacious because Christ himself acts in them; He is the one who baptizes, He who acts in His sacraments in order to communicate the grace that the sacrament signifies. The Father always hears the prayer of the Church of his Son who, in the epiclesis of each sacrament, expresses his faith in the power of the Spirit. As fire transforms into itself all that it touches, so the Holy Spirit transforms into divine life that which is submitted to his power.

1128. This is the meaning of the Church's following affirmation (cf. Council of Trent: DS 1608): the sacraments work ex opere operato (in the very words of the Council: "by the very fact that the action is performed"), that is, by virtue of Christ's salvific work, accomplished once and for all. From this it follows that "the sacrament does not act by virtue of the justice of the man who gives or receives it, but by the power of God" (St. Thomas Aquinas, S. Th., 3, q. 68, a. 8, c). Consequently, whenever a sacrament is celebrated according to the intention of the Church, the power of Christ and of his Spirit acts in it and through it, independently of the personal holiness of the minister. However, the fruits of the sacraments also depend on the dispositions of the one who receives them.

1129. The Church affirms that for believers the sacraments of the New Covenant are necessary for salvation (cf. Council of Trent: DS 1604). "Sacramental grace" is the grace of the Holy Spirit given by Christ and proper to each sacrament. The Spirit heals and transforms those who receive him by conforming them to the Son of God. The fruit of the sacramental life consists in the fact that the Spirit of adoption deifies (cf. 2 Pt 1:4) the faithful, uniting them vitally to the only Son, the Saviour.

V. Sacraments of Eternal Life

1130. The Church celebrates the mystery of her Lord "until he comes" and "God is all in all" (1 Cor 11:26; 15:28). Since the apostolic age, the liturgy has been drawn to its end by the groaning of the Spirit in the Church: Marana tha! (1 Cor 16:22). The liturgy thus participates in Jesus' desire: "I have longed to eat this Passover with you... until it finds its fulfillment in the Kingdom of God" (Lk 22:15-16). In the sacraments of Christ, the Church already receives the earnest of her inheritance, she already shares in eternal life, even though she "looks forward to the happy hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2:13). "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come! [...] Come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev 22:17, 20).

St. Thomas summarizes the different dimensions of the sacramental sign as follows: "Unde sacramentum est signum rememorativum eius quod praecessit, scilicet passionis Christi; et desmonstrativum eius quod in nobis efficitur per Christi passionem, scilicet gratiae; et prognosticum, id est, praenuntiativum futurae gloriae" ("Therefore the sacrament is a sign that recalls what happened, that is, the passion of Christ; it is a sign that demonstrates what is accomplished in us by virtue of Christ's passion, that is, grace; and it is a sign that anticipates, that is, that foretells the glory to come") (Summa Theologiae 3, q. 60, a. 3, c.)

3. THE SACRAMENTAL CELEBRATION OF THE PASCHAL MYSTERY

1135. The catechesis of the liturgy implies in the first place the understanding of the sacramental economy (chapter one). In its light the novelty of its celebration is revealed. This chapter will therefore deal with the celebration of the sacraments of the Church. Through the diversity of liturgical traditions, what is common to the celebration of the seven sacraments is presented. What is proper to each of them will be presented later. This fundamental catechesis of sacramental celebrations will respond to the immediate questions that arise for a member of the faithful in this regard:

- Who celebrates,
- How to celebrate,
- When to celebrate,
- Where to celebrate.

3.1. CELEBRATING THE LITURGY OF THE CHURCH

I. Who celebrates?

1136. The Liturgy is the "action" of the "whole Christ" (Christus totus). Those who celebrate it from now on already participate, beyond the signs, in the liturgy of heaven, where the celebration is entirely communion and celebration.

The Celebrants of the Heavenly Liturgy

1137. The Apocalypse of John, read in the Church's liturgy, first reveals to us that "one throne was set up in heaven, and one seated

on the throne" (Rev 4:2): "the Lord God" (Is 6:1; cf. Ez 1:26-28). He then reveals the Lamb, "slain and standing" (Rev 5:6; cf. Jn 1:29): Christ crucified and risen, the one High Priest of the true sanctuary (cf. Heb 4:14-15; 10:19-21; etc.), the same "one who offers and who is offered, who gives and who is given" (Byzantine Liturgy. Anaphora Iohannis Chrysostomi). And finally, he reveals "the river of water of life [...] who springs from the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Rev 22:1), one of the most beautiful symbols of the Holy Spirit (cf. Jn 4:10-14; Rev 21:6).

1138. "Recapitulated" in Christ, they share in the service of God's praise and in the fulfilment of his plan: the heavenly powers (cf. Rev 4-5; Is 6:2-3), the whole of creation (the four Living Ones), the servants of the Old and New Covenants (the twenty-four elders), the new People of God (the one hundred and forty-four thousand [cf. Rev 7:1-8; 14:1]), in particular the martyrs "slaughtered for the word of God" [Rev 6:9-11]), and the Most Holy Mother of God (the Woman [cf. Rev 12], the Bride of the Lamb [cf. Rev 21:9]), and finally an immense multitude, which no one could number, from every nation, kindred, peoples and language" (Rev 7:9).

1139. In this eternal liturgy the Spirit and the Church make us participate when we celebrate the mystery of salvation in the sacraments.

Celebrants of the sacramental liturgy

1140. It is the whole community, the Body of Christ united to its Head, that celebrates. "Liturgical actions are not private actions, but celebrations of the Church, which is the 'sacrament of unity', that is, a holy people, gathered and ordained under the direction of the bishops. They therefore belong to the whole Body of the Church, influence it and manifest it, but they affect each member of this Body differently,

according to the diversity of orders, functions and participation today" (SC 26). For this reason, too, "whenever the rites, according to the proper nature of each one, admit of a common celebration, with the attendance and active participation of the faithful, it must be inculcated that this should be preferred, as far as possible, to an individual and quasi-private celebration" (SC 27).

1141. The assembly that celebrates is the community of the baptized who, "by the new birth and by the anointing of the Holy Spirit, are consecrated as a spiritual house and holy priesthood so that they may offer, through all the works proper to the Christian, spiritual sacrifices" (LG 10). This "common priesthood" is that of Christ, the one Priest, shared by all his members (cf. LG 10; 34; PO 2):

> *"Mother Church ardently desires that all the faithful be brought to that full, conscious and active participation in liturgical celebrations which the nature of the liturgy itself demands and to which the Christian people have a right and obligation, by virtue of Baptism, 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people acquired' (1 Pt 2:9; cf. 2:4-5)" (SC 14).*

1142. But "all the members do not have the same function" (Rom 12:4). Some are called by God in and by the Church to a special service of the community. These servants are chosen and consecrated by the sacrament of Holy Orders, by which the Holy Spirit makes them fit to act as representatives of Christ the Head for the service of all the members of the Church (cf. PO 2 and 15). The ordained minister is like the "icon" of Christ the Priest. Since it is in the Eucharist that the sacrament of the Church is fully manifested, it is also in the presidency of the Eucharist that the ministry of the bishop appears in the first place, and in communion with him, that of priests and deacons.

1143. In order to exercise the functions of the common priesthood of the faithful, there are also other particular ministries not consecrated by the sacrament of Holy Orders, and whose functions are determined by the Bishops according to liturgical traditions and pastoral needs. "Acolytes, lectors, monitors, and those who belong to the schola cantorum carry out an authentic liturgical ministry" (SC 29).

1144. Thus, in the celebration of the sacraments, the whole assembly is a "liturgist", each according to his or her role, but in "the unity of the Spirit" who acts in all. "In liturgical celebrations, each one, minister or faithful, in carrying out his office, will do everything and only that which corresponds to him according to the nature of the action and the liturgical norms" (SC 28).

II.How to celebrate?

Signs and symbols

1145. A sacramental celebration is woven of signs and symbols. According to the divine pedagogy of salvation, its significance is rooted in the work of creation and in human culture, is outlined in the events of the Old Covenant and is fully revealed in the person and work of Christ.

1146. Signs of the world of men. In human life, signs and symbols occupy an important place. Man, being a being at once corporeal and spiritual, expresses and perceives spiritual realities through signs and material symbols. As a social being, man needs signs and symbols to communicate with others, through language, gestures and actions. The same is true of their relationship with God.

1147. God speaks to man through visible creation. The material cosmos presents itself to man's intelligence so that it may see in it the tra-

ces of its Creator (cf. Wis 13:1; Rom 1:19-20; Acts 14:17). Light and night, wind and fire, water and earth, tree and fruit speak of God, symbolizing both his greatness and his closeness.

1148. As creatures, these sensible realities can become a place of expression of the action of God who sanctifies men, and of the action of men who render their worship to God. The same is true of the signs and symbols of human social life: washing and anointing, breaking bread and sharing of the cup can express God's sanctifying presence and man's gratitude to his Creator.

1149. The great religions of humanity bear witness, often in an impressive way, to this cosmic and symbolic meaning of religious rites. The Church's liturgy presupposes, integrates and sanctifies elements of creation and of human culture, conferring on them the dignity of signs of grace, of the new creation in Jesus Christ.

1150. Signs of the Covenant. The chosen people receive from God distinctive signs and symbols that mark their liturgical life: they are no longer merely celebrations of cosmic cycles and social events, but signs of the Covenant, symbols of God's great actions on behalf of his people. Among these liturgical signs of the Old Covenant can be named circumcision, the anointing and consecration of kings and priests, the laying on of hands, sacrifices and, above all, Easter. The Church sees in these signs a prefiguration of the sacraments of the New Covenant.

1151. Signs assumed by Christ. In his preaching, the Lord Jesus often makes use of the signs of creation to make known the mysteries of the Kingdom of God (cf. Lk 8:10). He performs his healings or underlines his preaching by means of material signs or symbolic gestures (cf. Jn 9:6; Mk 7:33-35; 8:22-25). He gives new meaning to the events and

signs of the Old Covenant, especially to the Exodus and Easter (cf. Lk 9:31; 22:7-20), because he himself is the meaning of all these signs.

1152. Sacramental signs. From Pentecost, the Holy Spirit brings about sanctification through the sacramental signs of his Church. The sacraments of the Church do not annul, but purify and integrate all the richness of the signs and symbols of the cosmos and of social life. Moreover, they fulfill the types and figures of the Old Covenant, signify and accomplish the salvation wrought by Christ, and foreshadow and anticipate the glory of heaven.

Words and actions

1153. Every sacramental celebration is an encounter of the children of God with their Father, in Christ and in the Holy Spirit, and this encounter is expressed as a dialogue through actions and words. Certainly, symbolic actions are already a language, but it is necessary that the Word of God and the response of faith accompany and enliven these actions, so that the seed of the Kingdom may bear fruit in the good soil. Liturgical actions signify what the Word of God expresses: at the same time God's gratuitous initiative and the response of faith of his people.

1154. The liturgy of the Word is an integral part of sacramental celebrations. To nourish the faith of the faithful, the signs of the Word of God must be highlighted: the book of the Word (lectionary or gospel book), its veneration (procession, incense, light), the place of its proclamation (ambo), its audible and intelligible reading, the minister's homily, which prolongs its proclamation, and the responses of the assembly (acclamations, psalms of meditation, litanies, confession of faith).

1155. The word and the liturgical action, inseparable insofar as they are signs and teaching, are also inseparable in so far as they bring about

what they signify. The Holy Spirit not only procures an understanding of the Word of God by arousing faith, but also through the sacraments he accomplishes the "wonders" of God that are proclaimed by the Word itself: he makes present and communicates the work of the Father accomplished by the beloved Son.

Singing and music

1156. "The musical tradition of the universal Church constitutes a treasure of inestimable value that stands out among other artistic expressions, especially because sacred song, together with words, constitutes a necessary or integral part of the solemn liturgy" (SC 112). The composition and singing of inspired psalms, often accompanied by musical instruments, were already closely linked to the liturgical celebrations of the Old Covenant. The Church continues and develops this tradition: "Recite among yourselves psalms, hymns, and inspired songs; sing and sing in your hearts to the Lord" (Eph 5:19; cf. Col 3:16-17). "He who sings prays twice" (St. Augustine, Enarratio in Psalmum 72, 1).

1157. Song and music fulfil their function as signs in a way that is all the more significant the "more closely they are linked to the liturgical action" (SC 112), according to three main criteria: the expressive beauty of the prayer, the unanimous participation of the assembly at the times foreseen, and the solemn character of the celebration. They thus share in the purpose of liturgical words and actions: the glory of God and the sanctification of the faithful (cf. SC 112):

> *"How I wept when I heard your hymns and songs, strongly moved by the voices of your Church, which softly sang! Those voices entered my ears, and your truth melted in my heart, and with this*

the affection of pity was inflamed, and tears flowed, and I did well with them (St. Augustine, Confessions 9, 6, 14).

1158. The harmony of signs (song, music, words and actions) is all the more expressive and fruitful the more it is expressed in the cultural richness proper to the People of God who celebrate (cf. SC 119). For this reason, "popular religious singing should be strongly encouraged, so that in pious and sacred exercises and in liturgical actions themselves", in accordance with the norms of the Church, "the voices of the faithful may resound" (SC 118). But "the texts intended for sacred song must be in accordance with Catholic doctrine; indeed, they must be taken primarily from Sacred Scripture and from the liturgical sources" (SC 121).

Sacred images

1159. The sacred image, the liturgical icon, represents Christ principally. It cannot represent God invisible and incomprehensible; the Incarnation of the Son of God inaugurated a new "economy" of images:

"In the past, God, who had no body or figure, could not in any way be represented by an image. But now that he has made himself seen in the flesh and that he has lived with men, I can take a picture of what I have seen of God. [...] But when we have revealed his face, we behold the glory of the Lord" (St. John Damascene, De sacris imaginibus oratio 1:16).

1160. Christian iconography transcribes through images the Gospel message that Sacred Scripture transmits through the word. Image and Word clarify each other:

"To express ourselves briefly: we preserve intact all the traditions of the Church, written or unwritten, which have been handed down to us without alteration. One of them is the pictorial representation of images, which is in accordance with the preaching of Gospel history, believing that, truly and not in appearance, the Word God became flesh, which is so useful and profitable, because the things that become mutually clear undoubtedly have a reciprocal significance" (Council of Nicaea II, year 787, Terminus: COD 111).

1161. All the signs of the liturgical celebration refer to Christ: even the sacred images of the Most Holy Mother of God and of the saints. They signify, in effect, Christ who is glorified in them. They manifest "the cloud of witnesses" (Heb 12:1) who continue to participate in the salvation of the world and to whom we are united, especially in the sacramental celebration. Through his icons, it is man "in the image of God", finally transfigured "in his likeness" (cf. Rom 8:29; 1 Jn 3:2), who reveals himself to our faith, and even to the angels, recapitulated also in Christ:

"Following [...] the divinely inspired teaching of our holy Fathers and the Tradition of the Catholic Church (for we acknowledge that it is of the Holy Spirit who dwells in it), we define with all exactness and care that the image of the precious and life-giving Cross, as well as the venerable and holy images, whether painted or made of mosaic or other suitable material, let them be exposed in the holy churches of God, on sacred vessels and vestments, on walls and in pictures, in houses and on the roads: both the images of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ, and those of our Immaculate Lady the holy Mother of God, of the holy angels and of all the holy and just" (Council of Nicaea II: DS 600).

1162. "The beauty and color of the images stimulate my prayer. It is a feast for my eyes, just as the spectacle of the countryside stimulates my heart to give glory to God" (St. John Damascene, De sacris imaginibus oratio 127). The contemplation of sacred images, together with meditation on the Word of God and the singing of liturgical hymns, is part of the harmony of the signs of the celebration so that the mystery celebrated may be engraved in the memory of the heart and then expressed in the new life of the faithful.

III. When to celebrate?

The liturgical season

1163. "Holy Mother Church considers it her duty to celebrate the work of salvation of her divine Spouse with a sacred remembrance, on certain days throughout the year. Every week, on the day he called "the Lord's", he commemorates his resurrection, which he also celebrates once a year, together with his holy passion, on the highest solemnity of Easter. In addition, in the cycle of the year he develops the whole Mystery of Christ. [...] In commemorating the mysteries of redemption in this way, he opens up the richness of the virtues and merits of his Lord, so that he makes them present in a certain way, for every time, to the faithful so that they may reach them and be filled with the grace of salvation" (SC 102).

1164. Since the Mosaic Law, the People of God have had fixed feasts beginning with Easter, to commemorate the marvellous actions of God the Savior, to give thanks to him for them, to perpetuate his memory and to teach the new generations to conform their conduct to them. In the time of the Church, situated between Christ's Passover, already accomplished once and for all, and its consummation in the Kingdom of God, the

liturgy celebrated on fixed days is entirely permeated by the newness of the Mystery of Christ.

1165. When the Church celebrates the mystery of Christ, there is a word that marks her prayer: Today!, as an echo of the prayer her Lord taught her (Mt 6:11) and of the call of the Holy Spirit (Heb 3:7-4:11; Ps 95:7). This "today" of the living God into which man is called to enter is the "Hour" of Jesus' Passover, which pierces and guides all human history:

> *"Life has spread over all beings and all are filled with a wide light: the East of the East invades the universe, and the one who existed "before the morning star" and before all the stars, immortal and immense, the great Christ shines on all beings more than the sun. For this reason, for us who believe in him, a day of light, long, eternal, which is not extinguished, is established: the mystical Easter" (Pseudo-Hippolytus Romano, In Sanctum Pascha 1-2).*

The Lord's Day

1166. "The Church, from the apostolic tradition that has its origin in the very day of Christ's Resurrection, celebrates the paschal mystery every eight days, on the day that is rightly called 'Lord's Day' or Sunday" (SC 106). The day of Christ's Resurrection is both the "first day of the week", the memorial of the first day of creation, and the "eighth day" on which Christ, after his "rest" on the great Sabbath, inaugurates the Day "which the Lord makes" (Ps 118:24), the "day that knows no sunset" (cf. Easter Matins of the Byzantine Rite, Ode 9, troparius "Pentekostárion"). The "banquet of the Lord" is its centre, because it is here that the whole community of the faithful encounters the Risen Lord who invites them to his banquet (cf. Jn 21:12; Lk 24:30):

"The Lord's Day, the Day of the Resurrection, the Day of Christians, is our day. That is why it is called the Lord's day: because it is on this day that the Lord ascended victorious with the Father. If the pagans call it the day of the sun, we also do it with pleasure; for today the light of the world has dawned, today the sun of righteousness has appeared, whose rays bring salvation" (St. Jerome, In die Domnica Paschae homily).

1167. Sunday is the day par excellence of the liturgical assembly, on which the faithful "must gather together to listen to the Word of God and participate in the Eucharist to remember the passion, resurrection and glory of the Lord Jesus and to give thanks to God who has made them reborn to living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (SC 106):

"When we meditate, [O Christ], on the wonders that were wrought on this Sunday of your holy and glorious Resurrection, we say: Blessed is the day of Sunday, because in it the Creation began. the salvation of the world [...] the renewal of mankind [...] in it heaven and earth rejoiced and the whole universe was filled with light. Blessed is the day of Sunday, for on it the gates of paradise were opened, that Adam and all the exiles might enter it without fear" (Fanqîth, Breviarium iuxta ritum Ecclesiae Antiochenae Syrorum, v 6 [Mossul 1886] p. 193b).

The liturgical year

1168. Starting from the "Easter Triduum" as its source of light, the new season of the Resurrection fills the entire liturgical year with its radiance. The year, thanks to this source, is progressively transfigured by the liturgy. It is truly "the Lord's year of favour" (cf. Lk 4:19). The eco-

nomy of salvation operates within the framework of time, but since its fulfillment in Jesus' Passover and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the end of history is anticipated, as if foretasted, and the Kingdom of God breaks into the time of humanity.

1169. For this reason, Easter is not simply one feast among others: it is the "Feast of Feasts", "Solemnity of Solemnities", just as the Eucharist is the Sacrament of the Sacraments (the Great Sacrament). St. Athanasius calls it "the great Sunday" (Epistula festivalis 1 [year 329], 10: PG 26, 1366), just as Holy Week is called in the East "the great week". The Mystery of the Resurrection, in which Christ has crushed death, penetrates into our old time with its powerful energy, until all is subdued to it.

1170. At the Council of Nicaea (325) all the Churches agreed that the Christian Easter should be celebrated on the Sunday following the full moon (14 of the month of Nisan) after the vernal equinox. Because of the various methods used to calculate the 14th of the month of Nisan, the date of Easter does not always coincide in the Western and Eastern Churches. For this reason, these Churches are seeking an agreement today, to celebrate again on a common date the day of the Resurrection of the Lord.

1171. The liturgical year is the unfolding of the various aspects of the one paschal mystery. This is particularly true for the cycle of feasts around the mystery of the Incarnation (Annunciation, Christmas, Epiphany) which commemorate the beginning of our salvation and communicate to us the first fruits of the mystery of Easter.

The saint's day in the liturgical year

1172. "In the celebration of this annual circle of the mysteries of Christ, the Holy Church venerates with special love the Blessed Mother of God, the Virgin Mary, united by an indissoluble bond to the saving work of her Son; in it she looks upon and exalts the most excellent fruit of redemption and contemplates with joy, as in a most pure image, that which she herself, entirely, desires and hopes to be" (SC 103).

1173. When the Church, in the annual cycle, commemorates the martyrs and the other saints, "she proclaims the paschal mystery fulfilled in them, who suffered with Christ and were glorified with him; he sets his example to the faithful, which draws all through Christ to the Father, and by his merits he implores divine benefits" (SC 104; cf. SC 108 and 111).

The Liturgy of the Hours

1174. The mystery of Christ, his Incarnation and his Passover, which we celebrate in the Eucharist, especially in the Sunday assembly, penetrates and transfigures the time of each day through the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours, "the Divine Office" (cf. SC IV). This celebration, in fidelity to the apostolic recommendations to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess 5:17; Eph 6:18), "is structured in such a way that the praise of God consecrates the whole course of the day and night" (SC 84). It is "the public prayer of the Church" (SC 98) in which the faithful (clerics, religious and laity) exercise the royal priesthood of the baptized. Celebrated "according to the form approved" by the Church, the Liturgy of the Hours "is really the voice of the Bride herself that speaks to the Bridegroom; indeed, it is the prayer of Christ, with his own Body, to the Father" (SC 84).

1175. The Liturgy of the Hours is called to be the prayer of the entire People of God. In it, Christ himself "continues to exercise his priestly function through his Church" (SC 83); each one participates in it according to his or her proper place in the Church and the circumstances of his or her life: priests insofar as they are dedicated to the pastoral ministry, because they are called to remain assiduous in prayer and in the service of the Word (cf. SC 86 and 96; OP 5); men and women religious by the charism of their consecrated life (cf. SC 98); all the faithful according to their possibilities: "The pastors of souls should see to it that the principal Hours, especially Vespers, Sundays and solemn feasts, are celebrated in the church communally. It is recommended that the laity also recite the Divine Office, either with priests or gathered together, and even alone" (SC 100).

1176. Celebrating the Liturgy of the Hours requires not only harmonizing the voice with the heart that prays, but also "acquiring a richer liturgical and biblical instruction, especially on the Psalms" (SC 90).

1177. The hymns and litanies of the Prayer of the Hours insert the prayer of the Psalms into the time of the Church, expressing the symbolism of the time of day, of the liturgical season or of the feast celebrated. Moreover, the reading of the Word of God at each hour (with the responsories and troparii that follow), and, at certain times, the readings of the Fathers and spiritual teachers, reveal more deeply the meaning of the mystery celebrated, help the understanding of the psalms and prepare for silent prayer. Lectio divina, in which the Word of God is read and meditated upon to become prayer, is thus rooted in the liturgical celebration.

1178. The Liturgy of the Hours, which is as it were an extension of the Eucharistic celebration, does not exclude but welcomes in a com-

plementary way the various devotions of the People of God, particularly adoration and worship of the Blessed Sacrament.

IV Where to celebrate?

1179. The worship "in spirit and in truth" (Jn 4:24) of the New Covenant is not linked to an exclusive place. The whole earth is holy and has been entrusted to the children of men. When the faithful gather in the same place, the fundamental thing is that they are the "living stones", gathered together for "the building of a spiritual edifice" (1 Pt 2:4-5). The Body of the risen Christ is the spiritual temple from which the fountain of living water flows. Incorporated into Christ by the Holy Spirit, "we are the temple of the living God" (2 Cor 6:16).

1180. When the exercise of religious freedom is not impeded (cf. DH 4), Christians construct buildings for divine worship. These visible churches are not mere places of meeting, but signify and manifest the Church that lives in that place, the dwelling place of God with men reconciled and united in Christ.

1181. "In the house of prayer the Holy Eucharist is celebrated and reserved, the faithful gather and the presence of the Son of God, our Saviour, offered for us on the altar of sacrifice, is venerated for the help and consolation of the faithful. This house of prayer must be beautiful and appropriate for prayer and for sacred celebrations" (PO 5; cf. SC 122-127). In this "house of God", the truth and harmony of the signs that constitute it must manifest Christ who is present and at work in this place (cf. SC 7):

1182. The altar of the New Covenant is the Cross of the Lord (cf. Heb 13:10), from which flow the sacraments of the Paschal Mystery. On the altar, which is the center of the Church, the sacrifice of the cross is made present under the sacramental signs. The altar is also the Lord's table, to

which the People of God is invited (cf. General Institution of the Roman Missal, 259: Roman Missal). In some Eastern liturgies, the altar is also a symbol of the tomb (Christ truly died and rose again).

1183. The tabernacle is to be placed "in the churches in the most dignified place and with the greatest honour" (Paul VI, Encyclical Letter, Encyclical Letter No. Mysterium fidei). The nobility, disposition and security of the Eucharistic tabernacle (SC 128) must foster adoration of the Lord truly present in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar.

The Holy Chrism (Myron), whose anointing is a sacramental sign of the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit, is traditionally preserved and venerated in a safe place in the sanctuary. The oil of catechumens and that of the sick can be placed next to it.

1184. The seat of the bishop (cathedra) or of the priest "must signify his office as president of the assembly and director of prayer" (cf. General Institution of the Roman Missal, 271: Roman Missal).

The ambo: "The dignity of the Word of God demands that there be a place reserved in the Church for its proclamation, to which, during the liturgy of the Word, the attention of the faithful spontaneously turns" (cf. General Institution of the Roman Missal, 272: Roman Missal).

1185. The gathering of the People of God begins with Baptism; therefore, the temple must have an appropriate place for the celebration of Baptism (baptistery) and encourage the remembrance of the promises of baptism (holy water).

The renewal of baptismal life requires penance. Therefore, the temple must be prepared for the expression of repentance and the reception of forgiveness, which also requires an appropriate place.

The temple must also be a space that invites recollection and silent prayer, which prolongs and internalizes the great prayer of the Eucharist.

1186. Finally, the temple has an eschatological significance. To enter the house of God, one usually crosses a threshold, a symbol of the passage from the world wounded by sin to the world of new life to which all men and women are called. The visible Church symbolizes the paternal house towards which the People of God is on their way and where the Father "will wipe away every tear from their eyes" (Rev 21:4). For this reason, the Church is also the home of all God's children, widely open and welcoming.

3.2. LITURGICAL DIVERSITY AND UNITY OF THE MYSTERY

Liturgical Traditions and Catholicity of the Church

1200. From the first community in Jerusalem to the Parousia, the Churches of God, faithful to the apostolic faith, celebrate the same Paschal Mystery everywhere. The Mystery celebrated in the liturgy is one, but the forms of its celebration are diverse.

1201. The unfathomable richness of the mystery of Christ is such that no liturgical tradition can exhaust its expression. The history of the birth and development of these rites testifies to a wonderful complementarity. When the Churches have lived these liturgical traditions in communion in faith and in the sacraments of faith, they have enriched each other and grow in fidelity to tradition and to the mission common to the whole Church (cf. EN 63-64).

1202. The various liturgical traditions were born by reason of the

Church's mission. The Churches of the same geographical and cultural area came to celebrate the Mystery of Christ through particular, culturally typified expressions: in the tradition of the "deposit of faith" (2 Tim 1:14), in liturgical symbolism, in the organization of fraternal communion, in the theological understanding of the mysteries, and in types of holiness. Thus Christ, the Light and Salvation of all peoples, through the liturgical life of a Church, manifests himself to the people and culture to whom he is sent and in whom he is rooted. The Church is catholic: she can integrate into her unity, purifying them, all the true riches of cultures (cf. LG 23; UR 4).

1203. The liturgical traditions, or rites, currently in use in the Church are the Latin rite (mainly the Roman rite, but also the rites of some local Churches such as the Ambrosian rite, the Hispanic-Visigothic rite or those of various religious orders) and the Byzantine, Alexandrian or Coptic, Syriac, Armenian, Maronite and Chaldean rites. "The most holy Council, faithful to Tradition, [...] declares that Holy Mother Church grants equal rights and honour to all legitimately recognized rites and desires that in the future they be preserved and promoted by all means" (SC 4).

Liturgy and cultures

1204. The celebration of the liturgy must therefore correspond to the genius and culture of the different peoples (cf. SC 37-40). In order for the Mystery of Christ to be "made known to all the Gentiles for the obedience of faith" (Rom 16:26), it must be proclaimed, celebrated and lived in all cultures, so that these are not abolished but redeemed and fulfilled by him (cf. CT 53). The multitude of God's children, through their own human culture, assumed and transfigured by Christ, have access to the Father, to glorify him in one Spirit.

1205. "In the liturgy, especially in the liturgy of the sacraments, there is an immutable part, because it is a divine institution, of which the Church is the guardian, and parts susceptible to change, which she has the power, and sometimes even the duty, to adapt to the cultures of the peoples recently evangelized (cf. SC 21)" (John Paul II, Lit. ap. Vicesimus quintus annus, 16).

1206. "Liturgical diversity can be a source of enrichment, but it can also give rise to tensions, mutual misunderstandings and even schisms. In this field, diversity must not be detrimental to unity. It can only be expressed in fidelity to the common faith, to the sacramental signs that the Church has received from Christ and to hierarchical communion. Adaptation to cultures requires a conversion of heart and, if necessary, ruptures with ancestral habits incompatible with the Catholic faith" (Vicesimus quintus annus, n. 16).