



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC LETTER

SACRAM LITURGIAM

ISSUED MOTU PROPRIO

January 25, 1964

The many documents on liturgical questions that have been published and are well known to all demonstrate how it was the ceaseless concern of our predecessors in the supreme pontificate, of ourselves, and of the holy shepherds to preserve diligently, to cultivate and to renew the sacred liturgy according to need. Another proof of this solicitude is given by the Liturgical Constitution which the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council has approved by general consent and which we in the solemn public session of December 4, 1963, ordered to be promulgated.

This lively interest stems from the fact that "in the earthly liturgy we take part in a foretaste of that heavenly liturgy which is celebrated in the holy city of Jerusalem toward which we journey as pilgrims, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, a minister of the holies and of the true tabernacle. We sing a hymn to the Lord's glory with all the warriors of the heavenly army. Venerating the memory of the saints, we hope for some part and fellowship with them. We eagerly await the Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ, until He, our life, shall appear and we too will appear with Him in glory" (Article 8, CONSTITUTION ON THE LITURGY).

For this reason the souls of the faithful worship God, the principle and model of all holiness, in such a way as to be, in this earthly pilgrimage, "imitators of the heavenly Zion" (from hymn of Lauds of the Feast of the Dedication of a Church).

For these reasons it is apparent to all that it is our uppermost concern that all Christians, and especially all priests, should consecrate themselves first of all to the study of the already-mentioned Constitution and from now on, resolve to implement its individual prescriptions in good

faith as soon as they enter into force. And since it is necessary by the very nature of things that the prescriptions concerning the knowledge and spread of the liturgical laws should take place immediately, we earnestly exhort shepherds of dioceses that with the help of the sacred ministers, "dispensers of God's mysteries" (CONSTITUTION, Article 19), they should hasten to act in order that the faithful entrusted to their care may understand, to the degree permitted by age, by the conditions of their own life and by their mental formation, the strength and inner value of the liturgy and at the same time participate very devoutly, internally and externally, in the rites of the Church (CONSTITUTION, Article 19).

Meanwhile, it seems evident that many prescriptions of the Constitution cannot be applied in a short period of time, especially since some rites must first be revised and new liturgical books prepared. In order that this work may be carried out with the necessary wisdom and prudence, we are establishing a special commission whose principal task will be to implement in the best possible way the prescriptions of the Constitution on Sacred Liturgy itself.

However, since among the norms of the Constitution there are some which can be made effective now, we desire that they may enter immediately into force, so that the souls of the faithful may not be further deprived of the fruits of the grace which are hoped for from them.

Therefore, with our apostolic authority and on our own initiative, we order and decree that from the coming first Sunday of Lent, that is from February 16, 1964, the end of the interim period established by Law, the following norms enter into force:

I. We desire that the norms contained in Articles 15, 16 and 17 concerning teaching of the liturgy in seminaries, in schools of religious communities and in theological faculties immediately should be worked into the programs in such a way that beginning in the next school year students may devote themselves to such study in an orderly and diligent way.

II. We also decree that, according to the norms of Articles 45 and 46, there be established as soon as possible in the various dioceses a commission whose task is, under direction of the bishop, to foster knowledge of the liturgy and advance the liturgical apostolate.

It will also be opportune that in certain cases, several dioceses should have a single commission.

Furthermore, in all dioceses let two other commissions be established: one for sacred music and the other for sacred art.

These three diocesan commissions may also be merged into one if necessary.

III. From the date established above, we desire that the norms of Article 52 should enter into force, prescribing the homily during holy Mass on Sundays and holydays.

IV. In the same way, we also put into immediate effect the norms contained in Article 71, which permits administration of the sacrament of Confirmation during holy Mass when convenient.

V. Concerning Article 78, we admonish all concerned that the sacrament of Matrimony must normally be celebrated during holy Mass, after the reading of the Gospel and the sermon.

If Matrimony is administered outside the Mass, we order that the following rules be observed until a new ritual is established: At the beginning of this sacred rite (CONSTITUTION, Article 35, paragraph 3), after a brief exhortation, the Gospel and Epistle of the Nuptial Mass must be read; and then let spouses receive the blessing which is contained in the Roman Ritual in Section 8, Chapter III.

VI. Although the Divine Office has not yet been revised and renewed according to the norms of article 89, we nevertheless grant immediately the following permission to all who are obliged to recite the Divine Office. From February 16, in recitation of the office outside of choir, they may omit the hour of Prime and choose from among the three other little hours one that best suits the time of day, always without prejudice to the dispositions of Articles 95 and 96 of the Constitution.

We make this concession with strong confidence that this will not detract in any way from the piety of the clergy, but rather that in diligently carrying out the duties of their priestly office for the love of God, they may feel more closely united to God throughout the day.

VII. Still regarding the Divine Office, we ordain that bishops may for just and well-considered reasons dispense their own subjects wholly or in part from the obligation of reciting it, or substitute another pious practice for it (CONSTITUTION, Article 97).

VIII. Still regarding the Divine Office, we desire that those members of institutes of perfection who, according to their constitutions, recite some part of the Divine Office, or some "little office," provided this is drawn up on the pattern of the Divine Office and regularly approved, are to be considered as taking part in the public prayer of the Church (CONSTITUTION, Article 98) .

IX. Since according to Article 101 of the Constitution those who are obliged to recite the Divine Office may in various ways be permitted to use the vernacular instead of Latin, we deem it proper to specify that the various versions proposed by the competent territorial bishop's conference must always be reviewed and approved by the Holy See. We order that this practice always be observed whenever a liturgical Latin text is translated into the vernacular on behalf of the territorial authority.

X. Since in accord with article 22, paragraph 2, the direction of the liturgy within geographical limits comes within the competence of the legitimately constituted territorial episcopal conferences of various kinds, we establish that the term "territorial" be understood as meaning national.

In addition to the residential bishops, all who are mentioned in Canon 292 of the Code of Canon Law may participate in these national conferences, with the right to vote.

In addition, coadjutor and auxiliary bishops may also be called to these conferences. In these conferences, legitimate approval of decrees requires a two-thirds majority, with the voting secret.

XI. Finally we wish to emphasize that—beyond what we in this apostolic letter on liturgical matters have either changed or have ordered carried out at the established time—regulation of the liturgy comes solely within the authority of the Church: that is, of this Apostolic See and, in accordance with the law, of the bishop. Consequently, absolutely no one else, not even a priest, can on his own initiative add or subtract or change anything in liturgical matters (CONSTITUTION, Article 22, paragraphs 1 and 3).

We ordain that all we have established with this motu proprio should remain valid, and in force, everything to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given in Rome, at St. Peter's, January 25, 1964, the feast of the Conversion of St. Paul the Apostle, in the first year of our Pontificate.

PAUL VI