



The Holy See

MOTU PROPRIO *MYSTERII PASCHALIS* ON LITURGICAL YEAR

AND NEW UNIVERSAL ROMAN CALENDAR The Paschal Mystery and its celebration constitutes the essence of Christian worship in its daily, weekly and yearly unfolding. The Second Vatican Council clearly teaches this. It follows therefore that the restoration of the liturgical year, whose norms have been formulated by the same Holy Synod,(1) must put this Paschal Mystery in sharper focus with regard to the organization of the Proper of the Season and the Proper of the Saints as well as in the revision of the Roman Calendar. I. It is true that in the course of time the multiplication of feasts, vigils and octaves, as well as the progressive complication of different parts of the liturgical year, have often driven the faithful to particular devotions, in such a way that their minds have been somewhat diverted from the fundamental mysteries of our Redemption. Everyone is aware, however, of the numerous dispositions taken in this field by Our predecessors, St. Pius X and John XXIII of venerable memory, to restore Sunday to its original dignity, considered by all as "the original feast day,"(2) and likewise to restore the liturgical celebration of the Lenten Season. Above all, Our predecessor of venerable memory, Pius XII, had decided (3) to revive, within the Church of the West, in the course of the Paschal Night, the solemn Vigil, in which, while celebrating the sacraments of Christian Initiation, the People of God renew their covenant with Christ the Risen Lord. Following the teaching of the holy Fathers and the firm tradition of the Catholic Church, these Popes rightly thought that the unfolding of the liturgical year is not just a commemoration of the actions by which Jesus Christ, by dying, has brought about our salvation. Nor, according to them is this unfolding merely a commemoration of past events so that the faithful, even the more simple, might be instructed and nourished by meditating on them. They also taught that the celebration of the liturgical year "enjoys a sacramental force and a particular efficaciousness to nourish the Christian life."(4) We Ourselves think and teach the same. It is only right, therefore, that, when celebrating "the sacrament of the birth of Christ"(5) and His manifestation to the world, we pray that "he who outwardly was like us, may transform us interiorly."(6) When we renew the Pasch of Christ, we ask God that those who have been reborn with Christ "may be faithful, in their way of life, to the paschal mystery which they have received by faith."(7) For, to use the very words of the Second Vatican Council, "in recalling the mysteries of Redemption, the Church opens to the faithful the riches of her Lord's powers and merits, so that these are in some way made present at all times, and the faithful are enabled to lay hold of them and become filled with saving grace."(8) Thus the revision of the liturgical year and the norms which follow logically from this restoration have no other purpose than to permit the faithful to communicate in a more intense way, through faith, hope and love, in "the whole mystery of Christ which she unfolds within the cycle of a year."(9) II. Nor, we believe, is there any disagreement between this re-emphasis on the mystery of Christ and the feasts of the Blessed Virgin Mary, "who is joined by an inseparable bond to the saving work of her Son,"(10) and the commemorations of the saints, among which it is fitting to single out especially the natalicia of "our lords, the martyrs and conquerors"(11); all these are feasts which shine with particular brightness. For "the feasts of the saints proclaim the wonderful works of Christ in His servants, and display to the faithful fitting examples for their

imitation."(12) Indeed, the Catholic Church has always held that the paschal mystery of Christ is proclaimed and renewed in the feasts of the saints.(13)It cannot be denied, however, that in the course of centuries the feasts of the saints have become more and more numerous. The Sacred Synod has therefore decreed: "Lest the feasts of the saints take precedence over the feasts which commemorate the very mysteries of salvation, many of them should be left to be celebrated by a particular Church or nation or religious community; only those should be extended to the universal Church which commemorate saints who are truly of universal significance."(14)In order to execute this decision of the Ecumenical Council, the names of some saints have been removed from the universal Calendar, and the faculty has been given of re-establishing in regions concerned, if it is desired, the commemorations and cult of other saints. The suppression of reference to a certain number of saints who are not universally known has permitted the insertion, within the Roman Calendar, of names of some martyrs of regions where the proclaiming of the Gospel arrived at a later date. Thus, as representatives of their countries, those who have won renown by the shedding of their blood for Christ or by their outstanding virtues enjoy the same dignity in this same catalogue. For these reasons we think that the new universal Calendar, prepared for the Latin rite, is more in harmony with the piety and the needs of our times, and that it better reflects the universality of the Church, in the sense that it proposes the names of the most important saints, who present to all the People of God a shining example of sanctity in a variety of ways. It is superfluous to say that this will contribute to the spiritual well-being of the entire Christian world. Having very attentively weighed all this before the Lord, by Our apostolic authority we approve the new Roman Universal Calendar prepared by "Consilium"—"The Council for the Proper Implementation of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, and likewise the general norms concerning the arrangement of the liturgical year. We establish that they will go into effect on January 1, 1970, according to the decrees which will be published jointly by the Sacred Congregation of Rites and Consilium, and which will be valid until the edition of the restored Missal and Breviary. We wish that what we have established in this letter, given *motu proprio*, be firm and effective, notwithstanding, to the extent necessary, the apostolic constitutions and ordinances deserving particular mention and derogation. *Given at Rome, at Saint Peter's, February 14, 1969, the sixth year of Our pontificate.* **PAUL VI,**

POPE

NOTES 1. Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, chapter 5; A.A.S. 56 (1964) 125-128. 2. *Ibid.*, art. 106; A.A.S. 56 (1964) 126. 3. Sacred Congregation of Rites, Decree *Dominicae Resurrectionis*, February 9, 1951; A.A.S. 43 (1951) 128-129. 4. Sacred Congregation of Rites, General Decree *Maxima Redemptionis*, November 16, 1965; A.A.S. 47 (1955) 839. 5. St. Leo the Great, Sermon 27 for Christmas 7, 1; PL 54: 216. 6. Cf. Roman Missal, Prayer for the Commemoration of our Lord's Baptism, January 13. 7. *Ibid.*, Prayer for the Tuesday of Easter. 8. Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, art. 102; A.A.S. 56 (1964) 125. 9. *Ibid.* 10. *Ibid.*, art. 103. 11. Cf. Syriac Breviary (5th cent.), ed. Mariani, Rome, 1956, p. 27. 12. Cf. Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, art. 111; A.A.S. 56 (1964) 127. 13. Cf. *Ibid.*, art. 104; 125-126. 14. *Ibid.*, art. 111; 127.