

Liturgy as the Teacher of the Christian Life

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1. In the liturgy, we learn who we are.

Through the Scriptures, prayers, symbols, gestures, and sacraments, we are immersed in the great story of God's love and our salvation in Christ.

We don't merely learn about Jesus. We encounter Christ, who gathers us, speaks to us, forgives us, feeds us, and sends us.

The liturgy forms our identity as the Body of Christ. We gradually come to recognize ourselves not simply as individuals attending Mass, but as a people called into communion with Christ and one another.

Vatican II: Sacrosanctum Concilium 7, 14; Lumen Gentium 7.

2. In the liturgy, we learn how to live.

Week after week, we rehearse the very pattern of Christian discipleship.

We acknowledge our failures and learn humility. We listen to God's Word and allow it to challenge us. We pray for the needs of the world. We offer ourselves with Christ. We exchange peace, receive the Body of Christ, and become what we receive.

The liturgy forms our hearts and habits in the pattern of Jesus' own life: self-giving love.

This is why Vatican II says the faithful should not be present as strangers or silent spectators, but should learn to offer themselves (Sacrosanctum Concilium 48).

Participation isn't merely doing something during Mass. It is allowing what we celebrate to shape who we become.

3. In the liturgy, we learn what we are called to do.

The Eucharist doesn't end with Communion. It ends with a sending.

Having encountered Christ in Word and Sacrament, we are sent to recognize and serve him in our families, workplaces, neighborhoods, and especially among those who are poor, lonely, or suffering.

The liturgy forms us for mission. We carry Christ's mercy, forgiveness, generosity, and justice into the world.

This is precisely why the Council calls the liturgy the source and summit of the Church's life (Sacrosanctum Concilium 10).