

Liturgy & Liturgical Seasons

Fr. Thomas Loya – February 20, 2026
(Comprehensive Theological Lecture Notes)

I. Foundational Premise: Liturgy Is Reality

1. The Necessary “Unlearning”

Fr. Loya begins with a call to *unlearn* common assumptions:

- Liturgy is not primarily:
 - An obligation
 - Attendance at a religious service
 - A rule to fulfill
 - A devotional add-on to life

Instead:

Liturgy is the blueprint of reality.

It is the place where:

- The invisible becomes visible.
 - The infinite becomes intimate.
 - Heaven and earth meet.
-

2. The Sacramental-Mystical Worldview

Fr. Loya describes what he calls the “**S-C-H-L worldview**”:

- **Sacramental**
- **Catholic**
- **Human**
- **Liturgical**

These are not separate categories — they describe one integrated vision.

Mystical = Most Real

A critical theological clarification:

- “Mystical” does **not** mean vague, emotional, or esoteric.
- Mystical means *most real*.
- The mystical dimension is not an escape from reality; it is reality in its fullness.

In this worldview:

- Creation is not neutral.
- Matter is not merely material.
- Physical reality reveals and participates in divine reality.

This is fundamentally incarnational theology.

II. The Incarnation: The Pattern of Liturgy

1. The Creator Becomes Creature

The central theological claim:

The invisible God becomes visible through the physical.

The Incarnation is not merely a past event; it establishes the permanent structure of reality.

- God condescends (kenosis).
- The uncontainable One becomes contained.
- The Creator becomes creature without ceasing to be Creator.

Thus:

- Creation becomes sacramental.
 - Matter becomes a vehicle of divine presence.
 - History becomes capable of eternity.
-

2. The Human Person as Priestly

A crucial anthropological claim:

The human person alone can:

- See creation sacramentally.
- Offer it back to God in praise.

Adam was the first priest.

The human vocation:

- To receive creation.
- To offer it back in thanksgiving.

Thus:

The human person is liturgical by nature.

To live liturgically is to live fully human.

III. What Liturgy Does

1. Liturgy Sanctifies Time and Space

Liturgy transforms:

- Space (through incense, architecture, iconography)
- Time (through the liturgical calendar)
- Matter (through blessing and consecration)
- The human person (through participation)

The church building itself becomes:

- An image of heaven.
 - A meeting place of heaven and earth.
-

2. Chronos and Kairos

Fr. Loya distinguishes:

- **Chronos**: chronological time (linear sequence)
- **Kairos**: divine time (eternal present)

In the liturgy:

“Today Christ is born.”
“Today He is baptized.”
“Today He rises.”

These are not commemorations.

They are participations in kairos.

The liturgical “today” means:

- The event is mystically present.
- We enter into it.
- It becomes operative now.

This is parallel to Eucharistic theology:

- One sacrifice.
 - Timeless.
 - We enter into it.
-

IV. The Liturgical Year: Descent and Ascent

The structure of the Byzantine liturgical year follows a theological arc:

1. Descent

- Incarnation
- Baptism
- Passion
- Crucifixion
- Descent into Hades

2. Ascent

- Resurrection

- Ascension
- Pentecost
- Glorification

The liturgical rhythm mirrors Christ's salvific movement:

God descends to raise humanity.

1. The Harrowing of Hell





The Paschal icon in the Byzantine tradition is not Christ emerging from a tomb.

It is the **Anastasis**:

- Christ descending into Hades.
- Breaking its gates.
- Lifting Adam and Eve.

Theologically:

- Christ does not merely die.
- He invades death.
- He destroys death from within.

Holy Saturday becomes pivotal:

- The decisive confrontation with death.
 - The liberation of humanity.
-

V. The Bridegroom Theology of Holy Week

In the Byzantine Rite, Holy Week is called:

- **Great Week**
- **Bridegroom Week**

The central metaphor:
Christ as Bridegroom.

This is rooted in:

- Ephesians 5
- Revelation
- Patristic tradition

The Cross is understood as:

- A spousal self-gift.
- Christ giving Himself completely to His Bride (the Church).

Marriage becomes:

- The icon of salvation.

- A metaphor for divine-human communion.
-

VI. Sacramentality of Creation

The Eastern Church integrates nature into liturgy:

- Blessing of waters at Theophany
- Pussy willows on Palm Sunday
- Flowers at Dormition
- Harvest fruits at Transfiguration
- Green vestments at Pentecost





Theologically:

- Creation is not backdrop.
- Creation participates in redemption.
- Matter becomes sacramental.

Water at Theophany:

Mystically becomes the Jordan.

Oil in Holy Unction:

- Becomes vehicle of divine healing.
- Unites forgiveness and physical restoration.

The Eastern Church insists:

Nothing is “just” matter.

VII. The Theology of Chant

Why chant everything?

- Chant elevates speech.
- Worship deserves beauty.
- The human voice becomes instrument of offering.

Chant expresses:

- Loftiness
- Sincerity
- Sacrificial praise

It is an embodied theology.

VIII. Liturgical Texts as Theology

The Byzantine liturgy uses:

- Dogmatic hymns
- Allegory
- Metaphor
- Personification

Examples:

- Adam speaking to Paradise.
- The devil lamenting Christ's descent.
- The deceased speaking during funeral rites.

Funeral theology:

- Confronts death directly.
- Integrates grief.
- Ends in hope of resurrection.

Liturgy pulls believers through:

- Suffering
- Loss
- Sin
- Death

Without denial.

IX. Married Clergy in the East

Important clarification:

- Married men may be ordained.
- Priests do not marry after ordination.

The theological distinction:

West:

- Priesthood associated with celibacy.

East:

- Celibacy associated with monasticism.
- Priesthood not ontologically tied to celibacy.

This reflects different theological emphases, not contradiction.

X. Liturgical Continuity: Chrysostom & Basil

The Divine Liturgy of:

- **St. John Chrysostom**
- **St. Basil the Great**

Primarily differ in:

- The Anaphora (Eucharistic Prayer)
- Prayers of the Anaphora were written by each saint

Core structure remains ancient and stable.

XI. The Filioque and the Creed

The Eastern Church uses the original Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed.

Theological point:

- The creed formulated by Ecumenical Councils cannot be altered without another council.
- The filioque was added in the West for pastoral and anti-Arian reasons.
- The East maintains the original formulation.

The emphasis is ecclesiological and conciliar integrity.

XII. Major Theological Themes

1. Immersion

We do not observe liturgy; we enter it.

2. Transformation

Liturgy transfigures the participant.

3. Integration

Theology, architecture, chant, iconography, and gesture form one unified whole.

4. Full Humanness

To live liturgically is to live fully human.

“If you don’t come to church, you’re not fully human.”

XIII. Concluding Theological Vision

Liturgy:

- Is not an obligation.
- Is not attendance.
- Is not nostalgia.

It is:

- The restoration of vision.
- The school of reality.
- The formation of the human person.
- The participation in divine life.

Fr. Loya's central claim:

Liturgy contains the answers to life because it reveals what life actually is.

The invitation:

- Enter deeply.
- Study the texts.
- Live the liturgical year.
- Make the home a domestic church.
- Allow liturgy to transform perception.

If you would like, I can next:

- Convert this into a polished academic PDF with headings, footnotes, and block quotes.
- Create a condensed 3–5 page executive theological summary.
- Develop discussion questions for small groups.
- Or expand any section (e.g., Holy Saturday theology, sacramentality of matter, Bridegroom mysticism, or Kairos vs Chronos) into a deeper theological treatment.