

*Liturgical Catechesis on “Ad Orientem”
at St. John the Beloved*

“In Testimonium”

Parish Bulletin Articles from October 2015 to May 2016



CITATIONS OF LITURGICAL DOCUMENTS IN ST. JOHN THE BELOVED PARISH BULLETIN

Cardinal Sarah Speech at Sacra Liturgia USA 2015 (2015-10-18)

SC 2.4 (2015-10-27)

SC 7.8 (2015-11-01)

SC 9 (2015-11-08)

SC 11.12 (2015-11-15)

Ecclesia de Eucharistia (2015-11-29)

Ecclesia de Eucharistia (2015-12-06)

Ecclesia de Eucharistia (2015-12-13)

Sacramentum Caritatis, 20 (2016-01-31)

Sacramentum Caritatis, 21 (2016-02-07)

Sacramentum Caritatis, 55 (2016-02-14)

Sacramentum Caritatis, 52 & 53a (2016-02-21)

Sacramentum Caritatis, 53b & 38 (2016-02-28)

“Silenziosa azione del cuore”, Cardinal Sarah, (2016-03-06)

“Silenziosa azione del cuore”, Cardinal Sarah, (2016-03-13)

“Silenziosa azione del cuore”, Cardinal Sarah, (2016-03-20)

Spirit of the Liturgy, Cardinal Ratzinger, (2016-04-10)

Roman Missal (2016-04-17)

IN TESTIMONIUM...

18 OCTOBER 2015

Among my more memorable experiences of the visit of the Holy Father to the United States were the rehearsals for the Mass of Canonization.

At the beginning of the second rehearsal I attended one of the Assistant Papal Masters of Ceremony, Monsignor John Cihak, addressed all the servers and other volunteers. He is a priest of the Archdiocese of Portland in Oregon and also a seminary classmate of mine. Monsignor reminded all present that the primary protagonist in the Sacred Liturgy is the Holy Trinity. From that he expounded on the nature of reverence, both as a matter of interior activity and exterior stillness. Attentiveness to the divine mysteries is manifested, therefore, by motion which is both solemn and natural.

He also spoke at length about the appointment of Cardinal Sarah by Pope Francis as the Prefect for the Congregation for Divine Worship. "Sarah" is his last name. His Eminence Robert Cardinal Sarah hails from the African country of Guinea. When that appointment took place last November Cardinal Sarah asked His Holiness "How do you want me to exercise this ministry? What do you want me to do as Prefect of this Congregation?" The Holy Father said, "I want you to continue to implement the liturgical reform of the Second Vatican Council and I want you to continue the good work in the liturgy begun by Pope Benedict XVI."

At a conference in New York City which I attended this past June Cardinal Sarah expounded on this conversation. He told the attendees that

I want you to help me in this task. I ask you to continue to work towards achieving the liturgical aims of the Second Vatican Council (cf. [*Sacrosanctum Concilium*](#), I) and to work to continue the liturgical renewal promoted by Pope Benedict XVI, especially through the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation [*Sacramentum Caritatis*](#) of 22 February 2007 and the Motu Proprio [*Summorum Pontificum*](#) of 7 July 2007. I ask you to be wise, like the householder in St. Matthew's Gospel, who knows when to bring out of his treasure things both new and old (cf. Mt:13,52), so that the Sacred Liturgy as it is celebrated and lived today may lose nothing of the estimable riches of the Church's liturgical tradition, whilst always being open to legitimate development (cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 23).

In the weeks to come we will expound on this two-fold mandate from Pope Francis. In the meantime I encourage you to read the three documents mentioned. And we would do well to heed the last bit of advice that Monsignor Cihak offered the servers: read everything Cardinal Ratzinger wrote on the liturgy.

God bless you.

Rev. Christopher J. Pollard

IN TESTIMONIUM...

27 OCTOBER 2015

From the Second Vatican Council...

2. The liturgy, ‘through which the work of our redemption is accomplished,’ (Secret*, Ninth Sunday after Pentecost) most of all in the divine sacrifice of the eucharist, is the outstanding means whereby the faithful may express in their lives, and manifest to others, the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church. It is of the essence of the Church that she be both human and divine, visible and yet invisibly equipped, eager to act and yet intent on contemplation, present in this world and yet not at home in it; and she is all these things in such wise that in her the human is directed and subordinated to the divine, the visible likewise to the invisible, action to contemplation, and this present world to that city yet to come, which we seek (Cf. Heb. 13:14). While the liturgy daily builds up those who are within into a holy temple of the Lord, into a dwelling place for God in the Spirit (Cf. Eph. 2:21-22), to the mature measure of the fullness of Christ (Cf. Eph. 4:13), at the same time it marvelously strengthens their power to preach Christ, and thus shows forth the Church to those who are outside as a sign lifted up among the nations (Cf. Is. 11:12) under which the scattered children of God may be gathered together (Cf. John 11:52), until there is one sheepfold and one shepherd (Cf. John 10:16).

4. In faithful obedience to tradition, the sacred Council declares that holy Mother Church holds all lawfully acknowledged rites to be of equal right and dignity; that she wishes to preserve them in the future and to foster them in every way. The Council also desires that, where necessary, the rites be revised carefully in the light of sound tradition, and that they be given new vigor to meet the circumstances and needs of modern times.

Sacrosanctum Concilium
Sacred Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy
4 December 1963

The very first footnote of Vatican II is a reference to the *Missale Romanum*, the book of prayers for the Mass which had been only slightly changed over the previous many centuries. The “Secret” is a quiet prayer offered by the priest immediately before the Preface. It corresponds to what it called the “Prayer over the Gifts” or “super oblata” in the current ordinary form of the Roman Rite.

In order to understand what Vatican II says about the sacred liturgy it is critical to understand and love the traditional Roman Rite which the Council Fathers were offering every day, what Pope Benedict XVI dubbed the “Extraordinary Form”.

God bless you.

Rev. Christopher J. Pollard

IN TESTIMONIUM...

1 NOVEMBER 2015

More from *Sacrosanctum Concilium*:

7. ...Christ is always present in His Church, especially in her liturgical celebrations. He is present in the sacrifice of the Mass, not only in the person of His minister, "the same now offering, through the ministry of priests, who formerly offered himself on the cross" (20), but especially under the eucharistic species. By His power He is present in the sacraments, so that when a man baptizes it is really Christ Himself who baptizes (21). He is present in His word, since it is He Himself who speaks when the holy scriptures are read in the Church. He is present, lastly, when the Church prays and sings, for He promised: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20) .

Christ indeed always associates the Church with Himself in this great work wherein God is perfectly glorified and men are sanctified. The Church is His beloved Bride who calls to her Lord, and through Him offers worship to the Eternal Father.

Rightly, then, the liturgy is considered as an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ. In the liturgy the sanctification of the man is signified by signs perceptible to the senses, and is effected in a way which corresponds with each of these signs; in the liturgy the whole public worship is performed by the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, that is, by the Head and His members.

From this it follows that every liturgical celebration, because it is an action of Christ the priest and of His Body which is the Church, is a sacred action surpassing all others; no other action of the Church can equal its efficacy by the same title and to the same degree.

8. 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 (22); 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 Saviour, Our Lord Jesus Christ, until He, our life, shall appear and we too will appear with Him in glory (23).

All you angels and saints, pray for us!

God bless you.

Fr. Christopher J. Pollard

IN TESTIMONIUM...

8 NOVEMBER 2015

My mother's Funeral Mass may have been beautiful and may have moved hearts closer to Jesus, but the purpose of the Sacred Liturgy is not evangelization. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* clarifies that people need to be evangelized first.

9. The sacred liturgy does not exhaust the entire activity of the Church. Before men can come to the liturgy they must be called to faith and to conversion: "How then are they to call upon him in whom they have not yet believed? But how are they to believe him whom they have not heard? And how are they to hear if no one preaches? And how are men to preach unless they be sent?" (Rom. 10:14-15).

The words we speak and the lives we live should help others to come to believe in Jesus and to want to amend their lives.

Therefore the Church announces the good tidings of salvation to those who do not believe, so that all men may know the true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent, and may be converted from their ways, doing penance (Cf. John 17:3; Luke 24:27; Acts 2:38). To believers also the Church must ever preach faith and penance, she must prepare them for the sacraments, teach them to observe all that Christ has commanded (Cf. Matt. 28:20), and invite them to all the works of charity, piety, and the apostolate. For all these works make it clear that Christ's faithful, though not of this world, are to be the light of the world and to glorify the Father before men.

When we invite friends to come to Mass with us, we should be ready to explain some things ahead of time and to answer questions afterwards. The Sacred Liturgy did not fail if someone visiting did not understand it.

There is a pamphlet I developed years ago called "The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass: A Biblical Prayer". We will try to keep copies of it available in the vestibule. That and other guides can help newcomers and life-long believers to appreciate the divine authorship of our worship, the angelic origin of some many of our prayers and chants, and the saintly company in which we find ourselves.

That should result in all of us realizing that the need for deeper faith and more perfect contrition is constant.

All you angels and saints, pray for us!

God bless you.

Fr. Christopher J. Pollard

IN TESTIMONIUM...

15 NOVEMBER 2015

Sometimes people worry that they are not “getting a lot out of Mass”. To paraphrase the famous inauguration speech, “Ask not what your Mass can do for you. Ask what you can do for your Mass”.

Consider the possibility that our daily prayer life, in large part, determines how we experience “Sunday Mass”.

11. But in order that the liturgy may be able to produce its full effects, it is necessary that the faithful come to it with proper dispositions, that their minds should be attuned to their voices, and that they should cooperate with divine grace lest they receive it in vain (Cf. 2 Cor. 6:1). Pastors of souls must therefore realize that, when the liturgy is celebrated, something more is required than the mere observation of the laws governing valid and licit celebration; it is their duty also to ensure that the faithful take part fully aware of what they are doing, actively engaged in the rite, and enriched by its effects.

12. The spiritual life, however, is not limited solely to participation in the liturgy. The Christian is indeed called to pray with his brethren, but he must also enter into his chamber to pray to the Father, in secret (Cf. Matt. 6:6); yet more, according to the teaching of the Apostle, he should pray without ceasing (Cf. 1 Thess. 5:17). We learn from the same Apostle that we must always bear about in our body the dying of Jesus, so that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodily frame (Cf. 2 Cor. 4:10-11). This is why we ask the Lord in the sacrifice of the Mass that, “receiving the offering of the spiritual victim,” he may fashion us for himself “as an eternal gift” (Secret for Monday of Pentecost Week).

What do we do at Mass? We pray. Christ offers up His Sacrifice of the Cross. We accompany Him through our prayer. If someone doesn't know how to pray, I would expect him to feel strange at Mass. Think of prayer like any other activity. If you feel like you are not good at it, you won't want to do it with other people. If I can't catch a fly ball I don't want to play in the outfield. If you are good at it or getting better at it, you are more likely to enjoy doing it with other people.

If you pray in a significant way every day you will want to come to Mass. If your teenagers pray seriously every day, they will want to pray with several hundred people on Sunday morning. You will realize that you are combining your prayers to those of everyone else, to the Church, to the angels and saints. You will be eager to make your irreplaceable contribution. Therefore, pray. Meditate on the Paschal Mystery. You will want to witness It.

God bless you.

Fr. Christopher J. Pollard

IN TESTIMONIUM...

29 NOVEMBER 2015

Having reviewed most of the theological sections of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the document on the Sacred Liturgy from the Second Vatican Council, we can turn our attention to Pope Saint John Paul II.

His last major work touching on the Sacred Liturgy came in 2003 and is called *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* or “The Church of the Eucharist”. Interestingly enough, in all of his one hundred four footnotes, he quotes only once from *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. His theological and historical is extensive and will help us fill in a complete picture.

The Church draws her life from the Eucharist. This truth does not simply express a daily experience of faith, but recapitulates the heart of the mystery of the Church. In a variety of ways she joyfully experiences the constant fulfilment of the promise: “Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Mt 28:20), but in the Holy Eucharist, through the changing of bread and wine into the body and blood of the Lord, she rejoices in this presence with unique intensity. Ever since Pentecost, when the Church, the People of the New Covenant, began her pilgrim journey towards her heavenly homeland, the Divine Sacrament has continued to mark the passing of her days, filling them with confident hope.

The Second Vatican Council rightly proclaimed that the Eucharistic sacrifice is “the source and summit of the Christian life” (Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 11). “For the most holy Eucharist contains the Church's entire spiritual wealth: Christ himself, our passover and living bread. Through his own flesh, now made living and life-giving by the Holy Spirit, he offers life to men” (Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 5). Consequently the gaze of the Church is constantly turned to her Lord, present in the Sacrament of the Altar, in which she discovers the full manifestation of his boundless love.... The Church was born of the paschal mystery. For this very reason the Eucharist, which is in an outstanding way the sacrament of the paschal mystery, stands at the centre of the Church's life. This is already clear from the earliest images of the Church found in the Acts of the Apostles: “They devoted themselves to the Apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (2:42)

You can read it online: bit.ly/EcclesiaDeEucharistia **ENG**

This Sunday we all begin a new liturgical year. On Wednesday we start a novena to help our Confirmandi make the final preparations for a new life in Christ. Jesus is the Way and the Truth and the Life, unchanging and yet always new. May this new beginning lead us all deeper into the mystery of God among us.

God bless you!

Fr. Christopher J. Pollard

IN TESTIMONIUM...

6 DECEMBER 2015

The beginning of a new liturgical year of Catholic worship...

The beginning of a new millennium of Christian history...

Either way, Pope St. John Paul II set forth a fitting plan of action in *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*:

To contemplate the face of Christ, and to contemplate it with Mary, is the “programme” which I have set before the Church at the dawn of the third millennium, summoning her to put out into the deep on the sea of history with the enthusiasm of the new evangelization. To contemplate Christ involves being able to recognize him wherever he manifests himself, in his many forms of presence, but above all in the living sacrament of his body and his blood. *The Church draws her life from Christ in the Eucharist*; by him she is fed and by him she is enlightened. The Eucharist is both a mystery of faith and a “mystery of light”.³ Whenever the Church celebrates the Eucharist, the faithful can in some way relive the experience of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus: “their eyes were opened and they recognized him” (*Lk 24:31*)....

By proclaiming the Year of the Rosary, I wish to put this, my twenty-fifth anniversary, *under the aegis of the contemplation of Christ at the school of Mary*. Consequently, I cannot let this Holy Thursday 2003 pass without halting before the “Eucharistic face” of Christ and pointing out with new force to the Church the centrality of the Eucharist. From it the Church draws her life. From this living bread she draws her nourishment. How could I not feel the need to urge everyone to experience it ever anew?

The Eucharist, as Christ's saving presence in the community of the faithful and its spiritual food, is the most precious possession which the Church can have in her journey through history. This explains the *lively concern* which she has always shown for the Eucharistic mystery, a concern which finds authoritative expression in the work of the Councils and the Popes. How can we not admire the doctrinal expositions of the Decrees on the Most Holy Eucharist and on the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass promulgated by the Council of Trent? For centuries those Decrees guided theology and catechesis, and they are still a dogmatic reference-point for the continual renewal and growth of God's People in faith and in love for the Eucharist. In times closer to our own, three Encyclical Letters should be mentioned: the Encyclical *Mirae Caritatis* of Leo XIII, the Encyclical *Mediator Dei* of Pius XII and the Encyclical *Mysterium Fidei* of Paul VI.

And so the beginning of a new reading list...

God bless you!

Fr. Christopher J. Pollard

IN TESTIMONIUM...

13 DECEMBER 2015

With the Church still reverberating from the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon our Confirmandi this past Friday evening, with the rose vestments of Gaudete Sunday reminding us that Christmas is right around the corner, the words of Pope St. John Paul II in *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* ring loudly:

“*Mysterium fidei!* - The Mystery of Faith!”. When the priest recites or chants these words, all present acclaim: “We announce your death, O Lord, and we proclaim your resurrection, until you come in glory”. In these or similar words the Church, while pointing to Christ in the mystery of his passion, *also reveals her own mystery: Ecclesia de Eucharistia*. By the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost the Church was born and set out upon the pathways of the world, yet a decisive moment in her taking shape was certainly the institution of the Eucharist in the Upper Room. Her foundation and wellspring is the whole *Triduum paschale*, but this is as it were gathered up, foreshadowed and “concentrated” for ever in the gift of the Eucharist. In this gift Jesus Christ entrusted to his Church the perennial making present of the paschal mystery. With it he brought about a mysterious “oneness in time” between that *Triduum* and the passage of the centuries.

The thought of this leads us to profound amazement and gratitude. In the paschal event and the Eucharist which makes it present throughout the centuries, there is a truly enormous “capacity” which embraces all of history as the recipient of the grace of the redemption. This amazement should always fill the Church assembled for the celebration of the Eucharist. But in a special way it should fill the minister of the Eucharist. For it is he who, by the authority given him in the sacrament of priestly ordination, effects the consecration. It is he who says with the power coming to him from Christ in the Upper Room: “This is my body which will be given up for you This is the cup of my blood, poured out for you...”. The priest says these words, or rather he puts his voice at the disposal of the One who spoke these words in the Upper Room and who desires that they should be repeated in every generation by all those who in the Church ministerially share in his priesthood. I would like to rekindle this Eucharistic “amazement”.

Lend your voice to the words of the angels who adore this mystery in endless amazement: “Holy, holy, holy!”

God bless you!

Fr. Christopher J. Pollard

IN TESTIMONIUM...

31 JANUARY 2016

In the Fall we began a series on the Sacred Liturgy. In February of 2007 Pope Benedict XVI published an exhortation following the Synod of Bishops that had taken place in 2006. It is called *Sacramentum Caritatis* (The Sacrament of Charity):

20. The Synod Fathers rightly stated that a love for the Eucharist leads to a growing appreciation of the sacrament of Reconciliation (Cf. Pope St. John Paul II, *Encyclical Letter Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 17 April 2003, 36). Given the connection between these sacraments, an authentic catechesis on the meaning of the Eucharist must include the call to pursue the path of penance (cf. 1 Cor 11:27-29). We know that the faithful are surrounded by a culture that tends to eliminate the sense of sin (Cf. John Paul II, *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*, 2 December 1984, 18) and to promote a superficial approach that overlooks the need to be in a state of grace in order to approach sacramental communion worthily. (Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1385). The loss of a consciousness of sin always entails a certain superficiality in the understanding of God's love. Bringing out the elements within the rite of Mass that express consciousness of personal sin and, at the same time, of God's mercy, can prove most helpful to the faithful.

(For example, the Confiteor, or the words of the priest and people before receiving Communion: "Lord, I am not worthy to receive you, but only say the word and I shall be healed." Not insignificantly does the liturgy also prescribe certain very beautiful prayers for the priest, handed down by tradition, which speak of the need for forgiveness, as, for example, the one recited quietly before inviting the faithful to sacramental communion: "By the mystery of your body and blood, free me from all my sins and from every evil. Keep me always faithful to your teachings and never let me be parted from you.")

Furthermore, the relationship between the Eucharist and the sacrament of Reconciliation reminds us that sin is never a purely individual affair; it always damages the ecclesial communion that we have entered through Baptism. For this reason, Reconciliation, as the Fathers of the Church would say, is *laboriosus quidam baptismus* (a laborious kind of baptism); they thus emphasized that the outcome of the process of conversion is also the restoration of full ecclesial communion, expressed in a return to the Eucharist.

God bless you!

Rev. Christopher J. Pollard

IN TESTIMONIUM...

7 FEBRUARY 2016

Pope Benedict XVI continued his reflection on the Holy Eucharist and Reconciliation in paragraph 21 of the Post-Synodal Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* with the following thoughts on indulgences:

A balanced and sound practice of gaining *indulgences*, whether for oneself or for the dead, can be helpful for a renewed appreciation of the relationship between the Eucharist and Reconciliation. By this means the faithful obtain "remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven." (Paul VI, Apostolic Constitution *Indulgentiarum Doctrina*, 1 January 1967). The use of indulgences helps us to understand that by our efforts alone we would be incapable of making reparation for the wrong we have done, and that the sins of each individual harm the whole community. Furthermore, the practice of indulgences, which involves not only the doctrine of Christ's infinite merits, but also that of the communion of the saints, reminds us "how closely we are united to each other in Christ ... and how the supernatural life of each can help others." (*Ibid.*, 9) Since the conditions for gaining an indulgence include going to confession and receiving sacramental communion, this practice can effectively sustain the faithful on their journey of conversion and in rediscovering the centrality of the Eucharist in the Christian life.

Far be it from me to recommend a Valentine's Day gift, but if you are in the mood for some Latin spice, the authoritative and up-to-date *Handbook of Indulgences* is online at the Vatican website in the original language: <http://bit.ly/EnchiridionIndulgentiarum2002>

You're welcome.

God bless you.

Fr. Christopher J. Pollard

p.s. We just started a parish subscription to Formed.org and I am pretty excited. It will give all of you access to the videos of *Catholicism* by Fr. Barron as well as "Symbolon" by The Augustine Institute and lots of other content from Beloved and YDisciple as well as eBooks from Ignatius Press. Since the parish has paid the subscription, you can use it for free but you need to register individually. Please go onto the FORMED.ORG and subscribe as a St. John parishioner. Our parish code is X8DEVW.

p.p.s., St. John Prayer Chain will present again a daily email for Lenten Spiritual Reading, providing excerpts this year from works by Vinny Flynn: *Mercy's Gaze*, *7 Secrets of Confession* and *7 Secrets of Divine Mercy*. If you would like to subscribe please follow the link on the parish website or send an email to the Prayer Chain directly at StJohnPrayerChain@StJohnCatholicMcLean.org.

IN TESTIMONIUM...

14 FEBRUARY 2016

Pope Benedict XVI's reflection on the Holy Eucharist in the Post-Synodal Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* mentions penance when the topic of "active participation" is addressed:

55. In their consideration of the *actuosa participation* of the faithful in the liturgy, the Synod Fathers also discussed the personal conditions required for fruitful participation on the part of individuals. One of these is certainly the spirit of constant conversion which must mark the lives of all the faithful. Active participation in the eucharistic liturgy can hardly be expected if one approaches it superficially, without an examination of his or her life. This inner disposition can be fostered, for example, by recollection and silence for at least a few moments before the beginning of the liturgy, by fasting and, when necessary, by sacramental confession. A heart reconciled to God makes genuine participation possible. The faithful need to be reminded that there can be no *actuosa participation* in the sacred mysteries without an accompanying effort to participate actively in the life of the Church as a whole, including a missionary commitment to bring Christ's love into the life of society.

Clearly, full participation in the Eucharist takes place when the faithful approach the altar in person to receive communion. Yet true as this is, care must be taken lest they conclude that the mere fact of their being present in church during the liturgy gives them a right or even an obligation to approach the table of the Eucharist. Even in cases where it is not possible to receive sacramental communion, participation at Mass remains necessary, important, meaningful and fruitful. In such circumstances it is beneficial to cultivate a desire for full union with Christ through the practice of spiritual communion, praised by Pope John Paul II and recommended by saints who were masters of the spiritual life.

God bless you.

Fr. Christopher J. Pollard

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IN TESTIMONIUM...

21 FEBRUARY 2016

Pope Benedict's reflection on the active participation in *Sacramentum Caritatis* begins with these observations:

52. The Second Vatican Council rightly emphasized the active, full and fruitful participation of the entire People of God in the eucharistic celebration. Certainly, the renewal carried out in these past decades has made considerable progress towards fulfilling the wishes of the Council Fathers. Yet we must not overlook the fact that some misunderstanding has occasionally arisen concerning the precise meaning of this participation. It should be made clear that the word "participation" does not refer to mere external activity during the celebration. In fact, the active participation called for by the Council must be understood in more substantial terms, on the basis of a greater awareness of the mystery being celebrated and its relationship to daily life. The conciliar Constitution [Sacrosanctum Concilium](#) encouraged the faithful to take part in the eucharistic liturgy not "as strangers or silent spectators," but as participants "in the sacred action, conscious of what they are doing, actively and devoutly". This exhortation has lost none of its force. The Council went on to say that the faithful "should be instructed by God's word, and nourished at the table of the Lord's Body. They should give thanks to God. Offering the immaculate Victim, not only through the hands of the priest but also together with him, they should learn to make an offering of themselves. Through Christ, the Mediator, they should be drawn day by day into ever more perfect union with God and each other".

53. The beauty and the harmony of the liturgy find eloquent expression in the order by which everyone is called to participate actively. This entails an acknowledgment of the distinct hierarchical roles involved in the celebration. It is helpful to recall that active participation is not per se equivalent to the exercise of a specific ministry. The active participation of the laity does not benefit from the confusion arising from an inability to distinguish, within the Church's communion, the different functions proper to each one. There is a particular need for clarity with regard to the specific functions of the priest. He alone, and no other, as the tradition of the Church attests, presides over the entire eucharistic celebration, from the initial greeting to the final blessing. In virtue of his reception of Holy Orders, he represents Jesus Christ, the head of the Church, and, in a specific way, also the Church herself.

To be continued...

God bless you.

Fr. Christopher J. Pollard

IN TESTIMONIUM...

28 FEBRUARY 2016

Pope Benedict's reflections in *Sacramentum Caritatis* also takes up the topic of role of the priest.:

38. In the course of the Synod, there was frequent insistence on the need to avoid any antithesis between the *ars celebrandi*, the art of proper celebration, and the full, active and fruitful participation of all the faithful. The primary way to foster the participation of the People of God in the sacred rite is the proper celebration of the rite itself. The *ars celebrandi* is the best way to ensure their *ractuosa participatio*. The *ars celebrandi* is the fruit of faithful adherence to the liturgical norms in all their richness; indeed, for two thousand years this way of celebrating has sustained the faith life of all believers, called to take part in the celebration as the People of God, a royal priesthood, a holy nation.

39. While it is true that the whole People of God participates in the eucharistic liturgy, a correct *ars celebrandi* necessarily entails a specific responsibility on the part of those who have received the sacrament of Holy Orders. Bishops, priests, and deacons, each according to his proper rank, must consider the celebration of the liturgy as their principal duty. Above all, this is true of the Diocesan Bishop: as "the chief steward of the mysteries of God in the particular Church entrusted to his care, he is the moderator, promoter, and guardian of the whole of its liturgical life". This is essential for the life of the particular Church, not only because communion with the Bishop is required for the lawfulness of every celebration within his territory, but also because he himself is the celebrant par excellence within his Diocese. It is his responsibility to ensure unity and harmony in the celebrations taking place in his territory. Consequently the Bishop must be "determined that the priests, the deacons, and the lay Christian faithful grasp ever more deeply the genuine meaning of the rites and liturgical texts, and thereby be led to an active and fruitful celebration of the Eucharist". I would ask that every effort be made to ensure that the liturgies which the Bishop celebrates in his Cathedral are carried out with complete respect for the *ars celebrandi*, so that they can be considered an example for the entire Diocese.

53. Every celebration of the Eucharist, in fact, is led by the Bishop, "either in person or through priests who are his helpers." He is helped by a deacon, who has specific duties during the celebration: he prepares the altar, assists the priest, proclaims the Gospel, preaches the homily from time to time, reads the intentions of the Prayer of the Faithful, and distributes the Eucharist to the faithful. Associated with these ministries linked to the sacrament of Holy Orders, there are also other ministries of liturgical service which can be carried out in a praiseworthy manner by religious and properly trained laity.

Please pray for your priests and your bishops. God bless you!

Fr. Christopher J. Pollard

IN TESTIMONIUM...

6 MARCH 2016

His Eminence Robert Cardinal Sarah, the Cardinal Prefect of Congregation for Divine Worship and Sacraments whose speech in New York City last summer I mentioned to you last October, published in June of 2015 an article entitled “Silent Action of the Heart” in the Vatican’s official newspaper *l’Osservatore Romano*. He takes up themes that we have been considering in these pages over the last few months, namely, the development of the Liturgy, the active participation of the faithful and the proper action of the priest offering Holy Mass. He writes:

Fifty years after its promulgation by Pope Paul VI, will the Second Vatican Council’s Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy finally be read? *Sacrosanctum Concilium* is not in fact a simple catalogue of “recipes” for reform, but a true and proper Magna Carta for all liturgical action. In that Constitution, the Ecumenical Council gives us a masterful lesson in methodology. Far from contenting itself with a disciplinary and external approach to the liturgy, the Council summons us to contemplate the liturgy in its essence. The Church’s practice always flows from what she receives and contemplates from Revelation. Pastoral practice cannot be divorced from doctrine.

In the Church, “action is directed to contemplation” (cf. §2). The conciliar Constitution invites us to rediscover the Trinitarian origin of the work of the liturgy. Indeed, the Council affirms continuity between the mission of Christ the Redeemer and the liturgical mission of the Church. “Just as Christ was sent by the Father, so also he sent the apostles,” so that “by means of sacrifice and sacraments, around which the entire liturgical life revolves” they might “accomplish the work of salvation” (§6).

The liturgy in action is thus none other than the work of Christ in action. The liturgy is in its essence *actio Christi*: “the work of Christ the Lord in redeeming mankind and giving perfect glory to God” (§5). He is the high priest, the true subject, the true protagonist of the liturgy (cf. §7). If this vital principle is not embraced in faith, one risks reducing the liturgy to a human action, to the community’s celebration of itself.

On the contrary, the true work of the Church consists in entering into the action of Christ, participating intimately in the mission he has received from the Father. Thus “the fullness of divine worship was given to us,” because “his humanity, united with the person of the Word, was the instrument of our salvation” (§5). The Church, the Body of Christ, must in turn become an instrument in the hands of the Word.

To be continued...

God bless you!

Rev. Christopher J. Pollard

IN TESTIMONIUM...

13 MARCH 2016

Cardinal Sarah article *l'Osservatore Romano* entitled “Silent Action of the Heart”, continues to reflect on active participation and (re)introduces the concept of the priest and the people facing the same direction during prayers of the Mass that are directed to God the Father. He writes:

This is the ultimate meaning of the key concept of the conciliar Constitution, *participatio actuosa*. For the Church, this participation consists in becoming an instrument of Christ the Priest, so as to participate in his Trinitarian mission. The Church participates actively in the liturgical work of Christ insofar as she is his instrument. In this sense, language about the “celebrating community” can carry a degree of ambiguity requiring true caution (cf. the Instruction *Redemptoris sacramentum*, §42). *Participatio actuosa* must not be understood, therefore, as the need to do something. On this point the teaching of the Council has often been distorted. It is a question, rather, of allowing Christ to take hold of us and to associate us with his sacrifice.

Liturgical *participatio* must therefore be understood as a grace from Christ who “always associates the Church with himself” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 7). It is he who takes the initiative, who has primacy. The Church “calls to her Lord, and through Him offers worship to the Eternal Father” (§7).

The priest must thus become this instrument that allows Christ to shine through. As our Holy Father Pope Francis recently recalled, the celebrant is not the host of a show, he must not seek the affirmation of the assembly, standing before them as if they were called to enter into dialogue primarily with him. To enter into the spirit of the Council means—on the contrary—to efface oneself, to renounce the spotlight.

Contrary to what has sometimes been maintained, it is in full conformity with the conciliar Constitution—indeed, it is entirely fitting—for everyone, priest and congregation, to turn together to the East during the penitential rite, the singing of the Gloria, the orations, and the Eucharistic prayer, in order to express the desire to participate in the work of worship and redemption accomplished by Christ. This practice could well be established in cathedrals, where liturgical life must be exemplary (cf. §41).

To be continued...

God bless you!

Rev. Christopher J. Pollard

IN TESTIMONIUM...

20 MARCH 2016

Cardinal Sarah article *l'Osservatore Romano* entitled “Silent Action of the Heart”, continues to concept of the priest and the people facing the same direction during prayers of the Mass that are directed to God the Father. He writes:

Of course it is understood that there are other parts of the Mass in which the priest, acting in persona Christi Capitis, enters into nuptial dialogue with the assembly. But this face-to-face has no other purpose than to lead to a tete-à-tete with God, which, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, will become a heart-to-heart. The Council thus proposes additional means to favor participation: “acclamations, responses, psalms, antiphons and songs, as well as...actions, gestures, and bodily attitudes” (§30).

A hasty and all-too-human reading of the Constitution has led to the conclusion that the faithful must be kept constantly busy. The contemporary Western way of thinking, shaped by technology and dazzled by the media, has wished to turn the liturgy into a lucrative production. In this spirit, many have tried to make the celebrations festive. Prompted by pastoral motives, liturgical ministers sometimes stage celebrations into which elements of worldly entertainment are introduced. Have we not witnessed a proliferation of testimonials, acts, and applause? It is imagined that this will foster the participation of the faithful, when in fact it reduces the liturgy to a human plaything.

“Silence is not a virtue, noise is not a sin, it is true,” says Thomas Merton, “but the turmoil and confusion and constant noise of modern society [or of some African Eucharistic liturgies] are the expression of the ambiance of its greatest sins—its godlessness, its despair. A world of propaganda, of endless argument, vituperation, criticism, or simply of chatter, is a world without anything to live for.... Mass becomes racket and confusion; prayers—an exterior or interior noise” (Thomas Merton, *The Sign of Jonas* [San Diego: Harcourt, Inc., 1953, 1981], passim).

We run the real risk of leaving no room for God in our celebrations, falling into the temptation of the Israelites in the desert. They sought to create a cult of worship limited to their own measure and reach, and let us not forget that they ended up prostrate before the idol of the golden calf.

The hour has come to listen to the Council. The liturgy is “above all things the worship of the divine majesty” (§33). It can form and teach us only insofar as it is completely ordered to divine worship and the glorification of God.

God bless you!

Fr. Christopher J. Pollard

IN TESTIMONIUM...

3 APRIL 2016

The Sacred Triduum and Easter Sunday truly were beautiful and full of grace, kissed by the Blessed Virgin Mary. Sacristans, musicians, servers, singers and decorators all worked incredibly hard to make it happen. All of you parishioners who came simply to pray made it that much more rewarding. Among my favorite moments were those quiet mornings and evenings when we gathered for the Liturgy of the Hours the way Fr. Sina and I do in the rectory and some of you do at home.

On this last day of the Easter Octave, known as *Divine Mercy Sunday* since 2002, we will start praying Vespers, (Evening Prayer from the Liturgy of the Hours) every first Sunday of the month.

The Second Vatican Council called for parishes to do so: “Pastors of souls should see to it that the chief hours, especially Vespers, are celebrated in common in church on Sundays and the more solemn feasts. And the laity, too, are encouraged to recite the divine office, either with the priests, or among themselves, or even individually” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 100).

Almost thirty years later, and two weeks after I was ordained, Pope St. John Paul II issued an apostolic letter on keeping the Lord’s Day holy entitled “*Dies Domini*”. In it he writes:

“Sharing in the Eucharist is the heart of Sunday, but the duty to keep Sunday holy cannot be reduced to this. In fact, the Lord’s Day is lived well if it is marked from beginning to end by grateful and active remembrance of God’s saving work. This commits each of Christ’s disciples to shape the other moments of the day - those outside the liturgical context: family life, social relationships, moments of relaxation - in such a way that the peace and joy of the Risen Lord will emerge in the ordinary events of life. For example, the relaxed gathering of parents and children can be an opportunity not only to listen to one another but also to share a few formative and more reflective moments. Even in lay life, when possible, why not make provision for special *times of prayer* - especially the solemn celebration of Vespers, for example – or *moments of catechesis*, which on the eve of Sunday or on Sunday afternoon might prepare for or complete the gift of the Eucharist in people’s hearts?” (*Dies Domini*, 52).

He is right. Why not?

Look online and in the vestibule for my pamphlet explaining the Liturgy of the Hours. Suffice it to say here that the psalms would have played a significant role in the prayer life of the Holy Family. Several times on the Cross did the Lord pray words from the Psalms. There is much more in the heart of Christ to ponder by praying the Psalms *with* Him and *for* His Church.

God bless you!

Fr. Christopher J. Pollard

IN TESTIMONIUM...

10 APRIL 2016

On Wednesdays and First Saturdays, on Holy Thursday and on Corpus Christ, we gather at the altar to adore Our Lord in the Most Blessed Sacrament. When the priest or deacon leads prayers at Exposition and Benediction he is kneeling in front of the altar.

Try to imagine for a moment how it would look and how you would feel if the priest or deacon were to kneel behind the altar at Exposition and Benediction. When I try to image that it seems awkward.

When the priest or deacon is facing the same direction as most of the congregation, is it not clearly symbolic of his leading the Christian people toward God?

Cardinal Ratzinger would agree. In his book *Spirit of the Liturgy* (published in 2000 by Ignatius Press) there is a chapter entitled “The Altar and the Direction of Liturgical Prayer”. In it he says:

after the Council (which says nothing about “turning to the people”) new altars were set up everywhere, and today celebration *versus populum* really does look like the characteristic fruit of Vatican II's liturgical renewal. In fact it is the most conspicuous consequence of a re-ordering that not only signifies a new external arrangement of the places dedicated to the Liturgy, but also brings with it a new idea of the essence of the Liturgy.

Needless to say, he considers the “new idea” to be mistaken. Instead of conceding these changes as permanent he insists:

A common turning to the East during the Eucharistic Prayer remains essential. This is not a case of accidentals, but of essentials. Looking at the priest has no importance. What matters is looking together at the Lord. It is not now a question of dialogue, but of common worship, of setting off towards the One who is to come.

At the same time he suggests (back in the year 2000) that this takes time, admitting that “nothing is more harmful to the Liturgy than constant changes, even if it seems to be for the sake of genuine renewal.” His initial suggestion for immediate implementation was the placement of a significant cross in the middle of the altar to serve as a reference point.

The next modest correction that can be taken without any further rebuilding would be for the priest and deacon to stand at the front of the altar during the Eucharistic Prayer, similar to how they lead prayers at Adoration. This is what St. John has been doing on Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday for many years. I would like to know your thoughts about our doing that more of the time.

God bless you!

Fr. Christopher J. Pollard
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IN TESTIMONIUM...

17 APRIL 2016

The “post-Vatican II” Missal actually presumes that Mass would be celebrated with the priest and people facing the same direction as is evident from the five instances in which the priest is instructed to be turned towards the people:

GREETING

*WHEN THE ENTRANCE CHANT IS CONCLUDED, THE PRIEST AND THE FAITHFUL, STANDING, SIGN THEMSELVES WITH THE SIGN OF THE CROSS, WHILE THE PRIEST, **FACING THE PEOPLE**, SAYS,*

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

THE PEOPLE REPLY:

Amen.

ORATE FRATRES

*STANDING AT THE MIDDLE OF THE ALTAR, **FACING THE PEOPLE**, EXTENDING AND THEN JOINING HIS HANDS, HE SAYS:*

Pray, brethren (brothers and sisters), that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God, the Almighty Father.

THE PEOPLE RISE AND REPLY:

May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands, for the praise and glory of His name, for our good and the good of all His holy Church.

SIGN OF PEACE

*THE PRIEST, **TURNED TOWARDS THE PEOPLE**, EXTENDING AND THEN JOINING HIS HANDS, ADDS*
The peace of the Lord be with you always.

THE PEOPLE REPLY:

And with your spirit.

COMMUNION

*THE PRIEST GENUFLECTS. TAKES THE HOST AND, HOLDING IT SLIGHTLY RAISED ABOVE THE PATEN OR ABOVE THE CHALICE, **WHILE FACING THE PEOPLE**, SAYS ALOUD:*

Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

AND TOGETHER WITH THE PEOPLE HE ADDS ONCE:

Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

*THE PRIEST, **FACING THE ALTAR**, SAYS QUIETLY:*

May the Body of Christ keep me safe for eternal life.

GREETING & FINAL BLESSING

*THE PRIEST, **FACING THE PEOPLE** AND EXTENDING HIS HANDS SAYS:*

The Lord be with you.

THE PEOPLE REPLY:

And with your spirit.

THE PRIEST BLESSED THE PEOPLE SAYING:

May almighty God bless you, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

THE PEOPLE ANSWER:

Amen!

Actually, I added that last little exclamation mark.

May almighty God bless all of us!

Rev. Christopher J. Pollard

IN TESTIMONIUM...

24 APRIL 2016

If you have not visited a Greek Catholic Church you should. Our McLean neighbors at [Holy Transfiguration Melkite Greek Catholic Church](#), where our friend Deacon Sabatino Carnazzo is scheduled to be ordained a priest on Sunday the First of May, offers lovely examples of sacred art. A few doors down from my childhood home in Annandale stands [Epiphany of Our Lord Byzantine Ruthenian Catholic Church](#), which dedicated a beautiful new church a few years ago. Both churches also take food and festivals seriously, by the way.

Once you have visited a Greek Catholic Church you will never be able to forget a most striking feature that they all have in common: the iconostasis that separates the sanctuary from the nave. The *sanctuary* is the area immediately around the altar. The *nave* is the main floor space of the church where the faithful stand, sit and kneel during the Sacred Rites. Some contemporary scholars of eastern Christianity prefer the term *templon* to *iconostasis* for reasons too complex to discuss here. What most Greek Catholics still call the *iconostasis* is a wall of icons that stands as a solid barrier between the holy and the holy of holies (the domain of the profane being outside in the courtyard... or parking lot as the case may be). Doors in the iconostasis permit sacred ministers access to the sanctuary. An image of Our Lord is always on the right of the Royal (or central) Door; an image of Our Lord is always on the left side. We also would expect to see the Evangelists, Archangels and many saints.

Much to my surprise, the reading I have done lately indicates that the iconostasis is not as ancient as we Romans might think. Not only the [Catholic Encyclopedia](#) from 1910 but also modern Eastern sources describe the development of the iconostasis as medieval if not later. [NewByzantines.net](#) acknowledges that “there is neither archiological [sic] evidence nor testimony from the Church Fathers which would support the currently faddish notion in some quarters that clergy and people were a single entity or ‘community’ justifying the elimination of distinctions between the two either functionally or structurally.... In the ancient Byzantine churches and for several centuries thereafter the clergy and the people representing respectively heaven and earth were separated by a low wall about four feet high called a chancel screen.” The chancel screen so characteristic of Roman Churches can still be seen by pilgrims to Rome in the Basilicas of San Clemente and San Stefano Rotondo.

[New Liturgical Movement](#) cites the “erudite Russian icon-painter, L. Uspensky, [who] says that the iconostasis acquired its classical form in the 16th century, when it became one of the most important parts of the Orthodox church”. The Roman Church, on the other hand, has preserved the faithful’s ability to see the priest at the altar even if a bit obscured. Next week we will meditate a bit on what we witness when we “see” the consecration.

See you in Church.

God bless you!

Fr. Christopher J. Pollard

IN TESTIMONIUM...

1 MAY 2016

Now we see dimly.

When we “see” the consecration we witness something invisible. After bread and wine turn into the Most Blessed Sacrament we are in the presence of Jesus Christ: His Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity. He is immediately present to us and perfectly imperceptible all at the same time. Just as Our Lord two thousand years ago was suitably visible even though nothing about his appearance was divine, Our Lord in the Most Blessed Sacrament would go unrecognized were it not for our already having faith through what we have heard, through what has been preached to us (*Cf.* Romans 10,17).

Even if the Apostles believed that Our Lord had risen from the dead, they would have run to see Him. St. Peter and St. John saw evidence of Jesus’ Resurrection and yet did not believe that Our Lord lived (John 20,9). They simply believed that His body was indeed no longer in the tomb (John 20,8). When later that day the Risen Lord visited them there would have been nothing obviously divine in His appearance. It was His being alive again that caused them to believe, as St. Thomas declared a week later: “My Lord and my God!” (John 20,27).

One of the most striking moments in the Sacred Liturgy of the Roman Rite is when the priest turns to the faithful and shows the Body of Christ, proclaiming the words of St. John the Baptist: “Ecce Agnus Dei!” *Behold the Lamb of God. Behold Him Who takes away the sins of the world.* Not as ancient as the *Ecce* but still indelibly part of the Roman Rite is the elevation of the Sacred Host and then the chalice after the consecrations. These glimpses of Him evoke spontaneous joy, gratitude and humility. “My Lord and My God!” we pray interiorly or perhaps “Hail sweetest Jesus!”

Belief eventually yields to vision. Faith “is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Hebrews 11,1). Once we see God in heaven we will no longer have faith; we will have the knowledge of vision. “Now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood” (1Corinthians 13,12). After death our soul will be able to see God. After the Resurrection of the Dead our resurrected eyes will be able to behold His Majesty. What a moment it will be. What a vision to imagine!

Then we shall see clearly.

God bless you!

Fr. Christopher J. Pollard

IN TESTIMONIUM...

8 MAY 2016

First Holy Communion is a sight to behold.

But hold on to your seats before you get up to walk around for a better view! Being able to witness Our Lord in Holy Communion enter the little mouths of tiny saints really is one of the great joys of pastors. The desire of moms and dads, aunts and uncles alike, to see or even capture the moment is understandable. Fortunately at St. John the Beloved our expectation of reverence rescues us from First Holy Communion turning into a circus. Although a strategic pew might be worth an extra early arrival, being content to see what we can see from where we are is more than pragmatic and patient. The ones closest to this mystery, the tiny saints receiving Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, more than likely have their eyes closed anyway. The Real Presence of Christ is not seen with the eyes. If we were able to see with the spiritual eyes of the Resurrection we would be blown away with the reality of sacred assembly: Our Lord, Our Lady, our angels, the Holy Spirit, all saints, every one in worship of God the Father.



God bless us every one!

Fr. Christopher J. Pollard

IN TESTIMONIUM...

15 MAY 2016

Five weeks ago I asked you for feedback about the possibility of the priest and deacon standing at the front of the altar during the Eucharistic Prayer, similar to how they lead prayers at Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. In shorthand this is referred to as “facing East” or in Latin *ad orientem*. Here is an image of Pope Francis offering Holy Mass in the Sistine Chapel in this manner:



You were very responsive, for which I am grateful. Some of you wrote letters. Many of you sent me emails. I lost track of the number of comments I have received outside church. Dozens of you weighed in on Facebook. Of all the many replies that came my way, one family, one couple and two individuals expressed a negative reaction. Fortunately, there has been enough time to speak in person with each benevolent messenger of caution. All but one now have a much more favorable opinion of the matter. It helped that we all had an opportunity to be present with Fr. Gary Selin offering Holy Mass *ad orientem* during the parish annual retreat. Some very helpful reminders came out of those conversations.

We will take steps to augment the sound system, which seems to be a never ending saga. For the benefit of parishioners and visitors alike we will prepare a pamphlet for the vestibule literature rack explaining the theological significance of the priest facing *ad orientem*. In the meantime you can explain it to your guests very simply. When Christ is addressing us, the priest faces the people. When Christ is addressing God the Father, the priest is facing the Cross.

We can expect our special Mass on the evening of Corpus Christi to mark the beginning of this turn toward the Lord.

God bless you.

Fr. Christopher J. Pollard

IN TESTIMONIUM...

22 MAY 2016

Our “You” in the Ordinary makes for quite a study.

When we say “you” in the Sacred Liturgy it usually is by way of the priest saying “you” in the person of Christ and on behalf of the people speaking to the Almighty Father. When the words “we”, “us” and “our” are employed it always all of us addressing God in one voice.

Occasionally in course of our prayers we say “you” to one another: “The Lord be with *you*. And with *your* spirit”. The priest and people continue this conversation at length in discussion of our sins and our need for each other’s prayers:

Let *us* acknowledge
our sins
that *we* may worthily celebrate these sacred mysteries.

I confess to Almighty God *and to you*, my brothers and sisters...

I ask blessed Mary ever virgin, and all the angels and saints, *and you*, my brothers and sisters to pray for me...

May almighty God have mercy *on us*,
forgive us
our sins
and *lead us* to everlasting life.

Lord, have mercy *on us*.
Christ, have mercy *on us*.
Lord, have mercy *on us*.

Then we return to the near unwavering use of the “you” to refer to the Divine.

We worship YOU
we give YOU thanks
we praise YOU
for YOUR glory.
YOU take away the sin of the world
have mercy on *us*
YOU are seated at the right hand of the Father
Receive *our* prayer.
YOU alone are the Holy One,
YOU alone are the Lord
YOU alone are the Most High...

By my count, there are 17 times in the Ordinary of the Mass when we say “you” or “your” to each other and 71 times we say “YOU” or “YOUR” to God. Mmmm... inverse numbers... coincidence???

May God bless *you* and *us*!

Fr. Christopher J. Pollard

IN TESTIMONIUM...

29 MAY 2016

She was kind and earnest, so very dedicated to the church. But she had one big complaint about her priest. She told me, "At Mass it just seems like you are focused on God".

I don't think she was putting me in that category of priests who have an almost robotic persona when they are leading public prayer. I have seen that a few times. Rather, she wanted to feel a connection to me personally when she was at my Mass.

Needless to say, I took it as a great compliment. Sunday Mass is such a minefield of distractions for the priest offering the Sacred Mysteries. He has so many things to remember, so many things to forget, so many liturgical options from which to choose, so many servers to shepherd, so many random noises and constant movement to ignore, not to mention how many concerns weighing on his heart. To be truly focused on God in the Divine Liturgy is a work of Grace. To at least appear focused on God is at least one step in the right direction.

So often when Mother Teresa, soon to be St. Teresa of Calcutta, would meet with a priest she would have the same advice: "Get out of the way of grace". The turn that your priests are making toward the cross and the tabernacle just might help you in ways you do not expect. Special family Masses and Funeral Masses can be done at your request with the priest facing the people. I am hopeful that you will not lose what you gained when the priest started offering Mass in English and facing the people. Prior to that except for a High Mass, the priest offering Mass was at the altar for the entire time unless he had a homily. Now the priest is at the altar just for the Eucharistic Prayer, really just for the Consecration.

This turn will *definitely* help your priests in ways that we already have experienced, for reasons mentioned above. For your kindness and patience I am ever grateful and I promise to stop talking in this column about the priest at Mass for a while. When I resume this liturgical catechesis we will talk for a few weeks about the sign of peace, its origin and significance, its proper role and practice in the liturgy.

In the meantime, please do come to Corpus Christ Mass this Sunday evening at 5:00 p.m. The music will be especially spectacular. At least come back for the Eucharistic Procession at 6:00 p.m. and the BBQ reception to follow. Preparations began a year ago, thanks to Pat Molineaux and Sharon Teitelbaum. Our Lord deserves our very best. How blessed we are to be among so many people striving to do just that.

Let's make God the focus of everything!

May God bless *you* and *us*!

Fr. Christopher J. Pollard

DOCUMENTS ON THE SACRED LITURGY

Ecumenical Council of Trent, Session XXII, *Doctrina de ss. Missae Sacrificio*, Chapter 2: DS 1743

POPE LEO XIII

[*Mirae Caritatis*](#) (28 May 1902)

POPE PIUS XII

[*Mediator Dei*](#) (20 November 1947)

POPE JOHN XXIII

POPE PAUL VI

[*Mysterium Fidei*](#) (3 September 1965)

[*Sacrosanctum Concilium*](#) (4 December 1963)

POPE JOHN PAUL II

[*Dominicae Cenae*](#) (24 February 1980)

[*Vicesimus Quintus Annus*](#) (4 December 1988)

[*Liturgicam Authenticam*](#) (28 March 2001)

[*Rosarium Virginis Mariae*](#) (16 October 2002)

[*Ecclesia de Eucharistia*](#) (17 April 2003)

POPE BENEDICT

[*Sacramentum Caritatis*](#) (22 February 2007)

[*Summorum Pontificum*](#) (7 July 2007)