

## **POPE PIUS XII: ALLOCUTION TO THE ASSISI LITURGICAL CONGRESS, 1956.**

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Footnotes from the original.

### **ALLOCUTION<sup>1</sup>**

You have asked Us to deliver the closing address of the International Congress of Pastoral Liturgy which has just been held at Assisi. With the greatest pleasure We accede to your request and bid you welcome.

If one compares the present state of the liturgical movement with what it was thirty years ago, it is obvious that undeniable progress has been made both in extent and in depth. The interest brought to the liturgy, the practical accomplishments and the active participation of the faithful have developed to an extent unthought of at that time.

The chief driving force, both in doctrine and in practical application, has come from the hierarchy, and especially from Our saintly Predecessor Pius X, who in his Motu Proprio *Abhinc duos annos* of October 23, 1913,<sup>2</sup> gave the liturgical movement a decisive impetus.

The faithful received these directives with gratitude and showed themselves ready to respond to them. The liturgists turned to the work with zeal and before long developed interesting and fruitful initiatives, even if, at times, certain deviations from the right paths called for correction by ecclesiastical authority. Among the many recently published documents on this subject, it will be sufficient for Us to mention three: the encyclical *Mediator Dei* on the Sacred Liturgy, of November 20, 1947;<sup>3</sup> the new decree on holy Week, dated November 16, 1955,<sup>4</sup> which has helped the faithful to a better understanding and closer participation in the love, suffering and triumph of our Lord. Finally there was the encyclical *De musica sacra* of December 25, 1955.<sup>5</sup>

The liturgical movement is thus shown forth as a sign of the providential dispositions of God for the present time, of the movement of the Holy Ghost in the Church, to draw men more closely to the mysteries of the faith and the riches of grace which flow from the active participation of the faithful in the liturgical life.

The Congress which has just concluded was directed to this particular object, to show the inestimable value of the liturgy in the sanctification of souls and consequently in the pastoral

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<sup>1</sup> A.A.S. 48 (1956), 711–725. (For the translation here used, with slight modifications, we are indebted to *The Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, November, 1956.)

<sup>2</sup> A.A.S. 5 (1913), 449–51.

<sup>3</sup> A.A.S. 39 (1947), 522–95.

<sup>4</sup> A.A.S. 47 (1955), 838–47.

<sup>5</sup> A.A.S., 48 (1956), 5–25.

activity of the Church. You have studied that aspect of the liturgy as it was made manifest in history and as it continues to be unfolded today. You have examined too, how it is founded on the nature of things, that is to say, how it derives from essential elements of the liturgy. Your Congress, then, included a study of the historical development, a consideration of the present-day situation, and an examination of the future objectives and the means towards their realization. After a careful consideration of your program of work, We express the wish that this new sowing, together with the work of the past, will bring forth a rich harvest, to the benefit of the individual members as well as the Church as a whole.

In this Allocution, instead of putting before you more detailed directives, about which the Holy See has already sufficiently spoken, We have judged it more useful to treat some important questions which are coming up for discussion today in the field of liturgy and dogma, and which are of special interest to Us. We shall group these considerations under two titles, which will be simple pointers to, rather than exact themes of, Our address: the Liturgy and the Church, the Liturgy and Christ.

## **I. THE LITURGY OF THE CHURCH**

As We have said in the encyclical *Mediator Dei*, the liturgy is a vital function of the Church as a whole, and not of a single group or “movement” only: “The sacred liturgy is the public worship of the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ in the entirety of its Head and members.”<sup>6</sup> The Mystical Body of Christ lives on the truth of Christ and graces which are diffused in its members, giving them life and unity within themselves and with their Head. This is the thought of St. Paul when he says in his first epistle to the Corinthians: “All things belong to you, and you to Christ and Christ to God” (1 Cor. 3:23). Therefore everything is directed towards God, His service and His glory. The Church, filled with the gifts and the life of God, devotes itself with an interior and spontaneous movement to the adoration and praise of the infinite God, and through the liturgy, renders Him, as from a society, the worship that is due to Him.

To this unique liturgy, each of the members, whether invested with episcopal power or belonging to the body of the faithful, brings all that he has received from God, all the resources of his mind, his heart, his achievements. The hierarchy, in the first place, who hold the *depositum fidei*, the “deposit of faith,” and the *depositum gratiae*, the “treasury of grace.” From this “deposit of faith,” the truth of Christ as contained in Scripture and Tradition, it derives the great mysteries of faith, and enshrines them in the liturgy, particularly the mysteries of the Trinity, the Incarnation and the Redemption. But it would be difficult to find a truth of the Christian faith which is not somehow expressed in the liturgy, whether it is the readings from the Old and the New Testaments in the Mass and the Divine Office, or the riches which mind and heart discover in the psalms. The solemn liturgical ceremonies are, besides, a profession of faith in action. They express the great truths of faith concerning the inscrutable designs of God’s generosity and His inexhaustible goodness to men, concerning the love and mercy of the heavenly Father for the

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<sup>6</sup> *A.A.S.* 39 (1947), 528–9. N.C.W.C. translation, n.20.

world, to save which He sent His Son and delivered Him to death. Thus, the Church in the liturgy abundantly dispenses the treasures of the “deposit of faith,” the truth of Christ.

Through the liturgy also are poured out the treasures of the *depositum gratiae*, the “treasury of grace,” which our Lord has transmitted to His apostles: sanctifying grace, the virtues and gifts, the power to baptize, to confer the Holy Spirit, to forgive sins in the sacrament of penance, to ordain priests. It is in the heart of the liturgy that the celebration of the Eucharist, sacrifice and banquet, is accomplished; it is in it also that all the sacraments are conferred, and that the Church, by the sacramentals, multiplies copiously the blessings of grace in the most diverse circumstances. The care of the hierarchy extends still further to everything which contributes to the greater beauty and dignity of the liturgical ceremonies, whether in the matter of places of worship, of furnishings, of liturgical vestments, of sacred music or sacred art.

If the hierarchy communicates by the liturgy the truth and the grace of Christ, it is for the faithful, on their part, to accept these whole-heartedly, and to translate them into living realities. Everything which is offered to them, the graces of the sacrifice of the altar, the sacraments and sacramentals, they receive not in a passive manner in allowing them simply to flow into them, but in collaborating in them with their whole will and all their powers, and especially in participating in the liturgical offices or at least in following their unfolding with fervor. They have contributed in a large measure and continue to contribute by a constant effort to add to the external things of worship, to construct churches and chapels, to decorate them and to enrich the beauty of the liturgical ceremonies by all the splendors of sacred art.

The contributions which the hierarchy and the faithful bring to the liturgy are not added as two separate entities, but represent the collaborations of members of the same organism which acts as a single living unit. The pastors and the flock, the teaching Church and the Church which is taught, form but one and the same body of Christ. Thus there is no reason for maintaining a lack of confidence, rivalries, oppositions open or hidden whether in thought, in manner of speaking or in acts. Among the members of one body, there ought to reign before everything else concord, unity and collaboration. It is in this unity that the Church prays, offers sacrifice, sanctifies itself, so that it can be asserted with good reason that the liturgy is the work of the whole Church.

But We must add: the liturgy is not, however, *the whole Church*; it does not exhaust the scope of her activities. To be sure, by the side of the public worship, that of the community, there is a place for the private worship which the individual gives to God in the secret of his heart or expresses by his exterior acts, and which has as many variations as there are Christians, although it proceeds from the same faith and the same grace of Christ. The Church not only tolerates this form of worship, but she has fully acknowledged it and recommends it without in any way taking away the pre-eminence of liturgical worship.

But when We say that the liturgy does not exhaust the scope of the Church’s activity, we are thinking above all of its tasks of teaching and pastoral care, of the “Feed the flock that God has entrusted to you” (1 Pet. 5:2). We have recalled the role which the Magisterium, the depository of the truth of Christ, carries out through the liturgy; the influence of the authority of government on it is also evident, since it belongs to the Popes to examine current forms of worship, to

introduce new ones and to regulate the arranging of worship, and to the bishops to watch carefully that the canonical prescriptions relating to divine worship are observed.<sup>7</sup>

But the office of teaching and of governing extends further than this. To be assured of this it suffices to cast a glance at the Canon Law and what it says of the Pope, of the Roman Congregations, of bishops, of councils, of the Magisterium and of ecclesiastical discipline. From looking at the life of the Church, one comes to the same conclusion. In our two Allocutions of May 31 and November 2, 1954, on the triple office of the bishop, We have expressly insisted on the scope of his charge which is not limited to teaching and governing but which embraces as well all the rest of human activity in so far as religious and moral interests are involved.<sup>8</sup> If, then, the tasks and interests of the Church are at this point universal, the priests and the faithful, in their mode of thinking and acting, will beware of falling into narrowness of view or misunderstanding. Our encyclical *Mediator Dei* had already corrected certain erroneous assertions which were tending either to direct religious teaching and pastoral activity along an exclusively liturgical path or to raise obstacles to the liturgical movement which was not understood. In fact, there is no real divergence between the purpose pursued by the liturgy and by the other functions of the Church. There is a real diversity of opinions, but this does not present insurmountable obstacles. We hope that these considerations will suffice to show that the liturgy is the work of the whole Church and that all the faithful as members of the Mystical Body should love it, value it and take part in it, understanding none the less that the tasks of the Church extend beyond it.

## II. THE LITURGY AND CHRIST

We would like, now, to consider especially the liturgy of the Mass, and Christ, who is at the same time the priest and the victim. As certain inaccuracies and misunderstandings appear here and there on particular points, We shall say a word on “the action of Christ,” on “the presence of Christ,” and on “the infinite and divine majesty of Christ.”

### 1) *The Action of Christ*

The purpose of the liturgy of the Mass is the expression in a material manner of the greatness of the mystery there accomplished, and present-day effort is directed towards a participation by the faithful which will be as active and as understanding as possible.

Although this objective is justified one risks causing a lowering of respect if one turns the attention from the principal action and directs it towards the brilliance of other ceremonies.

What is this principal action of the eucharistic sacrifice? We have spoken of it explicitly in the Allocution of November 2, 1954.<sup>9</sup> We then quoted, first, the teaching of the Council of Trent: In this divine sacrifice which takes place at Mass, the same Christ is present and is immolated in an unbloody manner who on the cross once and for all offered Himself in a bloody manner . . . .

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<sup>7</sup> *Mediator Dei: A.A.S.* 39 (1947), 544. N.C.W.C. translation, n.58.

<sup>8</sup> *A.A.S.* 46 (1954), 313–17; 666–77

<sup>9</sup> *A.A.S.* 46 (1954), 668–70.

For the victim is one and the same, now offering Himself through the ministry of priests, who then offered Himself on the Cross; only the manner of offering is different.<sup>10</sup>

We then continued in these terms:

Therefore it is the priest-celebrant, and he alone, who, putting on the person of Christ, sacrifices: not the people, nor clerics, nor even priests who reverently assist. All these, however, can and should take an active part in the sacrifice.<sup>11</sup>

We emphasized, then, that owing to a failure to distinguish between the question of the participation of the celebrant in the fruits of the Mass and that of the action which he performs, the following conclusion had been reached: namely, that the offering of one Mass, at which a hundred priests assist with religious devotion, is the same as a hundred Masses celebrated by a hundred priests. Of this assertion, We said: "It must be rejected as an erroneous opinion," and We added in explanation:

With regard to the offering of the eucharistic sacrifice, the actions of Christ, the High Priest, are as many as are the priests celebrating, not as many as are the priests reverently hearing the Mass of a bishop or a priest; for those present at the Mass in no sense sustain, or act in, the person of Christ sacrificing, but are to be compared to the faithful layfolk who are present at the Mass.<sup>12</sup>

On the subject of liturgical congresses, We said on this same occasion: "These meetings sometimes follow a definite program, viz., only one offers the Mass, and others (all or the majority) assist at this one Mass, and receive the holy Eucharist during it from the hands of the celebrant. If this be done for a good and sound reason, . . . the practice is not to be opposed, so long as the error We have mentioned above is not underlying it": that is to say, the error which holds as equivalent the celebration of a hundred Masses by a hundred priests, and that of a Mass at which a hundred priests assist with devotion.

According to this the central element of the eucharistic sacrifice is that where Christ intervenes as "offering Himself," to use the very terms of the Council of Trent.<sup>13</sup> This occurs at the consecration where in the very act of transubstantiation, accomplished by the Lord,<sup>14</sup> the priest who celebrates is "putting on the person of Christ." Even if the consecration takes place without ceremonial and in a simple fashion, it is the central point of the whole liturgy of the sacrifice, the central point of the "action of Christ whose person is put on by the priest-celebrant" or the "concelebrating priests," in the case of true concelebration.

Recent events give Us occasion to make precise certain points in this connection. When the consecration of the bread and wine is validly performed, the entire action of Christ himself is accomplished. Even if all that follows cannot be carried out there is still nothing lacking to the

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<sup>10</sup> Sess. XXII, ch. 2.

<sup>11</sup> *A.A.S.* 46 (1954), 668.

<sup>12</sup> *Loc. cit.*, 669.

<sup>13</sup> Sess. XXII, ch. 2

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Council of Trent, Sess. XIII, ch. 4 and 3

offering of Christ. When the consecration is completed, the “oblation of the Victim placed upon the altar” may be done and is done by the celebrating priest, by the Church, by the other priests and by each of the faithful, but this action is not the “action of Christ Himself through a priest sustaining, and acting in, His person.” In truth the action of the consecrating priest is the very action of Christ, who acts by His minister. In the case of a concelebration in the proper sense of the word, Christ, in place of acting by one minister only, acts by several. In the concelebration of mere ceremony (“ceremonial concelebration”), on the other hand, which may also be performed by lay people, there is no simultaneous consecration, and the important question arises: “What intention and what exterior action is demanded for a true concelebration and simultaneous consecration?”

We recall, in this connection, what We said in Our Apostolic Constitution *Episcopalis Consecrationis*, November 30, 1944.<sup>15</sup> We there determined that in the consecration of a bishop, the two bishops who accompany the consecrating prelate should have the intention of consecrating the bishop-elect, and that consequently they should perform the exterior actions and pronounce the words by which the power and the grace to be transmitted are signified and given. It does not suffice, then, for them to unite their wills with the will of the principal consecrator and to declare that they make their own his words and his actions. They must, themselves, perform these actions and pronounce the essential words.

It is the same in concelebration in the proper sense. It does not suffice to have and to manifest the intention of making one’s own the words and actions of the celebrant. The concelebrants themselves must say over the bread and the wine: “This is my body,” “This is my blood,” otherwise their concelebration is merely “ceremonial.”

Therefore one may not assert that “in the last analysis the only decisive question is to know in what measure the personal participation, sustained by grace, which one takes in this ritual offering, increases participation in the Cross and in the grace of Christ which unites us to Him and with each other.” This inaccurate way of putting the question We have already rejected in the Allocution of November 2, 1954, but some theologians still cannot assent to this. Therefore do We repeat: the decisive point (for concelebration as for the Mass of a single priest) is not to know what fruit the soul draws from it, but what is the nature of the act which is performed: does the priest, as minister of Christ, perform “the action of Christ sacrificing and offering Himself,” or not? In the same way for the sacraments, it is not a question of knowing what is the fruit produced by them but whether the essential elements of the sacrament (the placing of the sacramental sign by the minister himself, doing the actions and pronouncing the words with the intention, at least, of “doing what the Church does”) have been validly placed. Likewise in celebration and in concelebration one must look to see if the celebrant, with the requisite internal intention, performs the external action and, in particular, pronounces the words which constitute “the action of Christ sacrificing and offering Himself.” That is not verified when the priest does not say over the bread and the wine the words of Christ: “This is my body,” “This is my blood.”

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15 *A.A.S.* 37 (1945), 131–32

## **2) *The Presence of Christ***

Just as the altar and sacrifice dominate liturgical worship, so one can say of the life of Christ that it is governed completely by the sacrifice of the Cross. The words of the angel to His foster-father: “He will save his people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21); the words of John the Baptist: “Behold the lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world” (John 1:29); the words of Christ Himself to Nicodemus: “Even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that those who believe in him may have life everlasting” (John 3:14–15); to His disciples: “I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished” (Luke 12:50); and, particularly, those of the Last Supper and Calvary, all indicate that Christ’s thought, His life, were centered on the Cross and the offering of Himself to the Father to reconcile men with God and to save them.

But is not He who offers the sacrifice greater, in some respects, than the sacrifice itself? And so we would like to talk to you now of our Lord Himself, and first of all, to draw your attention to the fact that in the Eucharist the Church possesses our Lord with His flesh and His blood, His body and His soul, and His divinity. The Council of Trent has defined this solemnly in the thirteenth session, canon 1; moreover, one has only to take the words uttered by Christ in their literal, obvious, unequivocal sense to reach the same conclusion: “Take and eat! This is my body, which is to be given for you! Take and drink, this is my blood, which is to be shed for you.” And St. Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 11:23–25) employs the same expressions, so simple and so clear.

Among Catholics there is not any doubt or any diversity of opinion on this subject. But as soon as theological speculation attempts to treat of the manner of Christ’s presence in the Eucharist, serious differences of view appear on a number of points. Into these speculative controversies We have no wish to enter: but We do want to point out certain limits and to insist upon a fundamental principle of interpretation, the overlooking of which is causing Us some concern.

Speculation must take it as a principle that the literal sense of texts of Scripture, faith and the teaching of the Church have precedence over scientific systematization and theoretical considerations; it is science which must conform to revelation, and not vice versa. When a philosophical conception distorts the natural sense of a revealed truth, it is because it is not exact or because it is not used correctly.

This principle finds its application in the doctrine of the Real Presence. Certain theologians, while accepting the teaching of the Council on the Real Presence and transubstantiation, interpret the words of Christ and the Council so that all that remains of the presence of Christ is a sort of shell, emptied of its natural content. For them the essential content of the species of bread and wine as they stand is “Christ in heaven,” with whom the species have a so-called real, essential relation of containing and of presence. This speculative interpretation raises serious objections when it is put forward as completely sufficient, for the Christian sense of the faithful, the constant catechetical teaching of the Church, the expressions of the Council and particularly the words of our Lord, require that the Eucharist contain Christ Himself. The sacramental species are not Christ, even if they have a so-called essential relationship of containing and of presence with

the substance of Christ in heaven. Our Lord said: “This is my body! This is my blood!” He did not say: “This is a sensible appearance which signifies the presence of my body and my blood.” Doubtless the sensible signs of a real relation of presence would be the sensible and efficacious signs of sacramental grace; but We are here concerned with the essential content of the “eucharistic species,” not with their sacramental efficacy. One cannot, then, admit that the theory of which We are speaking does full justice to the words of Christ, that the presence of Christ in the Eucharist means no more than this and that this suffices to be able to say in very truth of the Eucharist: “It is the Lord” (cf. John 21:7).

No doubt the majority of the faithful are not in a position to understand the difficult speculative problems, and the various explanations, which concern the nature of the presence of Christ. The Roman Catechism, moreover, requests us not to discuss these questions before them,<sup>16</sup> but it neither mentions nor proposes the theory outlined above; still less does it affirm that it exhausts the meaning of the words of Christ and explains them fully. Explanations and scientific interpretations can still be sought for, but they must not, so to speak, expel Christ from the Eucharist and leave in the tabernacle nothing but the eucharistic species retaining a so-called real and essential relation with the true Christ who is in heaven.

It is astonishing that those who are not satisfied with the theory treated above are classified in the ranks of the adversaries, among the non-scientific “physicists,” and that it is unhesitatingly declared with regard to the so-called scientific conception of the presence of Christ: “This truth is not for the masses.”

To these considerations We should add some remarks on the tabernacle. In the same way that We were just saying: “Christ is in some respects greater than the altar and the sacrifice,” We could now ask: “Is the tabernacle where our Lord, come down among His people, dwells, superior to the altar and to the sacrifice?” The altar surpasses the tabernacle because on it is offered the sacrifice of the Lord. The tabernacle, doubtless, possesses the *sacramentum permanens*; but it is not an *altare permanens*, because it is only during the celebration of the holy Mass that Christ offers Himself in sacrifice on the altar – not after, nor outside of, Mass. In the tabernacle, on the other hand, He is present as long as the consecrated species remain, without, however, offering Himself perpetually. One is fully justified in distinguishing between the offering of the sacrifice of the Mass and the *cultus latreuticus*, the supreme form of worship offered to the God-man hidden in the Eucharist. A decision of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, dated July 27, 1927, limits as much as possible the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament during Mass:<sup>17</sup> but this is easily explained by the desire of keeping habitually separate the act of sacrifice and the worship of simple adoration in order that the faithful would clearly understand their proper character.

Nevertheless, it is more important to recognize the unity than this diversity: it is one and the same Lord who is immolated on the altar and honored in the tabernacle and who pours out from there His blessings. If there were firm conviction on this point, many difficulties would be

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<sup>16</sup> Pars II, cap. iv, n.43 sq.

<sup>17</sup> A.A.S. 19 (1927), 289.



avoided, such as the exaggeration of the significance of the one to the detriment of the other, and opposition to the decisions of the Holy See would be guarded against.

The Council of Trent has explained what dispositions of soul one should have towards the Blessed Sacrament:

If anyone says that Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, is not to be adored in the holy sacrament of the Eucharist with the worship of latria, also outwardly manifested, and that the Sacrament, therefore, is not to be honored with extraordinary festive celebrations nor solemnly carried from place to place in procession according to the praiseworthy universal rite and custom of holy Church; or that the Sacrament is not to be publicly exposed for the people's adoration, and that those who adore it are idolators: let him be anathema.<sup>18</sup>

If anyone says that it is not lawful that the holy Eucharist be reserved in a sacred place, but immediately after consecration must necessarily be distributed among those present, or that it is not lawful that it be carried with honor to the sick, let him be anathema.<sup>19</sup>

Anyone who adheres sincerely to this doctrine does not think of the formulating objections against the presence of the tabernacle on the altar. In the Instruction of the Holy Office "On Sacred Art" of June 30, 1952,<sup>20</sup> the Holy See insists, among other things, on this point:

This Supreme Sacred Congregation strictly commands that the prescriptions of Canons 1268, par. 2, and 1269, par. 1, be faithfully observed: "The Most Blessed Sacrament should be kept in the most distinguished and honorable place in the church, and hence as a rule at the main altar unless some other be considered more convenient and suitable for the veneration and worship due to so great a Sacrament. . . . The Most Blessed Sacrament must be kept in an immovable tabernacle set in the middle of the altar."<sup>21</sup>

It is not so much to the material presence of the tabernacle on the altar as to a tendency toward a lesser esteem for the presence and the action of Christ in the tabernacle that We would like to draw your attention. The sacrifice of the altar is considered sufficient, and the importance of Him who accomplished it is diminished. But the person of the Lord must occupy the centre of worship, for it is that which unifies the relations of the altar and the tabernacle and gives to them their meaning.

It is first of all by the sacrifice of the altar that our Lord makes Himself present in the Eucharist and He is in the tabernacle only as *memoria sacrificii et passionis suae*, a "memorial of His sacrifice and passion." To separate the tabernacle and the altar is to separate two things which should remain united by their origin and their nature. The question of how the tabernacle could be placed on the altar without interfering with celebration facing the people admits of several different solutions. On these the experts will give their opinion. The essential thing is to have understood that it is the same Lord who is present on the altar and in the tabernacle.

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<sup>18</sup> Sess. XIII, can. 6.

<sup>19</sup> *Loc. cit.*, can. 7.

<sup>20</sup> *A.A.S.* 44 (1952), 542-46.

<sup>21</sup> *A.A.S.*, *loc. cit.*, 544.

One could also stress the attitude of the Church with regard to certain practices of piety: visits to the Blessed Sacrament, which it strongly recommends, the prayer of the Forty Hours or “perpetual adoration,” the holy hour, the solemn carrying of Communion to the sick, the processions of the Blessed Sacrament. The most enthusiastic, the most convinced liturgist must be able to understand and to realize what Christ in the tabernacle means for the faithful who are deeply pious, be they simple or learned people. He is their adviser, their comforter, their strength, their refuge, their hope in life and in death. The liturgical movement should not, then, be content merely to allow the faithful to come to Christ in the tabernacle. It will endeavor to draw them there to an ever greater degree.

### **3) *The Infinite and Divine Majesty of Christ***

The third and last point of which We would like to treat is the infinite and divine majesty of Christ which the words *Christus Deus* express. Most assuredly the Word Incarnate is the Lord and Savior of men; but He is and remains the Lord, the infinite God. It is said in the Athanasian Creed: “Our Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, is God and Man.” The humanity of Christ has a right also to the worship of *latria* because of its hypostatic union with the Word, but it is the divinity which is the reason and source of this worship. Thus the divinity of Christ cannot remain at the edge of liturgical thought. Ordinarily one goes *ad Patrem per Christum*, “to the Father through Christ,” since Christ is the Mediator between God and men. But He is not only Mediator; He is also, in the Trinity, equal to the Father and the Holy Spirit. Let it suffice to recall the magnificent prologue of the Gospel of St. John: “The Word was God. . . . All things were made by him. And without him was made nothing that was made” (John 1:1–3). Christ is the First and the Last, the Alpha and the Omega. At the end of the world, when all the enemies will have been vanquished and death last of all, Christ, that is to say, the Word subsisting in the human nature, will hand over the kingdom to God His Father and the Son Himself will submit to the One who has placed all things under Him, so that “God may be all in all” (1 Cor. 15:28). Meditation on the infinite, supreme, divine majesty of Christ can certainly contribute to the deepening of the liturgical sense, and this is why we have wished to draw your attention to it.

In conclusion we would like to add two observations on “the liturgy and the past” and “the liturgy and the present time.”

*The liturgy and the past.* In the matter of liturgy, as in many other spheres, one must avoid two extreme attitudes with regard to the past: a blind attachment and a complete contempt. There are found in the liturgy unchangeable elements, a sacred content which transcends time, but also elements which are variable and transitory, and sometimes even imperfect. The present-day attitude of liturgical milieux towards the past seems to Us in general to be entirely sound: there is investigation, serious study, attachment to that which truly deserves it, without, moreover, a falling into excess. Here and there, however, there appear ideas and erring tendencies, oppositions, enthusiasms or condemnations with whose concrete from you are well acquainted and of which We have said a word above.

*The liturgy and the present time.* the liturgy confers on the life of the Church, and even on the whole religious attitude of today, a characteristic mark. Above all, one notices an active and intelligent participation by the faithful in liturgical actions. On the part of the Church, the liturgy today admits of a preoccupation with progress, but also with conservation and defence. She returns to the past without slavishly copying it, and creates anew in the ceremonies themselves, in the use of the vernacular, in popular chant and in the building of churches. It would be, however, superfluous to recall once again that the Church has serious reasons for retaining steadfastly in the Latin rite the unconditional obligation of the celebrating priest to use the Latin language, and, likewise, for insisting that the Gregorian chant at the holy sacrifice shall be in the language of the Church. The faithful, on their part, are concerned with responding to the measures taken by the Church, but in so doing they adopt profoundly different attitudes. Some will show readiness, enthusiasm, occasionally even a too active desire, which demands interventions of authority. Others will show indifference and even opposition. Thus is manifested the diversity of temperaments, as also preferences for individual piety or for community worship.

The present-day liturgy interests itself also in a number of particular problems concerning, for example, the relation of the liturgy with the religious ideas of the world today, contemporary culture, social questions and depth psychology.

This simple mention will suffice to show you that the different aspects of the liturgy today not only arouse Our interest, but keep Us in watchful vigilance. We sincerely desire that the liturgical movement progress and We wish to help it; but it is Our office also to anticipate anything which would be a source of error and danger. It is, however, a consolation and a joy for Us to know that We can rely on your help and your understanding in these matters.

May these considerations and the works which occupied you during these preceding days produce abundant fruit and contribute more certainly to the attaining of the purpose to which the sacred liturgy is directed. As an earnest of divine blessing, which We now implore on you yourselves, and on the souls entrusted to you, We impart whole-heartedly Our Apostolic Blessing.