

Weekly Message from Fr William for Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time 2022

Dear People of St Mary's, with this Sunday's weekly message I offer you a summary of the third and final section in Pope Francis' recent letter on the Liturgy *Desiderio Desideravi*. (continued from weekly messages 3rd July and 31st July).

Section 1: The Liturgy is first an action of Christ – Christ offering himself to the Father – an action that then becomes an action of the whole *Christ-Church*, Head + Members.

Section 2: The question: How do we recover the capacity to live completely the liturgical action? (DD27) How do we recover the 'full engagement' and the 'living experience' of the liturgy? (DD45) 'We are in need' he says 'of a dynamic liturgical formation' (DD31)

The third and final section begins (DD49) with a reminder of what we mean by Liturgy. It is 'an exercise of the priestly office of Christ' (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 7). This means Christ offering himself to the Father, and ourselves with him, 'performed by the Mystical Body of Christ, that is by the Head and His members' (SS 7).

In this action the Paschal Mystery is made present, i.e. Christ's death and resurrection, his self-offering to the Father; and not only made present, but actually experienced by us. (DD49). How is it experienced? In the 'dynamics of symbolic language'. (DD49). In the symbolic gestures at the Ambo, at the Altar, and by the Assembly (congregation).

In the celebration of the liturgy we are no longer doing our own thing. Instead we allow ourselves to be caught up in something bigger than ourselves. And we grow into it by doing it. The celebration of the liturgy is something learned. (DD50)

And it's something we do together, as one body. 'Everybody doing together the same gesture, everybody speaking together in one voice – this' he writes 'transmits to each individual the energy of the entire assembly.' (DD51)

In addition to the symbolic gestures of the liturgical action, the acclamations, the prayers, and the dialogue between God and his people, we also have 'liturgical silence' at various points in the celebration. This is not just an outward silence, but an inner silence shared by the whole assembly. Each moment of liturgical silence constitutes a 'point of arrival within the liturgical sequence', and a shared awareness that we have reached this point. (DD52).

Sometimes though the gestures are those given by the ordained minister. These gestures are for the congregation celebrating the liturgy with him, who have 'the right to feel, in those gestures and words, the desire that the Lord has, today as at the Last Supper, to eat the Passover with us'. (DD57). '*Desiderio desideravi...*' 'With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.' (Luke 22)

God bless you!  Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time, 21 August 2022