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THE LITURGY:

AIMS AND PRINCIPLES IN REVIEW

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THE LITURGY:

Aims and Principles in Review

At the outset may I make three basic remarks in order to explain the meaning of the conditions for an effective relationship between the liturgy and the attitude of Catholics toward the community and society.

The first remark is this: What must be understood about the liturgy above all is the spirit. This spirit surely moulds external liturgical forms and is expressed through them; but to restrict one's interest only to external forms would be to reduce the liturgy to a dry and formal following of rubrics, which not only would have no influence on the spiritual life—and, in our particular case, on one's interior attitude toward the community—but would make religious life itself barren, poor, and even deformed.

Consequently, though external forms should be accepted with frank and intelligent assent, they must be ever more deeply considered, so as to penetrate the spirit which vivifies and animates them: *Spiritus est qui vivificat, caro autem non*

prodest quidquam ("It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh avails nothing").

A useful understanding of liturgical forms can be attained only by studying the history of the liturgy, which is, however, only a means, necessary though it be, for understanding and appreciating the spirit of the sacred liturgy itself.

Let us, then, give due importance to the rubrics and to the history of the liturgy, as necessary means for a complete liturgical life; but let us keep in mind that they are only instruments which condition and help the soul to approach the sacred liturgy and to take an active part in the liturgical action.

And here is our second remark: The liturgy is a powerful factor in moulding community life, insofar as there is active participation by the community of the faithful in the liturgy. I would even say that the supernatural power of the liturgy is so strong that it never fails to achieve a deep formative influence among the people of God. But it is certain that the more conscious and intimate the active participation of the congregation is, the greater and richer is this influence, and this as a natural consequence, both according to psychological laws and also from a supernatural point of view—because of a closer union with Christ operating in His Church.

It is precisely for this reason that in the famous document which may be considered the first solemn approval of today's liturgical revival, the *Motu Proprio* by Pius X on Sacred Music (November 22, 1903), we read that "active (*actuosa*) participation in the sacred mysteries and in the

solemn, public prayer of the Church is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful may acquire a true Christian spirit.”

Christian spirit. These words, used by Saint Pius X, will introduce my third remark: The sacred liturgy, even though well understood and shared in, will not only determine external rules of action or patterns of community life, but it will create a spirit and an interior attitude that will enable people to enter into a community with a generous and brotherly disposition and with the capacity to work. In this community they will create the climate and orientations congenial to a human social order, based on justice and permeated with charity.

What Is the Liturgy?

After these remarks it is very important to state that the power of the liturgy to form a true social spirit in the worshippers flows from its very nature and is part of its own being.

What, then, is the liturgy? The encyclical *Mediator Dei*, the Magna Carta of the modern liturgical revival, defines it as the worship of the whole Christ to the Father, that is to say, “of the Head and of the members—*Capitis nempe et membrorum.*”

The sacred liturgy is, then, the sacerdotal action of Christ by which He, the incarnate Son of God, who became our brother and wanted to be a creature in this very world He had created, glorifies the infinite majesty of God, adores,

gives thanks, expiates, implores; and all this together with His mystical members, the faithful, who are grafted into Him through baptism and are admitted to share in His life. This priestly action of Christ, then, is performed in union with His Church, which, with its great variety of organs and functions, constitutes His Mystical Body, where He lives and remains a source of supernatural life for all men, where He speaks, where He works, where He takes away sin, sanctifies souls, enlightens them and leads them to eternal life. The liturgy is therefore the action of the community, where the whole Church meets; its vastness expands beyond the boundaries of the visible world, stretching out to the very heavens, having there an everlasting abode; it reaches also the beloved deceased who have died in Christ. All the Church is there in its perennial character, always the same through the centuries, like Christ Himself, its Head and its Life, yesterday, today, and for ever.

United with Christ, the immense community of the Church glorifies the Father in Him, with Him, and through Him; also from Him and through Him the Church receives the gifts, the graces and the forgiveness of the Father. The liturgy is always an action and a prayer of the community, even if some acts seem to bear an individual character, as in the sacrament of penance, or when circumstances limit or entirely prevent an active participation, or exclude any representation of the faithful. For example, even when the priest recites the Divine Office alone in his room, even then the Church is present,

mysteriously attending — *Ecclesia*, that is, the congregation.

The priest giving absolution in the sacredness of the confessional acts by the authority the Church bestowed upon him, and he will depend upon its prayers and its merits (*precibus et meritis*) to assist in the atonement of the penitent; even in the confessional the Church is present.

Indeed, the gesture and the words of the priest in confession are the effective signs by which the prodigal son, having worn again the original garment of innocence, is admitted once more into the family and will sit at table with the others. The sinner is entitled again to be a member of the holy people (*plebs tua sancta*) which offers the Sacrifice. This ritual used to be evident in the solemn reconciliation of the repentants on Maundy Thursday and is still preserved in the Roman Pontifical.

In the same manner the whole Church sings the praise of God in the Divine Office through the mouth of its minister, whom the Church itself has entrusted with this task and who presents before the throne of God the prayers and the needs of men. In the solitude of a cell, as in the confessional, the whole Church, the Mystical Body of Christ is attending, as Christ its Head is there: *in omni actione liturgica prae-sens adest Christus* ("Christ is present in every liturgical action"), the encyclical *Mediator Dei* reminds us.

What is so continuously and essentially a "community" act cannot fail in its formative and educational function for the whole society, because the Soul of this action and of this prayer

is Christ, the Son of God, who came to be one of our common family, unfortunately broken up by sin and poisoned by egotism, but reconciled to God by Christ and recreated as the family of God.

Such a prayer and action becomes supernaturally operative—and by that very reason more deeply and efficaciously causing minds and hearts to be open to receive interior light and warmth, therefore creating through charity that perfect bond which calls for justice and, at the same time, softening its rigor, easing its obligations, perfecting it, even going beyond it.

Communal Nature Demands Communal Expression

From the very nature of the sacred liturgy derive, consequently and obviously, its expression and its forms; its nature obliges the liturgy to concern itself with the supernatural society.

For this reason the language of liturgy always uses the plural, with the unique exception of those moments when, reflecting human needs, it allows either the priest or the faithful to express their individuality, though remaining always in close communion with the congregation.

Man is a social being by nature and cannot even be conceived of apart from society; and in the supernatural order, too, God works his salvation within the framework of a society, which is the

Church. However, man has an individual personality that society may not and shall not suppress; and even in the realm of grace he preserves a sphere of close communion with God that cannot be wiped out. The wonderful history of Christian asceticism acknowledges the fact of individual devotion, with all its various manifestations, as well as the function of public worship. Though asserting the superiority of the latter, the Church never has underestimated the former; indeed, as we stated above, even in the prayer of the community, the sacred liturgy, the Church not only requests personal interior attention, but also authorizes its individual expression: *Suscipe . . . hanc immaculatam hostiam quam ego indignus famulus tuus offero tibi . . .* ("Accept . . . this immaculate host that I, Your unworthy servant, am offering to You . . ."); *Domine, non sum dignus . . .* ("Lord, I am not worthy . . ."); *mea culpa . . .* ("through my fault . . .").

Apart from these individual expressions, so spontaneous and so human, the sacred liturgy always feels the presence and the claim of that immense community which is the Church, and of the smaller worshipping community that actually represents the Church at the moment and, as it were, embodies it.

The names used to designate both communities are extremely significant: *familia tua* ("Your family"); *cuncta familia tua* ("Your whole family"); *populus tuus* ("Your people"); *plebs tua sancta* ("Your holy people"); *ecclesia tua* ("Your Church").

The Catholic, learning this language and using

it, feels at once that he must overcome the narrow limits of individualism, tinged sometimes with egotism; he must open his spirit and his heart to this broader society, where, united in prayer, he meets under the fatherly eye of God.

One through Charity

The sacred liturgy knows, however, that this "family of the Lord," this "people of God," this "Church," whose expression it embodies, has a character and a nature given to it by the Founder Himself, who remains its Head. The liturgy knows that as in a body there are different organs and different functions, all contributing to the good of the whole body, for all of them are bound to the whole by the very tie of life, so in the Mystical Body of Christ there are different gifts of the Spirit and different tasks, but all the members are bound into a close union by one faith and one charity, which forms the real and perfect tie. The sacred liturgy expresses the hierarchical constitution of this community in the variety of its vestments, in the distribution of its roles, in the respectful homage to authority by means of exterior gestures (bowing, kneeling, kissing). Since this community is made up of weak and frail human beings, all repeat daily: *Confiteor* ("I confess"); *mea culpa* ("through my fault"); *nobis quoque peccatoribus* ("and to us sinners also").

Based on the knowledge of our common weakness and of our natural and common dependence

upon God—*nos servi tui* (“we Your servants”)—the sacred liturgy expresses and constantly asks for the bond of charity that makes perfect the unity of the family of God in one faith: *Spiritus nobis, Domine, tuae caritatis infunde . . .* (“Pour forth, O Lord, the Spirit of Your love . . .”). The Holy Father in *Mediator Dei* says with authority: “Everything that expresses best this unity of the Mystical Body shall be rightly recognized and accepted.”

We find, therefore, the reciprocal salutation between the officiating priest or deacon and the congregation: *Pax vobis* (“Peace be to you”); *Dominus vobiscum* (“The Lord be with you”); *Et cum spiritu tuo* (“And with your spirit”). I have said “reciprocal,” which implies the dialogue and consequently the active participation; and, together with greetings, invitations also, such as: *Oremus* (“Let us pray”); *Flectamus genua* (“Let us kneel”); *Sursum corda* (“Lift up your hearts”); *Gratias agamus* (“Let us give thanks”); and the continual prayer for all: *pro omnibus circumstantibus, sed et pro omnibus fidelibus christianis vivis atque defunctis* (“for all here present as well as for all who have the faith, Christians alive or dead”); for all anxieties and needs of the world and of the individuals, especially in the litanies and in the orations; a remembrance, as of members of the same family, of the living and of the dead, just as there is a remembrance of the saints; for the former we have a brotherly prayer; of the latter we beg a prayer and brotherly protection.

We have only to page through the missal and

the breviary (to mention only these two liturgical books) in order to discover a blossoming display of expressions, often delicate and beautiful, reminding us of this basic fact: our unity in the brotherly charity of the children of God.

There is never an instance when the needs, the anxieties and sufferings of others are not mentioned; never an instance when a prayer is restricted egotistically to one individual person, limiting its scope to his narrow needs. This can indeed become a frequent temptation in individual prayer if it loses contact with liturgical prayer or fails to be vivified by its spirit.

Liturgical prayer is, therefore, always choral, even when there is no choir; for choral quality is natural to the liturgy as it is part of both the natural and the supernatural life.

One in Sacred Song

Consequently, community singing is not a casual accessory or accidental detail, a mere ornament to the liturgy. As speech is indeed the best means for human communication, so in the same way song is an expression natural to liturgy.

This is so, first of all, because it is the collective word of the congregation, which could hardly express itself adequately without giving its speech a rhythm. A crowd has two different ways to voice its feelings: through shouting or through rhythmical words.

Shouting belongs to a mob and not to the holy assembly of the people of God. For the

latter, in order to express in beauty the common mind and the common feeling, the proper medium is the rhythmical word, that is the song, which, in the limpid simplicity of the liturgy, becomes the best means for rendering sensibly and forcibly the unity of the religious feelings of the assembly.

Song blends and increases this unity because it makes people fraternize. For example: when you are on a bus, so crowded that you can't even move, though you are close to each other, you do not sing; none of the travelers sing; each is indifferent to the other. Though the elbow of my neighbor is against my ribs, his sorrows, his aspirations and anxieties do not touch me, are even unknown to me; and, vice versa, my griefs, my desires do not find any way to affect him. We are so near as to check each other's movements and yet so far spiritually, so completely ignorant of each other. And we do not sing.

But if, in a comfortable coach during a trip, we happen to be a congenial group of friends having the same mind, enjoying together a few leisure hours and going towards the same goal, then song flows out spontaneously as a natural expression of fraternity and a precious nourishment of the union of minds and blending of souls.

It is for all this that we sing in church: bent forward towards eternity, using the same ship, sharing the same goal and the same happiness, that of the children of God—we sing. The harmonious blending of voices is a token and an encouragement of union of souls, so that, according to St. Paul's exhortation, "With one heart and one

voice we glorify God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 15:6).

Sacred song is a token and a pledge of union, quite different really from any kind of common song, as there is in the latter only a psychological effect. Though not to be overlooked (even the sacred liturgy is aware of it), this psychological effect is merely natural. But in the sacred liturgy there is the presence of Christ always accompanying the liturgical performance, giving it power to become the nourishment and expression of charity.

Tradition expressed this sanctity of the liturgical song through an aphorism: *Qui bene cantat, bis orat* ("He who sings well prays twice"). And the Church, from St. Paul forward, has underlined many times the importance and the power of liturgical song, inviting the faithful not to be silent when congregated in holy assemblies, but to make their voices heard "as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders," as is the phrase in the Scripture (Apoc. 19:6).

In the encyclical *Musicae Sacrae Disciplina* the Holy Father Pius XII went so far as to declare the task of singers, players and composers of sacred music to be a real apostolate. And justly so, because, more effectively than other elements, singing produces and expresses the spiritual union of the congregation; singing must be always sacred, however, and not merely the performance of a schola or choir, competent as they may be.

The congregation must have its part. This we find in liturgical tradition, which since the very beginning produced chant with antiphon and

responsory, where, together with the schola that sings the psalm or other theme, we have the whole congregation answering to every verse with a refrain. An exception to this rule, however, are those songs which by their very nature or their position mark a pause for meditation between two readings, such as the Gradual, or which are meant to give to the praise of God a special character of stately and refined beauty.

In this manner liturgical song makes true and real the exhortation of the Apostle which connects singing with charity, the perfect bond, and joyous peace, which is the fruit of the Word of Christ accepted into the heart: "But above all these things have charity, which is the bond of perfection. And may the peace of Christ reign in your hearts; unto that peace, indeed, you were called in one body. Show yourselves thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you abundantly; in all wisdom teach and admonish one another by psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, singing in your hearts to God by His grace" (Col. 3:14-16).

One in Posture

Singing is not, however, the liturgy's only element, nor the only effective nourishment of the spirit of Christian society. Significant is the common physical presence, without any distinction of caste, social class, or race: "In Jesus Christ there is neither Greek nor barbarian nor slave nor freeman." Also the attitudes of the participants (all standing, all sitting, all kneeling) are formative elements.

The common attendance and participation of all in the prayer, in the offering, in the sacrament is a sign, an assurance, even a warning, that in the family of God there are not children on one side and foreign guests on the other, but we all are children introduced to the intimate family banquet of the Father. And, at the same time, we all are servants expecting His return, making treasure of His word and of His grace, in order to have, every one of us, a place with Him in heaven.

One posture for all means a virtual victory over that rebellious individualism which prompts one to remain a stranger to the others, to follow one's own inclinations; and besides, it is a significant symbol of the union of minds. If one of the children is standing when all the other members of the family are sitting at table, everyone will tell him, "Sit down!" and will hand a chair to him. For by his behavior he seems to be unwilling to partake in the common happiness. Whoever does not assume the common posture in an assembly shows clearly that he does not share the common feelings and therefore does not care for the common joy.

Such is the meaning and purpose of the rubrics, of liturgical books, of directives of diocesan authorities, and, lately, of the Instruction of the Sacred Congregation of Rites.

One in Offering

An action highly thought of in ancient times

and not completely abandoned even today (as the Holy Father himself remarked in *Mediator Dei*) is the offering by the whole congregation or by a few on behalf of all.

By this action one offers his own goods for the benefit of the Father and of his brothers; it is the contribution of the children to the family table. This is the reason why Cyprian reproached the rich lady who did not bring her offering of bread and then received holy Communion with the bread offered by the poor woman. The offering has always been considered the contribution of the children to the needs of the big family since the time of St. Paul, who orders the collections for the poor of Jerusalem during Sunday meetings (1 Cor. 16:1-3), and of St. Justin, who states that assistance to the widows, the orphans, the prisoners is possible through these offerings.

The offering is, above all, the exterior expression of the spiritual union of the whole community and of every individual with Christ, the divine Victim who offers Himself and is offered by all to the majesty of the Father.

Community Action in the Sacramental Rites

At this point, before drawing your attention to the act that, more than any other in the liturgy, creates and induces the spirit of supernatural fraternity, may I mention some rituals which may be approached by a person in the

light of purely personal interest; and this happens very often today, in an atmosphere of so much secularism.

The first of these rituals is baptism, considered perhaps as an event for a family celebration. Confirmation and marriage are also seen in the same light, frequently of interest to people from a merely human point of view, that is to say, of kinship, friendship, good manners and—business.

And as for marriage, how essential in modern society are wedding announcements and invitations, limiting so much the religious importance of such an act, as if the Christian community were not interested in it or the parish family could ignore it!

And yet, if we penetrate the spirit of the liturgy, all these rites have a vast social echo. See, for instance, with regard to baptism, the restored rite for the Easter Vigil and the whole liturgy of Holy Week (without going all the way back to the liturgical history of early times). These are illuminating documents (as St. Justin points out in chapter 62 of the first *Apology*). The family of God has welcomed one more child into its midst and bends over him with great emotion; the army of the people of God receives the recruits through confirmation; and the newly confirmed, personally swearing their profession of faith, enter the community with the full rights and full responsibilities of Christians.

In marriage, two members of the Mystical Body unite inseparably with the purpose of spreading and continuing the family of God. To this act Church and parish cannot be indifferent.

A meaningful liturgy embraces these events in a common joy and in a common prayer. Similarly, it wraps the burial of a Christian in an atmosphere of common sorrow and common prayer.

The rite of burial is undoubtedly one of highest poetic beauty. There are, indeed, many beautiful poems in the sacred liturgy. But, unfortunately, the understanding of the burial rite in particular is being missed more and more, so that in some instances this rite becomes a quick blessing of the coffin, deprived of any meaning for too many who, even though present at the ceremony, seem by their behavior to give evidence that they think there is no hope beyond the grave.

Where charity has failed, no feeling of human solidarity can make up for it; but a return to the understanding of the spirit of the liturgy would again give its supernatural meaning to the funeral service, which in itself is extremely rich. It is the supreme homage that a Christian, by virtue of his former expressed will, gives to God with his body. He does this in the midst of the community of brothers gathered around him once more in the home, which at that moment more than ever is for him the *porta caeli*, the "gate of heaven."

How consoling is then the song *In paradisum deducant te angeli* as a true absolving sentence that closes the awful drama expressed in the *Libera*.

But I cannot help adding that the rite before death also, the *Commendatio animae* (Recommendation of a departing soul) that takes place

in the intimacy of a silent room, in the midst of choked tears and of the death-rattle, still calls prayerfully upon the whole Church. The Church in heaven is addressed in the litanies of the dying and the invocations to the Virgin Mary; and the Church on earth is reminded, through a touching liturgical custom of bell tolls, that a brother is in need in the awful hour of the mysterious passage, and a prayer is requested from the heart of every one of the faithful. It is still the whole Church accompanying this parting son to the gates of heaven.

Unfortunately, much of this is perhaps fading away today in a life which has lost its spiritual flavor through materialism. How hard it is to live alone and, even more, how sad it is to die alone! Through the liturgy a Christian was meant never to be alone. This definitely involves duties and responsibility; but what rich helps and what consolations it offers!

HOLY MASS:

the Sacred Meeting of God's Family

And now we come to the holy Mass. Surely in no other rite is the social sense better manifested and formed than in the holy Mass.

It began in a supper-room, the Cenacle; it was sealed with an order of love: "Love each other as I have loved you." It was explained and illustrated by the service rendered by Jesus Christ in washing the apostles' feet: "The Son of man has

not come to be served but to serve." The Mass was immediately understood and practiced in this very social context by the Christian community of Corinth, when they joined it with the *Agape*.

And yet there was no need to stress this great divine reality, which is the center of the life of the Christian, as well as of the life of the Church and of the world! So Rome, perhaps, never had an *Agape*; and Africa, which then was so near to Rome, had it, but separate from the Mass.

How great and evident is the sense of supernatural brotherhood in the Mass, and how powerfully and effectively is it nourished in the Mass! The Mass is a meeting, yes, the meeting of the children of God, who gather in the house of the Father. Read, if you will, chapter 20 of the Acts of the Apostles, or chapter 67 of the Apology of St. Justin. It is Sunday. This large family, scattered in many earthly communities, expecting to be reunited in the same heavenly Jerusalem, meets together on "the day of the Lord." Really it is the *familia Dei*, the "family of God."

Meetings, in general, acknowledge a common bond, a common purpose. In the beginning of the Mass the purpose is to listen to the Word of God, preserved and dispensed by the Church; and the consequent answer is given in the unity of all minds with a common prayer and a common act of faith.

But, above all, through the Mass we feel the bond of union when we join in offering to God a worship worthy of Him, worthy of His infinite greatness, offering to Him, all bound together in

one body, the majestic Victim that is Jesus, and ourselves with Him: *nos servi tui, sed et plebs tua sancta* ("we Your servants, but also Your holy people").

And at this moment the bond of everlasting solidarity is tightened even more among the members. The congregation feels itself the family of God. For this family Christ, the first born of a numberless multitude of brothers, has offered His Blood streaming from the Cross in a spirit of reconciliation and atonement; and this mystery has just been renewed; a new covenant has been established.

God now looks down with fatherly benevolence on this assembly; and from the celebrant and from all those attending, the filial salutation rises: "Our Father . . .," together with the request of the children: "Give us this day our daily bread. . . ."

God now, through the hands of the priest, breaks the Bread, the Bread which the action and the words of Jesus, repeated in the Canon, have changed into His Body and Blood. In the same way the father of a family, sitting at table and surrounded by his children, gives everyone a piece of the large loaf of bread, the fruit of his labor and of his blood, we may say, by which he nourishes and feeds his children.

And these children, who shared this bread, feel ever deeper the bond of fraternity; that one bread in which all participated ties them more to their father, and they feel even more the fraternal unity also among themselves.

In full truth, therefore, the Eucharistic bread,

which truly, really and substantially (and not merely by analogy) is the Flesh and Blood of the Son of God, not only binds us together in Christ who makes Himself the food of our souls, but becomes the common tie binding us to one another.

“We all are one body, who share of the same bread!” emphasized St. Paul. And the Blood of Christ that flows in us mysteriously—according to St. Chrysostom—makes us akin to Christ, but consequently also akin to each other; we are indeed brothers!

The early Christian communities stressed very deeply the “breaking of the bread”; and this term is used in the apostolic writings and in the *Didache* to signify the Eucharist. Furthermore, they clearly perceived the practical social consequences of this reality, divinely offered to men: “If we own in common the heavenly goods, why should we not share also our earthly goods with those in need?” asks the *Didache*, at the dawn of the second century.

This inference is perfectly logical and gives quite a new meaning and a new orientation to the life both of individual Christians and of the Christian community. This meaning and this orientation, in the first enthusiasm of early Christianity in Jerusalem, reached great heights; and in the practice of the Churches established by St. Paul this outlook found itself in accord with the usual needs of the Christian life.

This is indeed a life of brotherly love, resting on the mystery of Christ, who, being the one Son of God, became our brother to give us the

privilege of enjoying with Him the sweet Fatherhood of the Lord.

Certainly this inference of the *Didache* is engaging. When it was read one day before the altar of my home, I had it rendered: "If we share the heavenly Bread, why should we not share the earthly bread?" Someone remarked that it was rather harsh.

No, this inference is not harsh. It is logical and contains an important lesson; it combats the selfishness and greed with which we covet the wealth which shrinks the more it is divided. The viewpoint expressed in the *Didache* is the condition on which life can be beautiful and happy—the life of every family, of every community, of the whole world.

*Behold, how good it is and how pleasant,
where brethren dwell in unity!*

*It is as when the precious ointment upon the head
runs down over the beard, the beard of Aaron,
till it runs down upon the collar of his robe.*

*It is a dew like that of Hermon, which
comes down upon the mountains of Sion;*

*For there the Lord has pronounced his blessing,
life forever.*

(Ps. 132:1-3)

The teaching of the *Didache* is not harsh. Rather, it embodies the meaning of the whole Gospel, to the fullest. For the heavenly Bread that we may receive so easily in common without selfishness not only means and involves the shar-

ing of earthly goods, but fosters in us the spirit of charity, which makes sharing less difficult and which blunts the reactions of egotism: *Spiritum nobis, Domine, tuae caritatis infunde ut quos uno pane coelesti satiasti, tua facias pietate concordēs . . .* ("Pour forth into our hearts the spirit of Your love, O Lord, so that those whom You have nourished with the one Bread of heaven You may in Your loving kindness make to be of one mind . . .").

So, in the very heart of the liturgy, represented by the holy Mass, everything (and holy Communion above all) draws and leads us with supernatural force to the spirit of brotherhood, bringing with it a true social awareness.

We must all realize the danger always lying in wait for us men, prone to waste even the most beautiful things. It might seem absurd, but it is unfortunately, if paradoxically, true: an irrational devotion can attempt to make the liturgical action, even holy Communion, an individualistic, almost egotistic action, so that sitting at the Father's banquet we ignore or forget our brothers!

What shall we do? We shall get in touch with the living liturgy, in its history and in its spirit, making wider and deeper our active participation. The greater the participation, the greater will the plan of God appear to us in all its shining beauty: "We are all one body in Christ our Lord!"



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