



The silent revolution that transformed the way millions of Catholics understand the Mass

There are questions that are uncomfortable precisely because they force us to look beyond appearances.

One of them is this:

Why did the Catholic liturgy change so dramatically after the Second Vatican Council?

Was it simply so that the faithful could better understand what was taking place?

To encourage more conscious participation?

To bring the celebration closer to modern man?

Or, in some respects, did the reform modify the language, gestures, orientation, music, role of the priest, and perception of the sacrifice so profoundly that the Mass began to resemble certain forms of Protestant worship more closely?

The serious Catholic answer cannot be reduced to a simple “yes” or “no.”

Because **the Second Vatican Council did not teach that the Mass had to become Protestant**. Nor did it order the abandonment of Latin, the elimination of Gregorian chant, the mandatory placement of the altar facing the people, or the transformation of the priest into a kind of master of ceremonies or entertainer of the assembly.

But neither can it be denied that, in the decades following the Council, an extraordinarily profound liturgical transformation took place.

And that transformation was not merely linguistic.

It changed, in many places, **the spiritual experience of the Catholic before the altar**.

It changed the way the priest was perceived.

It changed the relationship between altar, tabernacle, and people.

It changed the music.



DID THE LITURGY CHANGE TO MAKE IT MORE ACCESSIBLE... OR DID IT END UP LOOKING TOO MUCH LIKE PROTESTANTISM? | 2

It changed silence.

It changed the amount of external participation expected from the faithful.

It changed architecture.

It changed the calendar.

It changed the way Holy Communion was received.

And, above all, in certain settings, **it changed the perception of what is actually taking place in the Holy Mass.**

Here we find the heart of the issue.

1. Before speaking of “Protestantization,” we must understand what Catholic liturgy is

The first mistake is to think that the liturgy is simply an old-fashioned way of organizing a religious gathering.

It is not.

The liturgy is not a show.

It is not a lecture.

It is not a community meeting.

It is not the property of the priest or of the faithful.

The liturgy is, above all, **worship offered to God.**

The Catechism teaches that the Eucharist is the sacramental memorial of Christ’s sacrifice and that Christ becomes truly present in it.



Therefore, the fundamental question should never be:

| *“Do I feel comfortable during Mass?”*

The question should be:

| *“Am I truly worshipping God and entering into the mystery of Christ?”*

The difference may seem small.

But it completely changes the way we understand the liturgy.

2. The Mass was not born in the twentieth century

Before speaking about Vatican II, we must remember something fundamental.

The Church did not invent the Mass at the Second Vatican Council.

The Eucharist came from Christ Himself.

At the Last Supper, Our Lord took bread and wine and said:

| *“Do this in remembrance of me.”*
(Luke 22:19)

But the Last Supper cannot be separated from Calvary.



Christ instituted the Eucharist by sacramentally anticipating the sacrifice that He would consummate the following day on the Cross.

That is why Saint Paul writes:

*“For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you
proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.”
(1 Corinthians 11:26)*

The Mass is therefore inseparable from the sacrifice of Christ.

We are not simply remembering something that happened two thousand years ago.

The one sacrifice of Christ is made sacramentally present.

This truth is essential for understanding any discussion about the liturgy.

3. The Church has always reformed her liturgy

Here we must avoid another common mistake.

To say that before Vatican II the liturgy was exactly identical to that of the first Christians would not be historically correct either.

The Roman liturgy underwent development over the centuries.

Saint Gregory the Great played a decisive role in the shaping of the Roman rite.

Later, medieval modifications took place.

The Council of Trent produced an important work of clarification and standardization of the liturgy in response to the crisis caused by the Protestant Reformation.

Saint Pius V promulgated a Roman Missal in 1570 that became the normative form of the



Roman rite for centuries.

Therefore:

reforming the liturgy is not, in itself, contrary to Tradition.

The truly important questions are:

What is being reformed, why is it being reformed, and what is being preserved?

4. The Second Vatican Council: what did it actually ask for?

Here we encounter one of the most important questions in the entire debate.

The Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium* did not ask for the creation of a completely new liturgy.

In fact, it explicitly affirmed that in the liturgy there are elements that are immutable because they were instituted by God, and other elements that are subject to change.

And when it speaks about reforming the rite of the Mass, it says something extraordinarily important:

“*Let the rites be simplified, while due care is taken to preserve their substance.*”

It also calls for the removal of duplications or elements of little usefulness and for the restoration of other ancient elements when appropriate.

This is fundamental.

Because the Council did not say:



“Build a new Mass.”

It said:

“Reform the rite.”

And it did so with a specific pastoral purpose:

that the faithful might participate in a more conscious, devout, and active manner.

5. So, what did “active participation” mean?

Here we find probably one of the greatest misunderstandings of the modern era.

For many Catholics, “active participation” means:

- reading;
- singing;
- responding;
- bringing up the offerings;
- giving introductions;
- serving as an extraordinary minister;
- making announcements;
- constantly taking part in visible activities.

But that is not necessarily what participation in the liturgy means.

The Second Vatican Council itself spoke of **internal and external participation**.

And it called for the faithful to understand the rites and prayers and to participate in them consciously, devoutly, and actively.

Authentic participation can be profoundly silent.

An elderly person who remains kneeling during the Canon and inwardly offers his suffering may be participating more deeply in the Mass than someone who makes five public interventions without understanding the mystery.



That is why Benedict XVI later insisted that true participation cannot be reduced to external activity. Recollection, interior conversion, fasting, and confession are part of the conditions necessary for fruitful participation.

6. The problem arises when “participating” means “doing things”

And here we arrive at one of the great pastoral problems that emerged after the Council.

In certain settings, a genuine transformation of mentality took place.

The question changed from:

| *“How can I enter interiorly into the Sacrifice of Christ?”*

to:

| *“What can I do during Mass?”*

And they may seem to be the same thing.

But they are not.

The liturgy does not need everyone to be busy.

It needs everyone to be **turned toward God**.

Sacrosanctum Concilium itself explicitly recalls the importance of **sacred silence**.

It is therefore paradoxical that a reform intended to foster participation could, in some places, end up producing celebrations extraordinarily full of words, songs, interventions, and



movements, but with very little silence.

And silence is not an absence of participation.

Sometimes it is its deepest form.

7. Latin: was it eliminated by Vatican II?

No.

This point must be clarified because there is enormous historical confusion surrounding it.

Sacrosanctum Concilium explicitly stated:

“*The use of the Latin language is to be preserved in the Latin rites.*”

And it permitted the extension of the use of the vernacular, especially in readings, introductions, some prayers, and chants.

Furthermore, paragraph 54 stated that the faithful should be able to recite or sing together in Latin those parts of the Ordinary of the Mass that pertain to them.

Therefore, historically, it is incorrect to claim:

“*Vatican II ordered the elimination of Latin.*”

It did not.

What happened afterward was an extraordinarily broad expansion of the vernacular languages.



And here a legitimate pastoral question arises.

Was that beneficial?

In many respects, yes.

The faithful can directly understand the readings and prayers.

But something was also lost, in many places: a universal dimension of Roman worship.

A Catholic could enter a church in Spain, France, Germany, Italy, or Poland and immediately recognize the same liturgical language.

Latin was not simply a “difficult” language.

It was also a **sign of universality, continuity, and sacredness.**

8. And what about *ad orientem*?

Another change that had enormous psychological and theological consequences was the expansion of *versus populum* celebration, that is, with the priest facing the people.

Here we must be rigorous.

Vatican II did not explicitly order the celebration of Mass facing the people.

The orientation of the altar was not established in that manner by *Sacrosanctum Concilium*.

Nevertheless, *versus populum* celebration spread enormously after the Council.

And this has symbolic consequences.

When priest and people are facing the same altar, one image becomes especially powerful:

everyone is directed toward God.

The priest does not appear to be speaking to the people.



He is leading the people toward the Lord.

On the other hand, when the priest remains permanently facing the assembly, another perception can emerge — although not necessarily:

| *priest ↔ people.*

The liturgy can begin, psychologically, to appear to be a horizontal form of communication.

And this is especially dangerous in an age marked by individualism.

Because the Mass is not primarily a conversation of the community with itself.

It is the people of God who, united with Christ, **worship the Father.**

9. Did the Mass become an “assembly”?

Here we touch upon a very delicate issue.

The Church is a community.

Of course.

We are the Mystical Body of Christ.

But the Church is not a community in the modern sociological sense.

We are not an association created by individuals who happen to share certain values.

The Church comes from Christ.

And the liturgy does not exist simply because we gather.

We gather because **Christ incorporates us into His sacrifice.**



This distinction is fundamental.

When the community becomes the protagonist, there is a risk that the celebration loses its vertical orientation.

God ceases to appear as the center.

And the community begins to contemplate itself.

10. Here appears the great question: did “Protestantization” occur?

The answer must be nuanced.

It is not correct to claim that the Catholic Church doctrinally adopted Protestant theology.

Catholic doctrine concerning the Eucharist remained the same.

The Church continues to teach:

- the Real Presence of Christ;
- transubstantiation;
- the sacrificial character of the Mass;
- the ministerial priesthood;
- the reality of the altar;
- the necessity of grace;
- Eucharistic worship.

The Catechism clearly maintains the traditional doctrine concerning the Eucharist.

Therefore, it would be theologically irresponsible to say:

| *“The Church stopped believing in the sacrifice of the Mass.”*



No.

But there is another question.

Official doctrine and the liturgical perception of the faithful are two different things.

And here there is indeed a problem that we cannot ignore.

11. *Lex orandi, lex credendi*

The Catholic tradition has always understood that there is a profound relationship between the way we pray and the way we believe.

Lex orandi, lex credendi.

The law of prayer is related to the law of faith.

Benedict XVI explicitly recalled this connection when speaking about the traditional liturgy.

This means something extremely important:

The liturgy does not merely express the faith.

It also educates us in the faith.

A child learns theology not only from a book.

He also learns it by observing:

- where the tabernacle is;
- how adults kneel;
- how Holy Communion is received;
- how the priest is dressed;
- what music is sung;
- how much silence there is;



- which way the priest faces;
- how the altar is treated;
- what words are spoken.

All of that is catechesis.

12. One generation learned that the Mass was a sacrifice

For centuries, the Roman liturgy was filled with signs that constantly pointed toward the sacrificial character of the Eucharist.

The altar.

Silence.

The Canon.

Genuflections.

Orientation.

Priestly gestures.

Sacramental language.

The use of incense.

Gregorian chant.

The centrality of the tabernacle.

The solemn character of the words of Consecration.

All of this formed a genuine **theological ecosystem**.



A Catholic might not have known the word “transubstantiation.”

But he knew that he was in the presence of something terrible and sublime.

He was before God.

13. Then came a much more explanatory liturgy

The reform sought to facilitate understanding.

And this has undeniably positive aspects.

The new lectionary greatly expanded the faithful’s contact with Sacred Scripture. Vatican II itself had called for opening the “treasures of the Bible more abundantly.”

This is an enormously important fruit.

But there is a paradox:

making something more understandable does not guarantee that it will be understood more deeply.

You can translate a prayer into the language of the people and yet no one may understand its theological depth.

You can explain every gesture and destroy the mystery.

You can make everything immediately understandable and end up making nothing seem transcendent.



14. The danger of an excessively “horizontal” liturgy

Here we encounter one of the most serious criticisms that can be made of certain forms of implementing the reform.

Not of the reform as such.

But of its **practical reception**.

When everything is designed to be immediately understandable, participatory, and approachable, there is a danger of eliminating precisely what distinguishes Catholic worship from an ordinary gathering.

An ordinary gathering needs:

- communication;
- interaction;
- participation;
- clarity.

Worship also needs:

- mystery;
- adoration;
- silence;
- sacrifice;
- transcendence;
- reverence.

The liturgy should not become a pleasant meeting.

It should lead us toward God.



15. What happened to music?

This is another fundamental point.

Sacrosanctum Concilium did not reject the Church's musical tradition.

On the contrary.

It called for the preservation and careful cultivation of the treasury of sacred music and for the promotion of choirs.

Gregorian chant was not declared obsolete.

Nevertheless, in many places, post-conciliar liturgical music progressively abandoned the traditional language.

Popular-style songs appeared.

Guitars.

Melodies characteristic of secular music.

Songs centered on the community.

In certain cases, even musical styles that are difficult to distinguish from those used at youth gatherings.

And here the question arises again:

Does the music help us look toward God, or does it make us look at ourselves?

Not all modern music is bad.

And not all ancient music is automatically holy.

The Catholic criterion must be different:

| *Does this music express the holiness of worship and lead the*



| *soul toward God?*

16. The priest: priest or president?

The word matters.

In environments influenced by a sociological mentality, the priest may begin to be perceived as:

“the one who leads the celebration.”

But the Catholic priest is much more.

He is a priest.

He acts sacramentally **in persona Christi Capitis**.

He is not simply the delegate of a community.

And the Eucharist is not simply the celebration of a community remembering Jesus.

It is Christ who acts sacramentally.

This does not eliminate the people.

On the contrary.

The whole Church participates.

But each person according to his or her condition.

Sacrosanctum Concilium insists precisely that each person should perform those actions that belong to him or her according to the nature of the liturgical action.



17. The great mistake: confusing the baptismal priesthood with the ministerial priesthood

All the baptized participate in the priesthood of Christ.

But not all possess the ministerial priesthood.

The difference is not merely functional.

It is sacramental.

Therefore, the liturgy must simultaneously express:

the participation of the entire people

and

the unique priestly action of the ordained minister.

When everyone does the same thing, there is a danger of precisely erasing that distinction.

And that is not more Catholic.

18. Holy Communion: a change that also teaches

The manner in which the Eucharist is received is also of enormous catechetical importance.

For centuries, in the Roman rite, Holy Communion was normally received while kneeling and directly on the tongue.

The spread of Communion in the hand profoundly changed the physical experience of the



sacrament.

This does not mean that receiving Communion in the hand is automatically irreverent when it is legitimately permitted.

But it does raise a pastoral question:

Which gestures best express that we are receiving the King of the universe?

The liturgy educates through the body.

We kneel before God.

We bow.

We remain silent.

Not because God needs our gestures.

Because we need to learn through them who God is.

19. The loss of the sense of the sacred

Perhaps this is one of the most important consequences.

Not necessarily a consequence intended by the Council.

But certainly a consequence observable in certain contexts.

When the following progressively disappear:

- silence;
- Latin;
- Gregorian chant;
- incense;
- genuflections;
- common orientation;



- the distinction between sanctuary and nave;
- solemnity;
- frequent kneeling;

a psychological consequence can arise:

the church begins to look too much like any other human space.

And when the temple ceases to look like a different kind of place, awareness that something radically different is taking place there may also weaken.

20. “God is here”

The traditional Catholic liturgy possesses an extraordinarily powerful pedagogy.

It does not need to constantly explain:

┃ *“We are now in the presence of God.”*

It expresses this through behavior.

Silence.

Kneeling.

Incense.

Sacredness.

Chant.

Gestures.

Everything says:



| *Here there is something that infinitely surpasses man.*

And this is a form of catechesis that our age desperately needs.

We live in a culture that places man at the center.

The liturgy should teach us precisely the opposite:

God is the center.

21. Was the reform a response to modern man?

To a great extent, yes.

And this must be acknowledged.

Vatican II wanted the faithful to understand the liturgy better and participate in it consciously and fruitfully. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* repeatedly insists on liturgical formation.

The problem was not necessarily the intention.

The problem arises when a good pastoral intention is based on an incorrect anthropology.

If we think:

| *"Modern man cannot tolerate mystery."*

then we eliminate mystery.

If we think:



| *“Modern man needs everything explained.”*

then we fill the liturgy with explanations.

If we think:

| *“Modern man wants to feel like the protagonist.”*

then we make man the protagonist.

But perhaps modern man needs precisely the opposite.

He needs to discover that he is not God.

He needs silence.

He needs transcendence.

He needs to kneel.

He needs to discover that there is a reality that does not depend on his emotions.

He needs to hear again:

| *“**Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts.**”*
(Isaiah 6:3)

22. Was there Protestant influence?

Here we must be extremely precise.



There was a post-conciliar ecumenical context.

There were contacts with Protestant communities.

Theologians from different traditions participated as observers or experts in certain processes.

And some critics of the reform have pointed to similarities between certain liturgical modifications and historical concerns of the Protestant Reformation, particularly concerning an emphasis on:

- the table;
- the assembly;
- proclamation of the Word;
- communal understanding;
- participation;
- reduction of certain elements considered secondary.

But from this it does not automatically follow that:

| *“The new Mass was designed by Protestants.”*

Such a claim would be historically too strong and would require specific evidence that cannot be replaced by similarities.

The more interesting question is this:

Did some modifications ultimately produce a perception of the Mass that was closer to certain Protestant sensibilities?

In certain contexts, **this can indeed be defended as a theological and pastoral criticism**, especially when the celebration becomes predominantly centered on the community and proclamation, while the sacrificial and adoration dimensions of the Mass become obscured in practice.

But this is not equivalent to claiming that the Church abandoned Catholic doctrine.



23. The Church herself recognized that there had been problems

And this is particularly important.

Benedict XVI did not deny the liturgical reform.

On the contrary.

In *Sacramentum Caritatis*, he affirmed that the liturgical renewal associated with Vatican II had value and produced fruits, but he also acknowledged difficulties and abuses in its reception. He insisted that changes must be interpreted within the unity of the historical development of the liturgy and not through “artificial ruptures.”

This statement is extremely important.

Because it allows us to move beyond two extremes.

First extreme:

“Everything after Vatican II was perfect and any criticism is disobedience.”

No.

Second extreme:

“Vatican II completely destroyed the Church and created a new religion.”

Neither is correct.

The historical reality is more complex.



24. Benedict XVI and the hermeneutic of continuity

Benedict XVI sought precisely to address this issue from the perspective of continuity.

In *Summorum Pontificum*, he stated that the Missal of Paul VI constitutes the ordinary expression of the *lex orandi* of the Roman rite, while the 1962 Missal constituted at that time an extraordinary expression of the same *lex orandi*.

His aim was to avoid the idea that there were two Churches.

The question was:

How can the Church preserve her liturgical tradition while legitimately developing its forms?

This question remains extraordinarily relevant.

25. But then, what happened to the traditional liturgy?

Here another interesting phenomenon appears.

Many young people who never experienced the pre-conciliar period have begun discovering the traditional liturgy.

And this is especially significant.

Because we are not talking only about elderly people attached to childhood memories.

There are young people seeking:

- silence;
- reverence;



- Latin;
- Gregorian chant;
- orientation toward God;
- reverent reception of Holy Communion;
- a clearly expressed priesthood;
- historical continuity;
- solemnity;
- transcendence.

Why?

Perhaps because a generation saturated with noise is discovering the value of silence.

A generation that lives permanently connected to a screen is discovering the value of disconnecting.

A generation accustomed to relativism is searching for something that does not change.

And a generation accustomed to having everything revolve around the individual is beginning to discover the beauty of a liturgy that says:

| *You are not the center.*

26. Tradition is not nostalgia

This point is fundamental.

The traditional liturgy should not be reduced to:

| *"Everything was better in the past."*

That would be a form of nostalgia.



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Catholic Tradition is much deeper.

Tradition means receiving something that we did not create ourselves.

The Christian does not invent his faith.

He receives it.

He receives Scripture.

He receives the sacraments.

He receives the Creed.

He receives doctrine.

He receives the liturgy.

He receives spirituality.

He receives a heritage.

And then he has the responsibility to transmit it.

Saint Paul writes:

“*For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you.*”
(1 Corinthians 11:23)

This sentence could almost be considered a principle of all traditional spirituality.

Receive.

Preserve.

Live.



Transmit.

27. The liturgy does not belong to one generation

This is one of the great problems of modernity.

There is a temptation to think:

| *“Young people like this.”*

| *“Older people like that.”*

| *“This music is more modern.”*

| *“That rite is too old.”*

But the liturgy should not simply be subjected to fashions.

Because the liturgy belongs to the whole Church:

- to the living;
- to the dead;
- to the saints;
- to the angels;
- to people of every age.



When we enter Mass, we are not attending a cultural product from 2026.

We are entering into the worship of the Church.

28. The pastoral problem of an excessively informal liturgy

In recent decades, a tendency toward informality has also emerged.

Priests who constantly improvise.

Endless comments.

Applause.

Inappropriate music.

Thematic celebrations.

Spontaneous interventions.

The liturgy transformed into a kind of event.

Here we must remember something that Benedict XVI strongly emphasized:

true participation is fostered through a correct *ars celebrandi*.

That is, through the art of celebrating correctly.

Obedience to the liturgical norms is not the enemy of participation.

It is precisely one of its foundations.



29. When the priest disappears... and when he appears too much

It seems like a contradiction.

But there are two opposite dangers.

First danger: the priest disappears

Everything seems to be a community activity.

Second danger: the priest appears too much

The entire Mass depends on his personality.

In both cases there is a problem.

The priest should not be invisible as though he had no particular role.

But neither should he become the protagonist.

The protagonist is Christ.

This is probably one of the most important keys to recovering a genuine liturgical culture.

30. The altar is not a stage

A stage is designed so that someone performs in front of others.

The altar is intended for sacrifice.

This architectural distinction is enormously important.

When a church is designed like a theater, attention naturally focuses on whoever is in front.



When the space is oriented toward the altar and tabernacle, the entire building seems to proclaim:

| *God is here.*

Architecture is also theology.

31. And the tabernacle?

Another element of enormous pastoral importance.

The location of the Blessed Sacrament conveys a message.

If the tabernacle occupies the center of the church and everything leads toward it, even a visitor who knows nothing about theology perceives that a special presence exists there.

If the tabernacle is relegated to a corner, the perception can change.

This does not mean that Christ is “less present.”

But our visual pedagogy changes.

And the liturgy also needs visual pedagogy.

32. The liturgy must convert man, not entertain him

Here we can formulate a simple rule:



If a liturgy succeeds in making me feel like the protagonist but does not lead me to conversion, it has failed pastorally.

If a liturgy leads me to kneel before Christ, acknowledge my sin, hear His Word, and offer Him my life, it has fulfilled its purpose.

The Mass does not exist to produce an emotion.

It exists to **give us Christ**.

33. “We do not simply attend Mass”: we offer the sacrifice with Christ

There is also a traditional expression worth recovering.

We are not spectators.

But neither are we the producers of the sacrifice.

Christ is the High Priest.

The ministerial priest acts sacramentally in His person.

And the faithful participate by spiritually offering their own lives.

This is very close to what Vatican II itself asked for:

that the faithful learn to offer themselves together with the Immaculate Victim, not only through the hands of the priest but also together with him.

What depth there is here!

Your illness.

Your work.



Your marital problems.

Your worries.

Your repentant sins.

Your sufferings.

Your sacrifices.

Your children.

Your projects.

Everything can be placed upon the altar.

34. The Mass as a school of sacrifice

Our society teaches:

| *"Seek your comfort."*

The Mass teaches:

| *"Give yourself."*

Our society teaches:

| *"Do whatever makes you happy."*



The Cross teaches:

| *“Not my will, but yours, be done.”*

Our society teaches:

| *“You are the center.”*

The liturgy teaches:

| *“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord.”*

That is why a truly Catholic liturgy should form people capable of sacrifice.

Because Christianity without sacrifice is incomprehensible.

35. What should we recover today?

We do not necessarily need to think only in terms of “going backward.”

We can speak instead of **recovering what should never have been lost**.

1. The sense of the sacred

The church should be different from every other building.

2. Silence

We need to recover genuine periods of silence before, during, and after Mass.



3. Gregorian chant

Not as a museum piece, but as the living musical heritage of the Latin Church.

4. Latin

Without turning it into a barrier, but as a common heritage that can coexist with the vernacular.

5. Reverence

Genuflections, bows, silence, and dignity.

6. The sacrificial sense

The Mass must once again be clearly explained as the sacrifice of Christ.

7. Eucharistic adoration

There can be no authentic Eucharistic culture without adoration.

8. Confession

Eucharistic participation requires a life of conversion.

9. Liturgical formation

It is not enough to change the forms.

Their meaning must be taught.

10. The centrality of Christ

Above the priest, the choir, the readers, the parish group, and every movement.

Christ.



36. We do not need a “more modern” liturgy

Perhaps we need a liturgy that is **more Catholic**.

This statement is much deeper.

Because “modern” means temporary.

“Catholic” means universal.

The Church does not have to compete with the world.

She does not need to use exactly the same codes as the world in order to attract it.

The Church possesses something the world cannot offer:

Christ.

And when the liturgy truly manifests Christ, something extraordinary happens.

Man enters.

He encounters something he did not manufacture.

And precisely because of this, he can begin to change.

37. The liturgy should be accessible, but not banal

There is an enormous difference between:

making the mystery understandable

and



eliminating the mystery in order to make it understandable.

The first is evangelization.

The second is impoverishment.

A child may not understand the theology of transubstantiation.

But he can learn to kneel.

He can learn to remain silent.

He can learn that the altar is sacred.

He can learn that the priest is not performing.

He can learn that the consecrated Host is not an ordinary symbol.

And, with time, he will understand.

38. Beauty also evangelizes

Saint Augustine spoke of beauty as something capable of leading the soul toward God.

The liturgy possesses a beauty that is not merely decorative.

It is theological.

Incense says:

God is holy.

Silence says:

God is mystery.

Gregorian chant says:



We are praying, not entertaining ourselves.

The altar says:

Christ offers Himself.

The tabernacle says:

Christ is truly present.

Genuflection says:

God deserves worship.

The vested priest says:

He is not acting on his own initiative.

Everything speaks.

39. The great lesson of Vatican II

It would be unjust to turn this entire analysis into an accusation against the Council.

Sacrosanctum Concilium contains profoundly traditional affirmations:

- the liturgy as worship of the divine Majesty;
- the Eucharist as sacrifice;
- the presence of Christ;
- the importance of silence;
- the preservation of Latin;
- the importance of Gregorian chant;
- interior participation;
- the need for liturgical formation;
- reverence;
- continuity with Tradition.



The historical problem is that **the subsequent implementation was much broader and, in certain contexts, much more radical than what many of those conciliar provisions appear to require.**

That is precisely one of the debates that continues today.

40. And this discussion is still alive today

We are not talking about an archaeological question.

It is a completely current question.

In 2026 we are still asking:

- What does it mean to participate in Mass?
- What place does silence have?
- How should the priest celebrate?
- How is faith transmitted through rites?
- How can we recover the sense of the sacred?
- How can we attract young people without banalizing worship?
- How can we preserve Tradition without turning it into nostalgia?
- How can we legitimately reform without breaking continuity?
- How can we make the Eucharist once again truly the center of Catholic life?

And the answer will not be found simply by changing a few rubrics.

Because the problem is deeper.

We need a liturgical renewal that is also a renewal of faith.



41. The real problem is not Latin versus English

Nor is it:

Traditional Mass versus New Mass.

The deeper question is:

God or man?

If God is at the center:

the language will be an instrument.

The music will be an instrument.

Architecture will be an instrument.

Gestures will be instruments.

The priest will be a minister.

The faithful will be worshippers.

The liturgy will be sacred.

But if man ends up occupying the center:

the liturgy becomes an experience.

The priest becomes the protagonist.

Music becomes entertainment.

Participation becomes activity.

The church becomes a hall.



And the Mass can eventually come to resemble a meeting.

42. The answer is not nostalgia, but worship

This may be the most important conclusion for a traditional Catholic.

We do not defend an ancient liturgy simply because it is ancient.

We defend it when its forms help transmit what the Church believes.

We do not want Latin for the sake of Latin.

We want to recover the sense of universality and sacredness that it can express.

We do not want silence simply because we like silence.

We want silence because we need to hear God.

We do not want Gregorian chant because it is medieval.

We want to recover music born for prayer.

We do not want to kneel because it is an old custom.

We kneel because **Christ is God**.

We do not want the priest to face away from the people merely for aesthetic reasons.

We want the whole community, including the priest, to be able bodily to express that **we are all looking toward the Lord**.



43. The liturgy we need

Perhaps the Church of our time does not need a liturgy that tries to resemble the world more closely.

Perhaps she needs a liturgy that once again shows the world **something that the world no longer knows how to show**.

Silence.

Eternity.

Sacrifice.

Beauty.

Truth.

Sin.

Mercy.

The Real Presence.

The Cross.

The Resurrection.

And, above all:

Jesus Christ.

Because when the priest says:

| *“This is my Body.”*

we are not dealing with a metaphor.



When he says:

| *“This is my Blood.”*

we are not dealing with a mere representation.

We are standing before the mystery of faith.

And therefore the liturgy cannot be treated like any other human activity.

44. Conclusion: more accessible or more Protestant?

Let us finally return to our original question.

Did the liturgy change to make it more accessible, or to make it more Protestant?

The rigorous historical answer is:

The Second Vatican Council sought a liturgical renewal that would foster more conscious, active, and fruitful participation, greater biblical richness, and a better understanding of the rites. It did not order the Catholic liturgy to be turned into a Protestant form of worship.**

But it is also legitimate to ask whether **certain forms of implementing the reform** produced, in some places, an excessively horizontal, communal, or didactic understanding of the Mass, which in practice obscured — without doctrinally eliminating — its sacrificial, priestly, and adoration character.

And here we find one of the great tasks of the Church in the twenty-first century:



to recover the balance.

We do not need to set:

Tradition against Council.

We need to recover:

Tradition + true reform + reverence + continuity.

The Church does not need to make the Mass less mysterious.

She needs to teach modern man **how to enter into the mystery.**

Because perhaps the problem is not that the liturgy is too difficult.

Perhaps we have forgotten something much simpler:

*“Take off your sandals from your feet, for the place on which
you are standing is holy ground.”
(Exodus 3:5)*

Moses did not need God to make the burning bush more “accessible.”

He needed to learn to **take off his sandals before the mystery.**

And perhaps that is also the lesson that the Catholic liturgy can offer to modern man.

In a world that shouts, **silence.**

In a world that trivializes, **sacredness.**

In a world that worships itself, **adoration.**

In a world that flees from sacrifice, **the Cross.**

And in a world desperately searching for something that is true:



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Christ.