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LEO XIV

GENERAL AUDIENCE

Saint Peter's Square
Wednesday, 20 May 2026
[**Multimedia**]

Initial Greeting of the Holy Father to His Holiness Aram I, Catholicos of Cilicia

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Peace be with you.

Brothers and sisters, I am very happy to welcome His Holiness Aram I, Catholicos of Cilicia of the Armenian Apostolic Church, together with the distinguished delegation accompanying him. This fraternal visit represents an important opportunity to strengthen the bonds of unity that already exist between us, as we move towards full communion between our Churches.

Your Holiness, in these days when we prepare for Pentecost, I invoke the grace of the Holy Spirit upon your pilgrimage to the tombs of the Apostles Peter and Paul, and I invite all those present to pray fervently to the Lord that your visit and meetings may constitute a further step on the path towards full unity. Let us also pray for peace in Lebanon and the Middle East, once again torn apart by violence and war.

Your Holiness, I wish to express my particular gratitude for your constant personal commitment to ecumenism, especially to the international theological dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches.

Welcome, Your Holiness, dear bishops and dear friends! Together, let us invoke the intercession of Saint Gregory the Illuminator, Saint Gregory of Nareg, Saint Nerses the Gracious and, above all, the Virgin Mother of God, that they may enlighten our path towards the fullness of that unity we all desire.

Catechesis. The Documents of the Second Vatican Council. III. Constitution Sacrosanctum Concilium. *1. The liturgy in the mystery of the Church*

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning and welcome!

Today we are beginning a new series of catecheses on the first Document issued by the Second Vatican Council: the Constitution on the sacred liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (*SC*).

In drafting this Constitution, the Council Fathers sought not only to undertake a reform of the rites, but to lead the Church to contemplate and deepen that living bond which constitutes and unites her: the mystery of Christ. Indeed, the liturgy touches the very hear of this mystery: it is at once the space, the time and the context in which the Church receives her very life from Christ. For in the liturgy, "the work of our redemption is accomplished" (*SC*, 2), which makes us a chosen lineage, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people whom God has acquired for Himself (cf. *1 Pet* 2:9).

As manifested by the threefold renewal – biblical, patristic and liturgical – that the Church underwent through the course of the twentieth century, the Mystery in question does not designate an obscure reality, but God's salvific plan, hidden from all eternity and revealed in Christ, according to Saint Paul's affirmation (cf. *Eph* 3:2-6). Here, then, is the Christian Mystery: the Paschal event, that is to say, the passion, death, resurrection and glorificatior of Christ, which is made sacramentally present to us precisely in the liturgy, so that every time we take part in the assembly gathered "in his name" (cf. *Mt* 18:20) we are immersed i this Mystery.

Christ Himself is the inner source of the mystery of the Church, the holy people of God, born from His side pierced on the cross. In the holy liturgy, through the power of His Spirit, He continues to act. He sanctifies and unites the Church, His bride, to His offering to the Father. He exercises His utterly unique priesthood, He who is present in the proclaimed Word, in the sacraments, in the ministers who celebrate, in the gathered community and, in the highest degree, in the Eucharist (cf. SC, 7). Thus, according to Saint Augustine (cf. *Sermon*, 272), in celebrating the Eucharist the Church receives the Body of the Lord and becomes what she receives: she becomes the Body of Christ, "a dwelling place of God in the Spirit" (*Eph* 2:22). This is the "work of our redemption", which conforms us to Christ and builds us up in communion.

In the holy liturgy, this communion is achieved through "rites and prayers" (*SC*, 48). The rituality of the Church expresses her faith – in accordance with the familiar saying *lex orandi, lex credendi* – and at the same time shapes ecclesial identity: the proclaimed Word the celebration of the Sacrament, the gestures, the silences, the space – all this represents and gives form to the people gathered by the Father, the Body of Christ, the Temple of the Holy Spirit. Every celebration thus becomes a true epiphany of the Church in prayer, as Saint John Paul II recalled (Apostolic Letter *Vicesimus quintus annus*, 9).

If the liturgy is at the service of the mystery of Christ, one understands why it has been defined as "the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed ... the font from which all her power flows" (*SC*, 10). It is true that the action of the Church is not limited to the liturgy alone; however, all her activity (preaching, service to the poor, the accompaniment of human realities) converges towards this "summit"). Conversely, the liturgy sustains the faithful by immersing them ever and anew in the Pasch of the Lord and thus, through the proclamation of the Word, the celebration of the sacraments and communal prayer, they are refreshed, encouraged and renewed in their commitment to faith and in their mission. In other words, the participation of the faithful in the liturgical action is at once "internal" and "external".

This also means that it is called to unfold in a tangible way throughout daily life, in an ethical and spiritual dynamic, so that the liturgy celebrated is translated into life and demands a faithful existence, capable of making concrete what has been experienced in the celebration: it is in this way that our life becomes a "living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God", fulfilling our "spiritual worship" (*Rom* 12:1).

In this way, “the liturgy daily builds up those who are within into a holy temple of the Lor d” (*SC*, 2), and forms an open community, welcoming to all. Indeed, it is inhabited by the Holy Spirit, it introduces us into the life of Christ, it makes us His Body and, in all its dimensions, it represents a sign of the unity of the entire human race in Christ. As Pope Francis said, “the world still does not know it, but everyone is invited to the supper of the wedding of the Lamb (*Rev* 19:9)” (Apostolic Letter *Desiderio desideravi*, 5).

Dear friends, let us allow ourselves to be shaped inwardly by the rites, symbols, gestures and above all the living presence of Christ in the liturgy, which we will have the opportunity to explore in the coming Catecheses.

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Special greetings:

I greet this morning all the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today’s Audience, particularly the groups from England, Ireland, Tanzania, India, Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines, Vietnam, Canada and the United States of America, as well as the Patrons of the Arts in the Vatican Museums from Canada. Upon all of you, and upon your families, invoke the joy and peace of the risen Jesus! God bless you!

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Summary of the Holy Father's words:

Dear Brothers and Sisters, as we continue our series of catecheses on the Second Vatican Council, today we consider the Dogmatic Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. This document teaches that the liturgy immerses us in the mystery of Christ’s passion, death, resurrection and glorification. Through liturgical rites and prayers, and by the power of the Spirit, Jesus exercises his priesthood and sanctifies the Church, his spouse, uniting her to his own oblation to the Father. Indeed, Christ is present in the word that is proclaimed, in the sacraments, in the ministers, in the community, and most of all in the Eucharist. Let us allow ourselves to be shaped from within by the rites, symbols, gestures and above all by the living presence of Christ in the liturgy, which we will have further opportunity to explore.

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