

Archdiocese of Milwaukee

Synod 2014

Background Paper:

Liturgy

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SYNOD 2014
ARCHDIOCESE OF MILWAUKEE

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This section was written Bishop Donald J. Hying, the Auxiliary Bishop of Milwaukee, and it serves as the introduction for all eight Synod background papers. Bishop Hying presents “intentional discipleship” as our fundamental Catholic identity and the singular focus for all of our Synod considerations and challenges us to view all aspects of the Church in light of “formation for discipleship.”

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I. Introduction: Discipleship: Our Fundamental Catholic Identity

Introduction written by Bishop Donald J. Hying

In the Gospels, Jesus confronts us with a fundamental question: Who do you say that I am? As Christians and members of the Church, we answer with Simon, “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” In faith, we can add Savior, Light of the world, the Word made flesh, the Resurrection, the Prince of Peace. Through the saving activity of Jesus’ Incarnation, life, death and resurrection, we become adopted children of the Father, brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, temples of the Holy Spirit, all in the mystery, communion and sacrament of the Church. The relationship that Jesus enjoys with the Father by nature of who he is, we receive as a pure offer of grace.

Baptized into the identity and mission of Jesus Christ, we proclaim Christ’s saving Gospel through a faith lived out in the words, actions, work, relationships and values of our lives. Our fundamental identity as disciples of Jesus Christ gives focus and method to the important activity of the new evangelization. As we painfully know, too many Catholics have not really been evangelized to know and experience the personal love of Jesus Christ, have been poorly catechized in the fundamentals of the Catholic faith, and do not participate in the sacramental life of the Church in any meaningful way. If we seek to change this disturbing trend, parishes must continue to grow in their fundamental identity as dynamic communities of faith which form intentional disciples. If we are not focused on formation for discipleship, we are failing the mission of Christ.

What do intentional Catholic disciples look like? How do they act? What is qualitatively different about their lives and personalities? The answer is clear yet challenging. Disciples are ordinary people who have experienced the love, forgiveness, presence, consolation and challenge of God poured out through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. They have fallen in love with the Lord and find their deepest identity in their relationship with him. They find God and the mission of his Kingdom to be the fundamental purpose of their lives and, having a strong **Catholic identity**, find the whole Catholic experience of the Scriptures, sacraments, moral life and prayer to be the transformative means of their ongoing conversion. As Paul discovered on the road to Damascus, they are people loved and forgiven by Jesus Christ.

Disciples instinctively **evangelize**, that is they naturally share their experience of God and their faith in him with others. The power of moral example itself evangelizes, as others intuitively sense that such a person lives from a very different center of meaning and purpose than secular society. In addition to witnessing by example, disciples are both courageous and articulate in their proclamation of Jesus and the difference he has made in their lives. They will freely pray with others, do volunteer work, witness to how the Lord has worked in their daily experience, offer moral advice when asked, share spiritual books, CD’s and DVD’s with family,

friends and co-workers, all the while actively cultivating a discipleship response in those around them. The power of one Catholic who knows, practices and proclaims the faith is truly remarkable.

An intentional disciple is a good **steward**, knowing that everything in life is a superabundant gift freely bestowed upon us by the Lord, both to enrich us but also to bless and benefit others. This deep conviction of existence as a gift leads to a profound gratitude that pours itself out in deeds of mercy, love and healing. Like Mary who anoints the feet of Jesus with an extravagant costly perfume that cost 300 days' wages, we are compelled to break open and pour out the gifts of our lives in loving service of others and so fill the world with the sacred fragrance of Christ.

An intentional disciple is a Catholic maximalist, not asking what the minimum is that **must** be done in order to be saved, but rather asking what **can** be done for the sake of the Kingdom of God. Like St. Paul, a disciple has moved from the obligation of the law into the astonishing freedom of Christ, who liberates us to do every good work. In this context, the Blessed Virgin Mary is clearly the first and premier disciple who responds in total faith to the seemingly impossible proposal of the angel, places her entire being at the service of God and gives flesh to the Incarnate Word.

St. Augustine insists that when a Christian disciple places the whole mystery and gift of life at the service of God, the Lord Jesus takes flesh within that person and is offered to the world once again. For us as Catholics, in this critical moment in history, we cannot afford to proceed with business as usual. All over the world, millions of Catholics are asking the same questions.

- How can I have a deeper and more authentic relationship with Jesus Christ?
- How can I more effectively live out my faith in such a way that it actually makes a difference in the lives of others, especially my family and friends?
- How can we continue to insert Gospel values into the public square of politics, economy, health care and education?
- How can we bring back all of those Catholics who have fallen away from the practice of the faith?

In millions of different ways, intentional disciples are living out the exciting answers to these important questions. If the Gospel is the script of our lives, the new evangelization is the urgent challenge to act out with fresh enthusiasm and generosity the great drama of Christ's salvation.

Synod 2014 invites us to consider anew how to be intentional disciples, especially in the areas of Catholic Social Teaching, Cultural Diversity, Evangelization, Formation, Leadership, Liturgy, Marriage and Family, and Stewardship.

II. Liturgy: Introduction and Overview

In times past it seemed almost impossible to be a Catholic Christian without automatically being also an intentional disciple of Christ, since no other Christian denomination, at least within Western Christianity, presented its membership with such an array of rules and regulations, so many requirements for following the Lord in the living of one's Christian life: the Sunday Mass obligation, monthly Confession, meatless Fridays, the 40-day Lenten fast, as well as numerous pious practices such as weekly parish devotions with Benediction, Rogation Days, Stations of the Cross in Lent, Forty-Hours Devotion, rosaries in May and October, Corpus Christi processions, parish missions, not to mention a whole festal calendar with set holy days of obligation throughout the year. In the years before Vatican II, however, very few Catholics thought of any of these things as liturgy; in fact, the word "liturgy" was virtually unknown among the faithful. These were simply the ways that Catholics were expected to live their Catholic faith.

Vatican II's "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy" (*Sacrosanctum concilium* 12/4/63) changed all that both by its doctrinal instruction on the fundamental nature of Christian liturgy and by its directives for the renewal of liturgical rites and regulations. As a result, after its promulgation and subsequent liturgical reforms almost everything seemed different in Catholic life. Altars were freed from the back wall of the sanctuary and priests began facing the congregation at Mass from the opposite side. The Mass itself came to be celebrated no longer exclusively in Latin, but now mostly in the vernacular. No longer were bells rung by servers at the consecration, nor did communicants kneel at a communion rail, but standing, received not only the sacred host but even the precious blood as well. The laity, who before were forbidden even to touch the host or chalice, began receiving them in their hands, some even serving as extraordinary ministers to distribute them to others as well.

Today it is hard to imagine the mindset of years ago, so thoroughly has Catholic life been transformed by Vatican II, accomplished almost exclusively through liturgical changes in the wake of the Council. What more convincing evidence can there be of liturgy's transformative power in Christian life? And yet for all those changes, and in spite of the greater intelligibility of the liturgy and the new sense of dignity the laity experience before God because of their increased participation, the deeper mysteries present in the liturgy still remain for the most part hidden, so that parishioners still yearn to comprehend them more fully in their efforts to become intentional disciples of the Lord.

The aim of this paper, therefore, is to set out and reflect on the fundamental nature of Catholic Liturgy through the following perspectives:

- Current Cultural Realities
- Theological Foundations
- Other Related Information
- Key Issues to be Addressed
- Key Questions for Consideration

III. Liturgy: Current Cultural Realities

Although the Lord in the gospels provides many directives on how to live the Christian life, like “Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction...” (Matt 7:13), he presents very few absolute commands such as “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matt 5:44), and “Pray always” (Luke 18:1). In regard to the liturgy only two come to mind:

- “Go ... and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Matt 28:19-20),” and
- “Do this in memory of me” (1 Cor 11:24). As to the latter, the Letter to the Hebrews adds, “Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some . . .” (10:24-25).

In spite of these Gospel imperatives, a 2013 report by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) shows that the percentage of American Catholics regularly participating in Sunday Eucharist has dropped precipitously since Vatican II to a steady but meagre 24% after the year 2000.

And so questions arise: why have so many who have been baptized and still believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior no longer heed his words, "Do this in memory of me"? Why do they no longer see the vital connection between the Church's worship and the rest of Christian life? What are the causes of this disturbing phenomenon?

- Could it be that the sustained decades of affluence following the Great Depression and the destruction of World War II have dulled spiritual hunger of God—how hard it is for the rich man to get into heaven (Matt 19:23)?
- Could it be that the amazing scientific developments in our time—from iPhones to wars by drones—have redirected expectations for full human happiness away from union with God to the wonders of modern technology, giving rise to an expectation that human ingenuity alone will eventually solve all our problems—a new Tower of Babel?
- Could part of the problem also lie in how the sexual revolution brought on by Playboy and the pill has, for many Catholics, relativized the Church's teaching authority in regard not only to sexual morality but to the rest of human behavior as well, including her requirement of regular Sunday worship?
- Could it possibly be that, with the fundamental changes in the liturgy after Vatican II, because the Church earlier had so insisted on the sacredness of liturgical rites even to

the point of regarding failure to observe rubrics as sinful, many Catholics lost confidence in the Church's judgment about such things---including the necessity of the sacraments---so that now they see Sunday Mass, Reconciliation, sacramental Marriage, etc., as merely pious recommendations by well-meaning but fallible Church officials, rather than as real requirements for authentic Catholic life?

- Could it also be that, with the loss of Latin and the sacred aura surrounding the pre-Vatican II, Tridentine liturgy, many Catholics no longer experience a difference between how the new liturgy is commonly celebrated and the ordinariness of the rest of their lives, at least not enough to lift them above the banality of the secular world in which they live, and give them a sense of God's holiness in their midst?

The decline in the practice of the Sacrament of Reconciliation is even more dramatic, though here the reasons might be more complicated. In any case, now we see entire congregations receiving Communion whereas confessional lines on Saturday afternoons have all but disappeared. According to the National Opinion Research Council, between 1965 and 1975 the proportion of Catholics who confessed monthly fell from 38 percent to 17 percent. The most recent CARA poll (2008) shows an even further decline: 45% of adult Catholics never go to confession, 30% than less than once a year, 12% once a year, 12% several times a year, and just 2% monthly.

Whatever the cause or combination of causes that have so weakened the importance and practice of the liturgy for many Catholics today, it is time once again to ask ourselves why, in order truly to be intentional disciples of Christ, Catholics must engage in public worship and sacraments in the first place and, therefore, how we as leaders of the Church can recall our co-religionists to the fervor of their former practice. Put in another way: why is it not enough for authentic Christian living simply to pray to the Lord in private (cf. Matt 6:6), show compassion to the less fortunate around us, and live well-behaved Christian lives in our everyday world without also having to gather with the rest of the Church in the ritual enactment of the liturgy?

IV. Liturgy: Theological Foundations

The Liturgy as the Mission of Christ and his Church

Few words in the Gospels are as heart-wrenching as those which Jesus utters when he weeps over Jerusalem: "How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!" (23:17). This desire of the Lord was so deep because, as Vatican II teaches in *Lumen Gentium*, the whole purpose of his mission on earth is to gather all of God's scattered children to himself, and to do so through the Church:

"In the beginning God made human nature one and decreed that all His children, scattered as they were, would finally be gathered together as one. It

was for this purpose that God sent His Son . . . For this too God sent the Spirit of His Son as Lord and Life-giver. He it is who brings together the whole Church and each and every one of those who believe, and who is the well-spring of their unity in the teaching of the apostles and in fellowship, in the breaking of bread and prayers" (LG, 13; cf. also Eph 1).

The Council explains Christ's mission more fully in the beginning paragraphs of *Sacrosanctum concilium*. There it teaches, first of all, that **Jesus' gathering all to the Father was fully realized in principle in his own humanity**, because it was there, culminating in his self-offering on the cross, that he united the rest of humanity to himself: ". . . when the fulness of time had come [God] sent His Son, the Word made flesh, . . . the Mediator between God and man. For his humanity, united with the person of the Word, was the instrument of our salvation. Thus, in Christ 'there came forth the perfect satisfaction needed for our reconciliation , and we received the means for giving worthy worship to God'" (SC, 5).

Christ's work of salvation consisted in a human life of total love for the Father as he discovered him throughout creation, but most especially in his fellow human beings, the Father's children. By identifying himself completely with them all, even in the worst of their sinfulness, making no distinction between his own flesh and theirs, he gathered all to his Sacred Heart (cf. 2 Cor 5:21) by a self-offering which resulted eventually in his death on the cross.

The Council teaches also that **the Church came into existence precisely as the fruit of that all-inclusive love of Christ on the cross**: "For it was from the side of Christ as he slept the sleep of death upon the cross that there came forth 'the wondrous sacrament of the whole Church'" (SC, 5). Consequently, in the words of St. Paul, just as in Jesus "all the fulness of God was pleased to dwell" corporally (Col 1:19), so too is the Church now "his body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all" (Eph 1:23). And so, if the Lord continues to gather all humankind to the Father by the saving events of his life, death, and resurrection, he does so now in and through the self-offering of the Church herself as the continuing embodiment in his divine/human love in this world (cf. 1 Cor 10:15-17; 11:29).

As a result, it is in the mystery of the Church that human beings are now able to discover and so accept their oneness in Christ. As we read in Scripture, on the night before he died Jesus prayed: ". . . that they all may be one, even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be one in us, *so that the world may believe* that you sent me" (John 17:21). In other words, even though most of humanity never had the chance to encounter Jesus Christ personally in the flesh during his life on earth (cf. 1 Pet 1:8), they are now able to experience him directly, even bodily, in his Church as those members of the human race who, through faith and baptism, have become consciously

united as one in the divine/human mystery of his love (cf. 1 Cor 2:10-16). In the Church's sacred liturgy, therefore, human beings do not create a community which does not already exist in the world. They rather discover and grow in the community of Christ's humanity in which they were created in the first place, and which has already been fully won for them in his paschal mystery.

Note also that "the wondrous sacrament of the whole Church" referred to by the Council here is not something purely mystical, invisible to the world. Christ's love is an *embodied* reality, and so is manifest not simply in the good intentions of Church members, but in the fleshly manifestation of that love in all that they say and do in the course of their lives, most especially in the sacred liturgy. As Tertullian famously teaches, "the flesh is the hinge of salvation" (*Caro cardo salutis*). Nor does the conciliar phrase, "the wondrous sacrament," refer only to the "official Church" of the pope and bishops united to him. Rather, because the Church is the result of Christ's gathering *all* to himself, "the whole Church" referred to here comprises *all* of her members united hierarchically and visibly in both structured and charismatic ways.

And, although the Church lives and manifests Christ's self-sacrificial love in a myriad of ways, according to the Council none is more important and central to her identity than the sacred liturgy: "the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed . . . [and . . . the font from which all her power flows" (SC, 10).

The Liturgy as the Ritual Exactment of Christian Life

And yet, why is the liturgy the paramount mode by which the Church embodies Christ's unifying love? After all---at least in the case of those who have never heard of Christ---is not the ordinary life of charity itself sufficient for salvation: "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of my brethren, you did it to me" (Matt 25:40)? And why a *ritual* expression of that love?

As we know, what distinguishes humans from the rest of the animal kingdom is their ability as spiritual beings to stand back from life so as to consciously possess and project themselves into the future. This capacity to choose between various future options for themselves is what also allows them to give themselves away to each other in love. In the same way, then, does the Church at the liturgy, under the power and direction of the Holy Spirit, reflexively grab hold of and concentrate her whole existence in Christ into stylized, symbolic forms (e.g., in bread and wine at the Eucharist; in water and oil at Baptism; etc.), which in turn allow her to give it all back to the Father in thanksgiving, and in mutual service among participants in Christ's love.

Nor is the liturgy something totally separate from the rest of Christian life in this world. Just the opposite. As ritual, it is actually a more explicit and more intense participation in Christ's once-for-all self-offering: that mystery which is at the heart of all truly human life. By stylizing elements taken from ordinary Christian living, distilling out the essence of true human life

created and redeemed in Christ, the liturgy engages participants ever more fully in those very events in Christ's life through which God created and redeemed the world in the first place (cf. Col 1:15-20; Heb 1:3; John 1:1-5, 14). As St. Leo the Great so famously writes, "What was evident in the life of the Redeemer has passed over into the sacraments."

All human living, as we know, is fundamentally *personal*. It consists in a mutual self-giving between individuals and among whole groups of persons. Thus the Church's liturgy as true human living is also an exercise in self-giving and receiving: between God, community, and individual (e.g., "The Lord be with you" "And with your spirit"). As an intensification of human life, this mutual exchange is performed in poetic, stylized ways, calculated to highlight the specifically Christ-centered nature of all human existence in this world. And so by means of liturgical rituals individuals enter more deeply into the inner mystery and fulness of all created life in this world: the self-giving of the Incarnate Son back to the Father.

Thus, for example, the liturgy as ritual stylizes ordinary walking into processions toward the Lord; everyday musical sounds into reverential melodies to sing of his glories; and everyday speech into ennobling formulaic prayers to ask his assistance. It also dons liturgical ministers in glorious vestments as signs of Christ's love; typifies Christ as the Light of the World with flickering, mysterious candles; and lifts his people's prayers to heaven with evocative, sweet-smelling incense (cf. Ps. 141); all in order to engage all of creation in the praise of God's name.

The liturgy employs deliberately small portions of bread, wine, and water taken from ordinary life in order to reveal by contrast the immensity of the deeper realities enacted through them. Like a flavorful extract or a powerful aromatic essence, the Church in the liturgy distills out the ultimate, essential nature of ordinary life so as to enter more deeply into its fathomless mystery: "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col 1:27).

In the liturgy the Church lives that mystery to its fullness at regular points in time throughout the day, the week, and the Church year. Those celebrations thus become sacramentally poetic of all the ways throughout human history that God in Christ feeds the hungers (cf. Exod 16; John 6:32) and satisfies the thirsts (cf. Exod 17; John 7:38) of his people's hearts.

Beauty in the Liturgy

The true beauty of the liturgy, therefore, is found not so much in the merely aesthetic quality of its celebration, but rather in its presentation of the splendors of Christ himself (cf. 2 Cor 4:6). As the prologue of John's Gospel tells us, "Through him all things came to be and not one thing had its being but through him. All that came to be had life in him and *that life was the light of men*" (1:3-4). Here we see that, according to John's theology, the medieval notion that liturgy and sacraments serve to *hide* the mysterious reality within them is actually mistaken (E.g., "*Adoro te devote latens Deitas*"). For if the life of Christ truly exists in the world *as light*, then the Church's liturgy, too, must *reveal*, not *hide*, the paschal mystery it celebrates.

As we have seen, the liturgy as ritual does this through poetic, figurative language and symbolic forms. What else are:

- the bread and wine of the Eucharist than sacramental symbols of Christ by which he offers his whole self to nourish his people,
- the altar than symbol of both Christ and the Church's self-offering to the Father,
- the ordained presider than a personal icon of his leadership,
- the assembly than a sacrament of all humankind's unity in him,
- the proclaimed and preached Scripture than an illustrative invitation to authentic Christian living, etc?

And so, for example, to so camouflaged the altar or pulpit with multiple candles and flowers, or punctuate the sanctuary with sloganed banners and tables, or to overwhelm the whole celebration with "wall-to-wall" music---thereby obscuring the liturgy's more primary symbols---and to do so all in a vain effort to beautify the experience, is actually to betray the very nature of the liturgy itself as a sacramental celebration of Christ as the Source of all beauty in the world. Design and elegance are important, but never at the expense of the liturgy's more central symbolic forms.

The Liturgy as Divine-Human Mutual Self-Giving

As we know from ordinary human life, a gift only truly becomes a gift through the grateful recognition of the receiver. For no gift is ever truly received *as a gift* apart from some kind of giving in return, some kind of personal self-opening by the receiver to the person of the giver offered in the gift. In his or her expressions of thanksgiving, therefore, the receiver actually bestows new life on the giver: a participation in the receiver's own personal "world."

In the same way, it is only in and through the Church's conscious, thankful recognition of God's infinite goodness in Christ that God is in fact *able* to fully give, and liturgical participants receive, Christ in his paschal mystery throughout creation and salvation history in the first place, especially as present in their own selves. By their reception, therefore, they not only enable God *to be* God in their lives, but, just as importantly, **participants become God's self-gifts to themselves in Christ**: Christ's body in the world (cf. John 4:10).

That is why St. Paul castigates the Corinthians for not "discerning the body" (1 Cor 11:29) in one another, since through their self-offering in Christ at the Eucharist they actually become one with the body of Christ which they receive in the celebration (cf. 1 Cor 10:16). Because by God's gift of the Spirit "without measure" (John 3:34) Christ dwells in the Church fully (cf. 1 Cor 2:18), it is precisely in and through the Church's own self-offering in those who celebrate that they receive in Communion the fullness of Christ in return, being more closely conformed to him and deepened in their own mystery as his body in this world.

The Liturgical Assembly as Sacrament of the Universal Church

Accordingly, the Church which celebrates the liturgy is the locally gathered assembly, but only as a sacramental realization---in the concrete uniqueness of its particular time and place in history---of the whole Catholic Church throughout the world and across the centuries (cf. LG, 14). For it is in each particular liturgical celebration---especially that of the local church around its bishop (SC, 41)---that this corporate oneness in Christ's love is most consciously manifested and therefore most fully embodied in this world.

Furthermore, the local assembly which enacts the Eucharist is a sacramental realization of the whole Church, and is therefore truly Church, precisely through:

- the exercise of ordained leadership,
- the proclamation and explication of the Scriptures, and
- the performance of the fixed forms of the liturgy (rituals and texts) as authorized by the universal Church (cf. Matt 18:18).

That is why, says Vatican II, "Regulation of the sacred liturgy depends solely on the authority of the Church, that is, on the Apostolic See and, as laws may determine, on the bishop. . . .

Therefore no other person, even if he be a priest, may add, remove, or change anything in the liturgy on his own authority" (SC, 22).

At the same time, the Council also recognizes the need for occasional adaptations of the fixed liturgy to particular regional and national situations (SC, 37-40), since the Church herself is not an a-historical reality, but is rather "incarnated" throughout history in the great variety of human cultures whose meanings in turn necessarily affect participants' understanding of the liturgy they celebrate (cf. Mark 2:27). After all, the Christ who is celebrated in every Christian liturgy is not an a-historical, philosophical Savior, but one who through the Church continues on in the mystery of his Incarnation to gather all peoples to himself within the historical cultures in which they live.

As we have seen, therefore, through the remainder of human history Christ continues to gather all of humanity to himself in and through the Church's sacred liturgy. For it is in the liturgy as the source and summit of the Church's life in this world that Christians---through the power of the Holy Spirit and the agency of Christ within them---offer themselves most consciously and therefore most fully to the Father by their grateful acceptance of the Father's full self-gift to them in the love of Jesus Christ, a love enacted fully in the saving events of his life. By doing so, they become more fully united to Christ as his body which he sends out into the world once more to continue to gather the rest of humanity into his once-for-all worship of the Father.

V. Liturgy: Other Related Information

As we know, the liturgy ---in no matter which of its official ritual celebrations: Roman, Byzantine, Coptic, Armenian, Maronite, etc.---is one of the three major ways by which the Church both manifests and realizes her essential nature in the world: *Witness (Martyria)*, *Service (Diakonia)*, and *Worship (Leitourgia)*. As three aspects of the same mystery, each necessarily includes the other two.

Accordingly, the Church's Witness of evangelizing, preaching, teaching, and personally witnessing to the faith possibly even to the point of martyrdom---along with all the ways Church members live true to God's call in their ordinary lives---is also, as an offer of faith, both a Service to the rest of humankind, and a Worship of God, since it is also an act of reverence for God in all of God's children. Similarly is Christian Service to the world both a manifestation of the Church's essential faith, her Witness---that Christ dwells within all, even the least of his brethren, and a form of Worship, since it is also honor offered to God through the love of the neighbor.

Finally, the Church's official liturgy, her Worship, is both a Witness through the preaching and the doctrinal dimension of the prayers and rites that are celebrated, and a Service through the support in the faith liturgical ministers and congregation give to each other by their sheer presence, as well as by their joining together in song and in all the other rites---all in their mutual effort to give worship to God.

Thus the liturgy is effective in its task of worshiping God to the extent that it exercises members of the Church in true Christian living, deepening their own faith, and sending them as apostles to attract others as well into the one body of Christ and his mission to draw all of humanity to the Father through the once-for-all self-offering of his paschal mystery (cf. John 12:32).

VI. Liturgy: Key Issues to be Addressed

In regard to the liturgy's role within parishes of forming intentional disciples, three issues need to be addressed.

- First, a sophisticated instrument needs to be developed to foster reflection by parishioners on their liturgical experiences in the parishes, in order (a) to discover where they are finding or not finding God there, (b) to provide them with an opportunity to reflect upon and own more consciously their liturgical participation, and (c) to allow parish leadership itself to discern from their responses how better through the liturgy to form parishioners as intentional disciples.
- Second, an implementation plan needs to be developed to systematically re-educate Catholics on the essential importance of regular Sunday Eucharist, and to find new ways of deepening their life of faith by nurturing growth in personal prayer and Christian

virtue, and by greater involvement in parish life and its evangelical outreach to the larger community.

- Third, an implementation plan needs to be developed to address the need for more effective preaching at Sunday masses, including possibly providing ongoing theological education for deacons and priests to aid them in delivering homilies that speak more effectively to how God is present and acting not only in the liturgy itself, but also in the lives of their parishioners beyond the liturgy.

VII. Liturgy: Key Questions for Consideration

The key questions for consideration emerge in direct correlation to the three key issues as articulated in the previous section. These questions are designed to focus discussion on specific strategies for actualizing the three plans.

1. What professional resources are available for creating such an instrument, and what kinds of questions would best yield the desired results? What preparation should be given to parishioners to prepare them well to take such an instrument and when and where should it be administered?
2. Besides regular appeals in Sunday homilies to the sacred obligation Catholics have to recognize by regular Sunday Eucharist their total beholdenness to God for his goodness throughout their lives, and gentle invitations to parishioners to grow in their discipleship by regular Confession, what other parish means might be used to encourage and provide occasions for growth in the life of faith?
3. The most typical complaints in regard to the liturgy that Catholics across the country have expressed in recent years are (1) the lack of reverence and prayerfulness in its celebration, (2) the triteness of the words and music they are often asked to sing, and (3) the failure of homilists to break open the deeper Christian meaning of their lives in the world. Since among these the need for good homilies is obviously paramount, what programs or remedies to existing programs might be adopted to ensure that good homilies become more and more standard in the Church, instruction that truly enlightens and supports the Christian life of the faithful?

VIII. Liturgy: Conclusion

The Catholic Church are those intentional disciples of Christ throughout the world who have been so united as Christ's body by his Spirit-given consciousness and love as to allow him to continue in themselves throughout history his essential mission: gathering all human beings by Witness (*Martyria*) and Service (*Diakonia*) into his saving Worship of the Father (*Leitourgia*), a worship realized once-for-all on the cross but now made fully present and active especially in the sacred liturgy.