

ADORATION 101

THE SACRAMENT OF CHARITY:

The Eucharistic Celebration and its Celebrants

We move now to the proper celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy itself. Once again, we are following the words of Pope (Emeritus) Benedict XVI from his 2007 Apostolic Exhortation on the Eucharist (*Sacramentum Charitatis* ¶ 38-39). Since the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the *Source and Summit* of our Christian faith, the Church regards its celebration with the utmost importance; and rightfully so.

The Holy Father uses the Latin term “*ars celebrandi*” to describe how the Holy Mass is to be celebrated. This simply means “*the art of [the] celebration*” in English. He underscores that the proper guidelines for the celebration of the Holy Mass unlock its true richness and points out how observing its norms has been something the Church has stressed ever since the very beginning of its existence. Active participation in the Holy Mass by everyone involved brings about the unity which St. Peter described in his epistle (1 Peter 2:4-5, 9) where we, the People of God, are authentically shown to be a “*royal priesthood*” and a “*holy nation*”.

Moreover, he continues, the “*ars celebrandi*” entails a specific responsibility for those who have received the Sacrament of Holy Orders: Bishops, Priests and Deacons. The liturgy is their principle duty. Bishops, however, have a more critical role to play in the celebration of the Holy Mass; for they are the “*chief stewards of the mysteries of God in the particular church entrusted to their care.*” They are to moderate, promote and guard the whole of the liturgical rite within their diocese. The Bishop is the celebrant *par excellence* within his territory, therefore union with him by the faithful is crucial.

It is his responsibility to ensure unity and harmony in the celebrations taking place within his diocese. The Bishops are to make sure that the clergy and the laity under his care grasp ever more deeply the genuine meaning of the rites and liturgical texts and thereby have an active and fruitful celebration. Most importantly, the Bishop must show complete respect for the “art of the celebration” himself and lead by his example.

I remind the reader that **all** of what we’re learning here, week after week, points to Jesus. Everything the Church does, all its seemingly complicated “rules” and “regulations” have a purpose. Their purpose is to ensure that all of us can have the most fruitful encounter with our Lord in all His Eucharistic splendor.

NEXT WEEK: We’ll look into the books, signs, and art involved in the liturgy – Paul A. Ray