

ADORATION 101

THE SACRAMENT OF CHARITY:

Priestly Participation in the Holy Mass and Inculturation

For the past several months we've been making our way through the 2007 Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* (The Sacrament of Charity/love) of the Holy Father Pope Benedict (Emeritus) XVI which speaks on the Eucharist as the Source and Summit of the Church's life and mission. This week our focus will be on paragraphs 53-54 which deal with participation in the Eucharistic celebration by our priests and its inculturation.

We may begin by pointing out that the Holy Mass finds its eloquent order and structure when everyone, the lay faithful and the hierarchy, participate in their own unique way. The priest, however, and no other, as the tradition of the Church professes, presides over the entire Eucharistic celebration, from the initial greeting until the final blessing in a detrimental way. Our Holy Father expresses it this way: "*In virtue of his reception of Holy Orders, he represents Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, and in a specific way, the Church herself.*" One aspect within all this is something I myself never knew. And that is every celebration of the Eucharist is led by the bishop, either in person, or through priests who are his helpers.

The role of the deacon is pivotal as well; who has specific duties in the celebration as well. He prepares the altar, assists the priest, proclaims the Gospel, preaches the homily from time-to-time. With the cooperation and participation of altar servers (altar boys) and properly trained laity, the Holy Mass shines forth as a true beacon of what God created it to be.

The Church, the Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI and the Second Vatican Council saw fit to foster provisions and adaptations appropriate to different contexts and cultures. "*The fact that certain abuses have occurred,*" the Pope continues, "*does not detract from this clear principle, which must be upheld in accordance with the real needs of the Church as she lives and celebrates the one mystery of Christ in a variety of cultural situations.*" By the example of Christ who was born not only with the duty to bring God to His people, but also to the entire world, the Church allows these adaptations in order to show that God wishes to encounter us in our own particular situation, provided these alterations align with the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, and fit the criteria laid down by the Fourth Instruction of the Congregation of Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments (in a document called *Varietates Legitimae*) and the directives expressed by Pope St. John Paul II in his Apostolic Exhortations *Ecclesia in Africa, Ecclesia in America, Ecclesia in Asia, Ecclesia in Oceania, and Ecclesia in Europe*. – Paul A. Ray
NEXT WEEK: Our personal conditions for active participation in the Holy Mass