
Pope at audience: “A Christianity without a liturgy is a Christianity without Christ”

“A Christianity without a liturgy is a Christianity without Christ”, the Pope said in clear words, pointing out: “there is no Christian spirituality that is not rooted in the celebration of the holy mysteries.” “The liturgy, in itself, is not only spontaneous prayer, but something more and more original: it is an act that founds the whole Christian experience and, therefore, also prayer”, Francis said during today’s general audience livestreamed from the private library of the Apostolic Palace, devoted to praying in the liturgy: Liturgy “is event, it is happening, it is presence, it is encounter. It is an encounter with Christ. Christ makes himself present in the Holy Spirit through the sacramental signs: hence the need for us Christians to participate in the divine mysteries.” “The body enters into prayer”, Francis explained in unprepared remarks: “The prayer of Christians passes through tangible mediations: Sacred Scripture, the Sacraments, liturgical rites. In Christian life, the corporeal and material sphere may not be dispensed with, because in Jesus Christ it became the way of salvation.” *“Jesus Christ is not an idea or a sentiment, but a living Person, and His Mystery a historical event”*, Francis said in his opening remarks, guarding against

“a temptation to practise an intimist Christianity, which does not recognise the spiritual importance of public liturgical rites.”

“Often, this tendency claimed the supposed greater purity of a religiousness that did not depend on external ceremonies, which were considered a useless or harmful burden”, said the Holy Father. “At the centre of the criticism was not a particular ritual form, or a particular way of celebrating, but rather the liturgy itself, the liturgical form of praying.” In the Church “one can find certain forms of spirituality that have failed to adequately integrate the liturgical moment”, the Pope said, noting that “many of the faithful, although they participate assiduously in the liturgy, especially Sunday Mass, have instead drawn nourishment for their faith and spiritual life from other sources, of a devotional type.” “Much has been achieved in recent decades”, is the assessment starting from the pivotal point represented by the Constitution . Sacrosanctum Concilium. *“Even in the sparest rite, such as that which some Christians have celebrated and continue to celebrate in places of incarceration, or in the seclusion of a house during times of persecution, Christ is truly present and gives Himself to His faithful”*, Francis assured: “Every time we celebrate a Baptism, or consecrate the bread and wine in the Eucharist, or anoint the body of a sick person with Holy Oil, **Christ is here!** It is He who acts and is present just as He was when He healed the weak limbs of a sick person, or when at the Last Supper He delivered His testament for the salvation of the world.” Hence the prayer of the Christian “makes the sacramental presence of Jesus his or her own. What is external to us becomes part of us: the liturgy expresses this even in the very natural gesture of eating.” “Holy Mass cannot simply be ‘listened to’ - it is also an expression incorrect, ‘I’m going to listen to Mass’ - as if we were merely spectators of something that slips away without our involvement”, is the message contained in the final part of the audience: “Holy Mass is always celebrated, and not only by the priest who presides over it, but by all Christians who experience it. And the centre is Christ! All of us, in the diversity of gifts and ministries, join in His action, because He, Christ, is the Protagonist of the liturgy.” “Life is called to become worship to God, but this cannot happen without prayer, especially liturgical prayer”, is the Pope’s appeal. “May this thought help us all”, he added in unprepared remarks: “when we go to Sunday Mass: I go to pray in the community, I go to pray with Christ who is present. When we go to the celebration of a Baptism, for example, it is Christ who is there, present, who baptizes. ‘But Father, this is an idea, a figure of speech’: no, it is not a figure of speech. Christ is present, and

in the liturgy you pray with Christ who is beside you.”

