

PAIX LITURGIQUE

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SACRA LITURGIA: A GREAT STEP FORWARD TOWARDS THE LITURGICAL PACIFICATION

Liturgical Formation, Celebration and Mission in the Year of Faith on the 50th Anniversary of the inauguration of the Second Vatican Council were at the center of interest during the international conference “Sacra Liturgia 2013”, that took place June 25th - 28th in Rome.

Numerous speakers - the who's who in the liturgical realm of the Catholic Church - were present. The guidance and patronage of this presumably largest international liturgical conference this year lay with the bishop of Fréjus-Toulon in France, Mons. Dominique Rey. During the conference many important people had the chance contribute, among them Card. Malcolm Ranjith, Card. Raymond Burke, Bishop Aillet of France and Rev. Keith Newton of the Personal Ordinariate “Our Lady of Walsingham”, for converts of the Anglican Church.

The Conference resounded greatly in the media and was represented with an extensive website and its own facebook profile with hundreds of pictures. It quickly became the main topic of countless blogs of the liturgical scene. The liturgical framework - liturgy should not just be analyzed, liturgy must be lived - included a vespers on the evening of June 25th by Mons. Dominique Rey in the Basilica “S. Apollinare”, the Church of the Opus Dei University of the Holy Cross; a mass in the ordinary form celebrated by H.E. Card. Antonio Cañizares on June 26th; a mass in the extraordinary form celebrated by H.E. Card. Walter Brandmüller on June 27th and a closing vespers on June 28th with Mons. Rey.

On Saturday, the solemnity of Ss. Peter and Paul, the participants took part in a Pontifical Mass in the Vatican, during a Pallium was conferred also to one of the speakers of the conference, Alexander Sample, Archbishop of Portland, Oregon (USA). The Pallium is a symbol for metropolitan archbishops as a special sign of unity with the successor of the Apostle Peter, the Pope in Rome.

The conference was a meeting point of the most important representatives and scholars from different disciplines, that are directly or indirectly linked with liturgy. Mons. Rey made the opening remarks and explained that the conference wants to foster the idea of a “reform of the reform”, which was initiated by Pope Benedict XVI. Central importance was a revisiting of the Liturgical Constitution “Sacrosanctum Concilium” on liturgy, especially in the ongoing Year of Faith, and the occupation of the great gift of Benedict XVI, the Motu Proprio “Summorum Pontificum”. Pope Francis continued this matter of his predecessor with fidelity and this whole mission seems to be a great challenge for the whole Church, especially still in this Year of Faith. In the liturgical changes of the last 50 years, “lights” and “shadows” became apparent, which needed to be discerned honestly and clearly distinguished and addressed.



Card. Ranjith opened the discussions with his contribution about the Liturgy with its natural and supernatural elements. His focal point was the understanding of liturgy not as something made by human hands, rather as a heavenly event, which bows down to earth in order to raise man “up”. In the relation to Christ in the liturgy, the Church receives the strength for her mission; liturgy is the soul of the Church.

Some of the fascinating speakers and topics can be mentioned here: the German music scholar and musician Dr. Gabriel Steinschulte, who presented his thoughts on music in the liturgy as means of the New Evangelization in front of the 350 participants, presented it as non-verbal means of communication, that is present in

all aspects of cult and culture.

Rev. P. Peter J. Elliott spoke in his presentation on the “ars celebrandi”, which turned out to be a returning key concept, as part of the liturgical renewal. Prof. Dr. Stefan Heid, president of the Roman Institute of the Görres-Gesellschaft examined the altar as “cornerstone” of the church building and disclosed some misunderstandings about the early Christian altars. As an example he refuted the theory that the early Christian used a simple “dinner table” as altar. Rather since the beginning of Christianity, an altar table was used, which lost all of its quotidian purpose. Heid drew one conclusion in saying that the concept of “free standing altar”, which was introduced after the Council needed to be reconsidered completely.

The philosopher and theologian Prof. Dr. Tracy Rowland from Australia analyzed the extraordinary form of the Roman rite, the “Usus Antiquior” as being an antidote to the ravaging rationalism of our time and the widespread philosophical dialectic between body and soul. She suggested the forms and ritual of the older form of Mass as an answer to the anthropological contemporary dead ends.

The afternoon was dedicated to the contribution of bishop Marc Aillet of Bayonne (France), who spoke about the new movements and the liturgy and Abbot Jean-Charles Neaut OSB, Abbot of Saint-Wandrille, who committed himself to the topic of the Holy Liturgy as foundation for the religious life.

The Talks of Thursday broadened the discussion even further with an analysis of Church architecture, presented by Dr. Uwe Michael Lang CO. Dr. Lang recalled three essential elements of Church architecture, which are: verticality, that surpasses the mere practical use of the edifice, orientation, that is, directionality of the sacred space and, if possible, of the Church as a whole, and the presence of thresholds, that separate the profane from the sacred.

The psychological and comparative religious dimension of the Holy Mass was explained by Abbot Michael John Zielinski OSB, Member of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. Zielinski pointed out that man as “homo liturgicus” craved for a unity of faith and gestures, movements, and posture. He lived in a world, in which he needed a separation of the sacred and the profane, which is in accordance with his nature and could be found in all religions.

The liturgical reform as a whole was examined by Dom Alcuin Reid of Toulon and H. Ex. Archbishop Sample of Portland (USA). Reid explained that a liturgical reform would only be possible through liturgical formation of the individual priest and called for a theological “ressourcement”. Only then a reform, which was envisaged by Pope Pius X and later by the Second Vatican Council, could be put into action.

Sample emphasised the “sanctifying” task of the Bishop which came about by the exercise of his threefold “munera”. The extraordinary form of the Roman Rite served in this context as a compass and ideal of a liturgical renewal.

Dr. Guido Rodheudt, priest of the German diocese of Aachen, pointed the misunderstandings of a “pastoral” liturgy out, and the danger of a wrong Hermeneutics of this concept.

Don Nicola Bux, consultant for the Congregation of the Doctrine of Faith and the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments closed the scientific part of the day with his thoughts on the catechesis that pertains to the liturgy. He pointed out that the liturgical crises seemed to be the cause for the universal crisis of the Church after the Council and called for a correct celebration of the “Novus Ordo” according to the prescribed norms and the promoted celebration of the “Vetus Ordo” as well as the examination and reworking of the translations of the liturgical books. The liturgical catechesis of New Evangelization was in need of both, the different charismas and services within the Church and their respective unity and communion.

Mons. Keith Newton, member of the Personal Ordinariate of “Our Lady of Walsingham” presented the research of Mons. Andrew Burnham who could not take part in the congress because of grave health issues. The paper regarded the Anglican tradition as an enriching factor for the Roman Rite. The treasure of the Anglican heritage existed especially in the hymns, the rites of matrimony and funerals and special editions of the Holy Bible. With the right understanding it could lead to a mutual enrichment of the two Traditions.

Jeffrey Tucker, founder of the Website “New Liturgical Movement” and “Musica Sacra” recounted the function of the internet as effective instrument to publish and foster the publication of liturgical contents.

Card. Burke spoke on the meaning of the “ius divinum” and the liturgical law as important factors for a realization of a liturgical reform.

The fundamental problems of the liturgical life of the Church quickly surfaced: misunderstandings of the liturgical reform after the Council, lacking knowledge about the liturgical rites and meanings and the symbolism of movements, instruments and forms of the cult, the “ars celebrandi” of the individual priest, the importance of the education of the parish priest and the whole community in liturgical matters, just to name a few. Also the correlation and the “mutual enrichment” of the two forms of the Roman Rite were discussed, always in reference to the exemplary character of the extraordinary form.

Many of the participants had for the first time the chance to lead discussions even of hot topics in a climate of mutual understanding, some of which are marginalized or intentionally concealed in the daily life of a parish. The active sharing between participants of countless topics continued also after the official presentation, which were translated simultaneously into five languages, and led oftentimes to fruitful discussion outside of the conference rooms until dusk in Rome.

True universality of the Roman Church in both her liturgical forms were especially sensible in the liturgies which framed the conference and which represented a moment of prayer and orientation towards the essential core of the faith. The participants were not just engages intellectually, but could partake in the liturgy with all their sense. The solemn Pontifical Mass with Card. Brandmüller and the polyphonic chant was certainly the climax of the conference for many. The vision of the countless priests and religious, huddled in the Choir of S. Apollinare, must have left a deep impression on the hearts.

The unity to Pope Francis was shown in the participation of the solemn Mass on the feast of St. Peter and Paul on Saturday.

Sacra Liturgia 2013 therefore laid the cornerstone of this year in everything liturgical in Rome and will hopefully become a foundation-stone of the “reform of the reform” of the time to come, on which has to be built now in the different religious houses, parishes and catholic families.