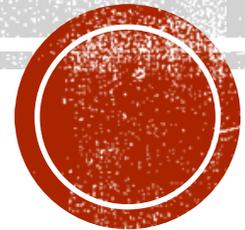


# **UNDERSTANDING OUR CELEBRATION OF THE PASCHAL MYSTERY OF CHRIST**

**BY  
FATHER CHRIS N ANYANWU**



# PREAMBLE

- Our Catechism makes an important assertion: *“The Church celebrates in the liturgy above all the Paschal mystery of Christ by which Christ accomplished the work of salvation” (CCC. No. 1067)*
  - The questions that we need to ask include the following:
    - 1) What do we understand by the Paschal mystery of Christ?
    - 2) When do we celebrate these mysteries in the Church?
    - 3) How do we celebrate the mysteries?
    - 4) Who celebrates the mysteries?
- The key words in the discussion are: **Paschal Mystery, Liturgy, Sacraments**



# WHAT IS PASCHAL MYSTERY

- The word “paschal” is the equivalent of the Greek word “**pascha**” which is derived from Aramaic “**pasha**” and Hebrew “**pesah**” meaning “**the passing over.**”
- By the Paschal Mystery of Christ, we mean Christ passing through death from this life into eternal glory. The Paschal mystery is the passion, death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ by which he heals us from sins and enables us to become children of God.



# WHAT IS PASCHAL MYSTERY

- It means the process of dying and rising, from death to a new life.
- It is one of the central concept of Christian faith relating to the history of salvation.
- Christ's work of redemption was accomplished by his passion, death, resurrection and glorious ascension, whereby "dying he destroyed our death, rising he restored our life."



# WHAT IS PASCHAL MYSTERY

- We know that a mystery is both visible and hidden.
- The death and resurrection of Christ are hidden in the eternity of God, but it is seen by the visible gathering of the community for worship and remembrance of what God has done for us.



# **THE CELEBRATION OF THE PASCHAL MYSTERY**

- **The Paschal mystery is celebrated and made present in the liturgy of the Church and its saving effects are communicated through the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist, which renews the Paschal sacrifice of Christ as sacrifice offered by the Church.**
- **We therefore celebrate the Paschal mystery of Christ in our liturgies and in the Sacraments.**
- **It is the Holy Spirit, the source of the Church's life, which draws us together when we worship in our liturgy and celebrate the Sacraments.**



# WHAT IS THE LITURGY

- The word liturgy comes from the Greek term meaning *“public work or work done on behalf of the people.”*
- Liturgy has a broader application, for it embraces all the official public prayer life of the Church, while the term Sacrament refers to a particular celebration of Christ’s salvific work.
- Liturgy always referred to an organized community. A work then, done by an individual or a group was a liturgy on behalf of the larger community.



# WHAT IS THE LITURGY

- All the worshipers are expected to participate actively in each liturgy, for this is the holy “work” not entertainment or a spectator event.
- Every liturgical celebration is an action of Christ the High Priest and the Mystical Body, which is the Church.
- It therefore requires the participation of the People of God in the work of God.



# WHAT IS THE LITURGY

- Liturgy is centered on the Holy Trinity.
- At every liturgy the action of the worship is directed to the Father, from whom all blessings come, through the Son, in the unity of the Holy Spirit.
- Through the liturgical celebrations of the Church, we participate in the Paschal Mystery of Christ, that is, his passing through death from this life into eternal glory, just as God enabled the people of ancient Israel to pass from slavery to freedom through the events narrated in the Book of Exodus(cf. Ex 11-13).



# WHAT IS THE LITURGY

- The liturgies of the Church also help each of us to know about Jesus Christ and the meaning of the mysteries we celebrate.
- Jesus Christ's death and Resurrection is present to us and effective to us in our liturgical celebrations.
- We gather in our liturgies to worship and celebrate also the Sacraments.



# WHAT IS THE SACRAMENT

- **“The Sacraments are efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us” through the work of the Holy Spirit(CCC, nos 1131; cf. no 774).**
- **Sacraments are efficacious signs: that is, they are effective. They are effective because Jesus Christ is at work in them.(It is Christ who baptizes , he who acts in the sacraments in order to communicate the grace that each sacrament signifies.”(CCC, no.1127).**



# WHAT IS THE SACRAMENT

- Christ uses the Sacramental signs to confer his life of grace on us.
- When these sacramental signs are celebrated, they reveal and make present the reality they signify.



# WHAT IS THE SACRAMENTS

- The whole liturgical life of the Church revolves around the Eucharistic sacrifice and the Sacraments.
- The Sacraments have a visible and invisible reality; a reality open to all human senses but grasped in its God-given depths with the eyes of faith.



# WHAT IS THE SACRAMENTS

- The visible reality we see in the Sacraments is their outward expression, the form they take, and the way in which they are administered and received.
- The invisible reality we cannot “see” is God’s grace, his gracious initiative in redeeming us through the death and Resurrection of his Son.
- His initiative is called grace because it is free and loving gift by which he offers people a share in his life, and shows us his favor and will for our salvation.



# WHAT IS THE SACRAMENTS

- The saving words and deeds of Jesus Christ are the foundation of what he communicates in the Sacraments through the ministers of the Church.
- Guided by the Holy Spirit, the Church recognizes the existence of Seven Sacraments instituted by the Lord.



# WHAT IS THE SACRAMENTS

- The Seven Sacraments are grouped together in the following ways:
- SACRAMENT OF INITIATION: **Baptism, Confirmation** and the **Eucharist**.
- SACRAMENTS OF HEALING: **Penance and Reconciliation** and **Anointing of the Sick**.
- SACRAMENT OF SERVICE OF COMMUNION: **Holy Orders and Matrimony**.



# WHAT IS THE SACRAMENTS

- Christ instituted the Sacraments.
- Jesus entrusted the Sacraments to the Church.
- The Sacraments transmit divine life. Our share in this life is God's grace.
- Jesus gave us the Sacraments to call us to worship God, to build up the Church, to deepen our faith, to show us how to pray, to connect us with the Living Tradition of the Church, and to sanctify us.



# WHO CELEBRATES

- **The entire Body of Christ, animated by the Holy Spirit celebrates the Paschal mysteries.**
- **The celebrating assembly is the community of the faithful (you and I).**
- **Our celebration is not a matter of private prayer but a public act of worship by the faithful gathered together by the power of the spirit under the authority of the Bishop, their teacher and shepherd.**



# WHO CELEBRATES

- **Within the assembly, the ordained have a unique function of service.**
- **These servants are chosen and consecrated by the Sacrament of Holy Orders, by which the Holy Spirit enables them to act in the person of Christ the Head, for the service of the members of the Church” (CCC, no.1142).**



# HOW WE CELEBRATE

- **The Church celebrates the liturgy and Sacraments using an abundance of signs and symbols and rituals.**
- **We celebrate the Sacraments with spiritual readings, homilies, music, processions, blessings, bread, wine, oil, arms outstretched in prayer, gestures of peace, bowed heads, kneeling, standing, sitting, incense, holy water, flowers, candles, colors, ritual vestments, choirs and musical instruments.**



# HOW WE CELEBRATE

- We do this in a holy environment in which architecture, sculpture, paintings, icons, and stained glass lend an ambience that speaks of the mystery of God and divine transcendence on the one hand, and the unity of God with the worshipping community on the other.
- Since the Son of God honored us by becoming incarnate---the true visible image of the invisible God---we use these signs and symbols to help us experience God's invisible presence.



# HOW WE CELEBRATE

- In our celebrations, the Word of God is a central part. The reading of the Sacred Scriptures is meant to awaken a response of faith in the listeners. When the word is proclaimed, Christ himself speaks to us.
- Having encountered Christ in the word, the people enter with a deeper appreciation into the heart of the celebration.



# HOW WE CELEBRATE

- The signs that accompany this reading emphasize its dignity: the use of a beautiful book, a procession with the Book of the Gospels, including incense and candles, an effective reading of the scriptures, a homily that breaks open the word, silent reflection, and a prayerful response from the assembly.
- The combination of word and action helps make visible the invisible action of Christ and the Holy spirit to open the hearts of the assembly to the grace of the particular sacramental celebration.



# WHEN DO WE CELEBRATE

- Central to the Church's liturgical life is Sunday, the day of Christ's Resurrection.
- The observance begins with the evening of the preceding day.
- It is a day when all Catholics are obliged to take part in the Mass.
- The Church encourages that Sunday, the Lord's Day also a day for rest and recreation.
- It is also a day when the faithful can devote themselves to works of mercy and to the apostolate.



# WHEN DO WE CELEBRATE

- The Church celebrates the whole mystery of Christ from Incarnation until the day of Pentecost and the expectation of Christ's coming.
- The summit of our celebration is the Easter Triduum—from the evening of Holy Thursday to the evening of Easter Sunday.
- The presence of the Risen Lord and his saving work permeates the entire liturgical celebration Year: Advent, Christmas, Lent, the Easter Season and Ordinary Time.



# WHEN DO WE CELEBRATE

- The Church with special love venerates the Blessed Virgin Mary and also offers for the devotion of the faithful the memory of the martyrs and other saints.
- The veneration of Mary is evident in the number of feasts of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
- Closely tied to the Eucharist is the daily liturgical life of the Church is the Liturgy of the Hours, especially Morning and Evening prayer.



# WHEN DO WE CELEBRATE

- **The Liturgy of the Hours, in which the whole Church pours out her praise to God, prolongs the Eucharistic celebration, and leads us back to it.**
- **Besides offering praise to God, the Church in the Liturgy of the Hours expresses the prayers and desires of the Christian faithful. This is evident especially in the intercessions at Morning and Evening Prayer, the praying of Our Father and the concluding prayer.**



# WHERE DO WE CELEBRATE

- **Worship is not confined to any one place, for the whole earth is entrusted to God's people.**
- **It is customary to build churches for divine worship. A church is "a house of prayer in which the Eucharist is celebrated and reserved, where the faithful assemble, and where we worshipped the presence of the Son of God and Savior"(CCC, no.1181**
- **While the church building is important, the worshipping community, "living stones built into a spiritual hours", is of greater importance.**



# CONCLUSION

- Our celebrations especially the Eucharist ends with the mission to go forth and serve the Lord. This sending means that the love of God and neighbor and the moral implications of the beatitudes and the Ten Commandments should be witnessed by the participants in everyday life.
- People of faith know that their liturgical experience provides a unique spiritual vision and strength for making this world a better place to live.



# QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- 1. Do you participate well at our Sunday Mass?
- 2. Which areas of the Mass do you want to be improved?
- 3. How is our worship related to our life?

