



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER
ON THE OCCASION OF THE COURSE FOR THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR
EPISCOPAL LITURGICAL CELEBRATIONS
AT THE PONTIFICAL ATHENAEUM SANT'ANSELMO**

[Aula IX of the Pontifical Athenaeum Sant'Anselmo, 24-28 February 2025]

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

I greet the Father Abbot Primate and the Dean of the Pontifical Liturgical Institute, with the professors and students who have attended this second edition of the course for those responsible for episcopal liturgical celebrations. I am pleased to note that you have once again accepted the invitation formulated in the Apostolic Letter *Desiderio desideravi*, continuing to study the liturgy, not only from a theological perspective, but also in the area of celebratory praxis.

This dimension touches the life of the people of God and reveals its true spiritual nature (cf. Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, 9). Therefore, the person responsible for liturgical celebrations is not just a teacher of theology; he is not a scribe, who applies the norms; he is not a sacristan, who prepares what is needed for the celebration. He is a teacher placed at the service of the prayer of the community. While humbly teaching the liturgical art, he must guide all those who celebrate, keeping the ritual rhythm and accompanying the faithful in the sacramental event.

As a mystagogue, he prepares every celebration wisely, for the good of the assembly; he translates into celebratory praxis the theological principles expressed in the liturgical books (*Caeremoniale Episcoporum*, 9). Thus assisted, the pastor can gently lead the entire diocesan community in the offering of self to the Father, in imitation of Christ the Lord.

Dear brothers and sisters, every diocese looks to the Bishop and the Cathedral as celebratory models to be imitated. I urge you, therefore, to propose and foster a liturgical style that expresses the following of Jesus, avoiding unnecessary pageantry or prominence. I invite you to carry out

your ministry in discretion, without boasting about the results of your service. And I encourage you to transmit these attitudes to the ministers, lectors and cantors, according to the words of Psalm 115 quoted in the Prologue of the Benedictine Rule: “Not to us, Lord, not to us give the glory, but to your name alone” (cf. nos. 29-30).

In all of your tasks, do not forget that care for the liturgy is first and foremost care for prayer, that is, for the encounter with the Lord. When he proclaimed Saint Teresa of Ávila as doctor of the Church, [Saint Paul VI](#) defined the mystical experience as a love that becomes light and wisdom: the wisdom of the divine and the human (cf. *Homily*, 27 September 1970). May this great master of spiritual life be an example to you: indeed, to prepare and guide liturgical celebrations means bringing together divine and human wisdom. The first is acquired through prayer, meditation and contemplation; the second comes from study, the commitment to deepen, the ability to listen.

To succeed in these tasks, I advise you to keep your eyes on the people, of whom the Bishop is pastor and father: this will help you to understand the needs of the faithful, as well as the forms and ways to promote their participation in liturgical action.

Since worship is the work of the whole assembly, the encounter between doctrine and pastoral care is not an optional technique, but a constitutive aspect of the liturgy, which must always be incarnated, inculturated, expressing the faith of the Church. Consequently, the joys and sufferings, the dreams and concerns of the people of God possess a hermeneutical value that we cannot ignore (cf. [Videomessage to the International Congress of Theology at the U.C.A.](#), Buenos Aires, 1-3 September 2015). I like to recall, in this regard, what the first dean of the Pontifical Liturgical Institute, Benedictine Abbot Salvatore Marsili, wrote. It was in 1964: with foresight he invited us to become aware of the message of the Second Vatican Council, in the light of which no true pastoral work is possible without liturgy, because the liturgy is the peak to which all the action of the Church tends. (cf. S. Marsili, *Riforma Liturgica dall'alto*, *Rivista Liturgica* 51 [1964] 77-78).

As I invite you to make these words the fundamental perspective of your ministry, I hope that every one of you will always have at heart the people of God, whom you accompany in worship with wisdom and love. And do not forget to pray for me.

From “Gemelli” Hospital, 26 February 2025

FRANCIS

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