



## GUARDIANS OF THE SACRED LITURGY - WITHOUT BORDERS

### LITURGICAL LITERACY PROGRAM (LLP)

#### MODULE 1



#### ***WHY DO WE NEED TO BE LITURGY LITERATE***

I will answer this question based on my own personal experience. To start with, I am a cradle Catholic, like probably most Catholics. I developed the discipline and practice of coming to Mass every Sunday as my parents taught me, following every gesture, saying the responses and singing the hymns as everyone in the congregation did. Every time I attended the Mass, I participated ***actively*** in the liturgy by doing all the actions that everybody was doing, and saying the words that everybody was saying. But I did not really know what I was doing and why I was doing what I was doing like the gestures and the words. In other words, I did not know the meaning and significance of the words and the actions. I just did and uttered as everybody did. Sounds familiar?

In 2008, the Assistant Pastor of the parish I belonged to was promoted as Parish Priest of another parish, and he passed on to me his liturgist role, in particular, preparing the Sunday liturgy. He trained me on how to prepare the liturgy script and taught me things I needed to know about the sacred liturgy. As it is my nature to want to know more about a new undertaking or endeavour, to learn what I can and cannot do, I did my own research. I found several documents about the sacred liturgy: *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), the *General*

*Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM), the Order of the Mass (Roman Missal), *Redemptionis Sacramentum* and other resources on the sacred liturgy. I studied the documents and learned a lot about the sacred liturgy, liturgical celebrations and breaches of liturgical rules and norms which the Church documents refer to as liturgical abuses. I learned most of all that I cannot change anything at all in the liturgy. No one can! Not even the clergy.

### ***As a Participant***

By studying and learning about the sacred liturgy, as a participant in the celebration of the Mass, I acquired a better understanding and appreciation of the sacred liturgy, why we need to attend the Mass apart from it being an obligation and the meaning of the words and actions that we do at Mass. I learned to love the Mass more. I learned the meaning of the words that we say and the actions that we do in the Mass. My learnings enabled me to find a deeper meaning in and the significance of the sacred liturgy so that when I do the actions and say the word of the responses and prayers in the Mass, it gave me the consciousness to understand the essence of the nature and spirit of the sacred liturgy as praise, glorification and thanksgiving to God. It was transformational! It totally transformed me and attending the mass brought a deeper meaning into attending it. Acquiring the knowledge about the truth of and in the liturgy enabled me to live it and brought the sacred liturgy to my family and the community at large.

The primary purpose of the reform of the sacred liturgy through the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*) is to promote the full, conscious and active participation of the faithful in the sacred liturgy, the Mass. This can only be achieved if the faithful is liturgy literate. The clergy as mandated in the Constitution are supposed to educate and catechize the faithful on the sacred liturgy. Unfortunately, this is one of the failures of the clergy. And so, the Guardians of the Sacred Liturgy Without Borders is picking up the slack by taking the initiative of enabling the faithful to be liturgy literate through its Liturgical Literacy Program (LLP).

### ***As a Guardian of the Sacred Liturgy***

With the new knowledge that I acquired, my eyes were opened to the state of liturgical celebrations in the Catholic Church, the liturgical impropriety committed in the sanctuary especially at the altar of the Lord. I was, and still am appalled today at the extent of abuses that I

witness in liturgical celebrations. I get disturbed and feel short-changed every time I attend a liturgy that is fraught with liturgical abuses.

Sadly, as acknowledged by the Universal Church, liturgical abuse is widespread in the Catholic world. It is a global concern, not only of the Universal Church but of the faithful of the Catholic world as evidenced by posts and comments in different social media platforms.

So what do we do with this problem that continues to beset our Church? Is there something we, the LAY people of God, can do to address this crisis, the liturgical impropriety or abuse ?

Before Paul set for Jerusalem, he told the other disciples of Christ in Ephesus this: “*Be on your guard for yourselves and for all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you the guardians, to feed the Church of God which he bought with the blood of his own Son.*” (Acts 20:28 JB) So, we are the guardians of the Church; we have to look after it, its sacraments in particular the Holy Eucharist, the food of our souls.

To emphasize this role, the duties and obligations of the Christian faithful are enshrined in the 1983 Code of Canon Law, excerpts of relevant provisions are included in Module I of the Liturgical Literacy Program (LLP). Please read the document “Rights and Obligations of the Lay Faithful”.

In terms more particular to the sacred liturgy of the Church, the Holy See which is the administrative body of the Catholic Church through the then Congregation (now Dicastery) of Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments issued the juridical document “*Instruction Redemptionis Sacramentum* and at paragraphs 183 and 184:

*[183.] In an altogether particular manner, let everyone do all that is in their power to ensure that the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist will be protected from any and every irreverence or distortion and that all abuses be thoroughly corrected. This is a most serious duty incumbent upon each and every one, and all are bound to carry it out without any favouritism. (emphasis supplied)*

*[184.] Any Catholic, whether Priest or Deacon or lay member of Christ’s faithful, has the right to lodge a complaint regarding a liturgical abuse to the diocesan Bishop or the competent Ordinary equivalent to him in law, or to the Apostolic See on account of the primacy of the Roman Pontiff. It is fitting, however, insofar as possible, that the report or complaint be submitted first to the diocesan Bishop. This is naturally to be done in truth and charity. (emphasis supplied)*

This is the foundation of the creation of the Guardians of the Sacred Liturgy Without Borders. As a function of the Mission to address liturgical impropriety or liturgical abuse, the Guardians will ensure that liturgies, whenever or wherever held, are celebrated properly and faithfully in accordance with established liturgical laws, rules and norms.

To carry out this mission, it is critical that the Guardians of the Sacred Liturgy Without Borders have the correct and adequate knowledge of the sacred liturgy, that is, that they are liturgy literate. Hence, the Guardians will enable its followers to acquire liturgical literacy through education and formation programs such as the Liturgical Literacy Program.

Before we act to address liturgical abuses, we need LITURGICAL LITERACY to enable and empower us to identify the abuses or impropriety in liturgical celebrations. Without adequate knowledge of the truth of and in the sacred liturgy, we will not have the skill to identify liturgical impropriety or abuse in the celebration of the Mass.

In conclusion, we need to be liturgy literate firstly, to enable us to fully, consciously and actively participate in the praise and worship of God in the sacred liturgy, and secondly, to be able to carry out our mission as Guardians of the Sacred Liturgy Without Borders to protect the Eucharist from irreverence or distortion and to stop liturgical abuse.