

Editor's words

“Liturgy” comes from the Greek word “*leiturgia*”, which means a public work or a service, that is, a service in the name of/on behalf of the people. In Christian tradition, liturgy refers to the participation of the people of God in “the work of God”, with all liturgical celebrations revolving around the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

Liturgy is at the heart of Christian prayer. It is also the primary place where God and humans come together for the good of the world. In Catholic tradition, “the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the font from which all her power flows. For the aim and object of apostolic works is that all who are made sons of God by faith and baptism should come together to praise God in the midst of His Church, to take part in the sacrifice, and to eat the Lord’s supper” (SC 10). Thus, it is the duty of pastors “to ensure that the faithful take part fully aware of what they are doing, actively engaged in the rite, and enriched by its effects” (SC 11). Such participation by the Christian people as “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people” (1 Pt 2:9; cf. 2:4-5) is their right and duty by reason of their baptism (SC 14).

To ensure that the faithful take part “fully aware of what they are doing, actively engaged in the rite, and enriched by

its effects”, it would be worthy to study the various elements involved, which are closely related to liturgical inculturation. In fact, even before the Second Vatican Council, local Churches had already begun to introduce elements of local cultures into liturgical celebrations. The thing that is needed to bear in mind is to ensure “oneness in diversity” in liturgical traditions, that is, diversified while remaining faithful to the Apostolic Tradition and in communion with the whole Church in matters of faith and liturgy. This is exactly the theme of this issue, to study the liturgical reform and inculturation in the Catholic Church basing on the experiences of the Churches in Mainland China and in Hong Kong.

This issue includes seven thematic articles. The first one is a study of liturgical inculturation in the contemporary Church in China based on Church teachings and the spirit of the liturgy, written by Rev. Dr. Felipe Yang. Rev. Yang first points out that liturgical celebration serves to communicate the mystery of salvation. It consists of a number of elements, such as language, gestures and symbols. He examines specifically how the Chinese culture can properly and securely embrace and serve the mystery of salvation. He suggests that if the spirit of liturgical inculturation is to be fully realized, we should study the liturgy and the meanings of the concrete rites in an in-depth manner basing on biblical revelation. Moreover, it would require input from various professionals, including liturgical scholars, biblical scholars, historians, cultural studies scholars, architects and artists.

In the second article, Rev. Carlos Cheung focuses on expounding the meaning of *participatio actiosa* (active participation) in order to deepen the faithful's understanding of this notion. Active participation is an imperative principle after the liturgical reform of the Second Vatican Council. Rev. Cheung first examines the characteristics of active participation, as well as its reasons, methods, content, scope and nature. Based on the liturgical practices in the Church in Hong Kong, certain possible pitfalls that might threaten the liturgy are noticed, and positive and negative comments on the current practices are listed. He then puts the liturgy in the vernacular language and the Tridentine Liturgy into dialogue, pointing out that “devout participation” and holy passivity are necessary in addition to “active participation”. In front of the mystery of God, our ultimate move is to be in a state of holy passivity, which is total acceptance and self-surrender, for God Himself takes the ultimate lead.

The next three articles focus on the Eucharist (the Mass). Since the Mass is at the center of both the Christian life and the liturgy, the simplified and inculturated *Novus Ordo* promotes a closer participation of the faithful in the mystery of salvation. Rev. Dr. Felipe Yang suggests that to avoid chaos after the reform, it would be necessary to understand the meaning of each rite in the Mass. In his article, Rev. Yang introduces the history of the *Novus Ordo*, the structure of the rites, the historical background and significance of each part of the Mass, including the Introductory Rites, the Liturgy of the Word, the Liturgy of

the Eucharist and the Concluding Rites. Basing on these, he puts forward some suggestions for liturgical inculturation for the Church in China.

Rev. Dr. Angel Li conducts a study on the liturgical language of *Missale Romanum* from the viewpoint of inculturation. Based on the existing Chinese version of *Missale Romanum*, Rev. Li reflects on the fidelity of the translated text and the comprehensibility of the liturgical language. He emphasizes that liturgical language serves to reveal the mystery of God so as to enable communication between God and humans, leading to the glorification of God and the benefit of human souls. From the hermeneutical viewpoint, the author suggests that the principal purpose of liturgical language is to let the participating faithful understand the liturgy as far as possible, and to enable them to enter into the mystery being celebrated. Rev. Dr. Kang Xi's article attempts to explore the Mass or the Sacrament of the Eucharist as the source of salvation from humanistic, theological and pastoral perspectives. He also gives us some suggestions about the nurturing of spiritual life with reference to pastoral care and spiritual practice.

Besides the Eucharist, sacred music also plays an important role in the process of liturgical inculturation. Rev. Dr. Angel Li opines that the purpose of inculturating sacred music is to allow the faithful to enter into the sacred milieu within the musical traditions that they are familiar with. Instead of inculturating Gregorian chants with Chinese lyrics,

creating brand new sacred music in the liturgical spirit is much more preferred, in the hope of encouraging the people of God to participate actively in liturgical celebrations. The author also proposes an integrated formation in sacred music, which includes both the art and the spirit of sacred music, aiming to help people grow in the Christian faith and walk on the path to perfection.

Apart from the above thematic articles, a related article was co-written by Erica Lee, Grace Chan and Herbert Li, researchers of the Holy Spirit Study Centre, paying special tribute to the contributions of Rev. Gianni Giampietro (commonly known as “Fr. Yan Po Tak”) to liturgical inculturation and evangelization in Hong Kong. Through reviewing Giampietro’s life and analyzing the publications and audio-visual products produced under his leadership, the authors examine how he began to promote liturgical inculturation and popularization shortly after the Second Vatican Council and to let more faithful understand the spirit of the Council. Giampietro had always strived to enable the faithful to have “full, conscious, and active participation” (SC 14) in the liturgy, promote their understanding of the liturgy, and encourage their participation in the mission of evangelization.

In addition, this issue includes a short article written by a Maryknoll missionary cum scholar, James Kroeger. The article gives a succinct introduction to the background and the essential content of Pope Francis’ latest exhortation

Laudate Deum. Tripod issue no. 200 (2022) was published with the theme of “Integral Ecology”, which is one of the main themes of the Pope’s previous encyclical *Laudato Si*. The newly promulgated exhortation continues his discussion and concern on the ecological environment, especially climate change, and would deserve our further attention.

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