

# Constitution of sacred liturgy

[Religion](#), [Christianity](#)



## Introduction

Many churches undergo changes throughout history, however, some of the most immense changes took place when the Second Vatican Council was convened and is considered one of the most important religious events which took place during the twentieth century. The second Vatican Council was the 21st Ecumenical council recognised by the Catholic Church. POPE JOHN XXIII, who claimed it was necessary to bring the Church up to date, summoned the council on the 25th January 1959. Over the next few years the council prepared, the first gathering was on 11th October 1962 and was presided over by Pope John XXIII. His opening remarks were “ I want to throw open the windows of the church so that we can see out and the people can see in.”

Over a period of the next four years and approximately 178 meetings, 2540 Bishops attended the council from all around the world. Pope John’s XXIII vision for the church was – awareness, renewal and dialogue.

Throughout the Council’s history they agreed 4 main constitutions, 3 declarations and 9 decrees. The majority are aimed at the renewal and reform of Catholicism, but four affect the relationship and the non-Catholic world, they addressed all aspects of Catholic life on all levels: the global, the local and particularly at the parish level.

## **The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy**

One of the documents, which changed the spiritual life of the Church, was the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy- Sacrosanctum Concilium. These changes affected every Catholic and inevitably many found these changes

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disturbing especially the older generation. During these times Mass was commonly said in Latin and many believed that it should be preserved. The Council agreed and expressed its first decree in the “ Constitution of Sacred Liturgy”.

This issue was addressed because the Liturgy of the Western Church was said in Latin something which none of the participants understood and came to an understanding that this was only benefiting the papacy and the clergy and it created a separation between the clergy

and its believers. This constitution had hopes that the entire congregation could participate in the mass with the readings, the singing, and reception of the Eucharist. It also was used to change the liturgy when it came to administering Sacraments and administering the Eucharist to the sick. This Constitution was finalized December 4, 1963 with only four votes against it.

**This stated**

“ The use of the Latin language is to be preserved in the Latin Rights.”[ Sacrosanctum Concilium, paragraph 36: 1]

However, many parts of the Mass were singled out by the Council, who authorised the use of the vernacular or mother tongue. The council also suggested that where possible the High Altars should be placed facing the congregation to help create a connection to God and that the priest should now face the congregation. Many of the old ceremonies were discarded, such as the prayerful attitude or hardly noticing your neighbour. Now they were asked to greet their neighbour with a “ Sign of Peace”

Another change within the Liturgy involved the time of the fasting before they could receive Holy Communion. Prior to the second Vatican Council, it was considered a mortal sin if you consumed either food or water, not even a few drops after midnight.

“ To fast from midnight means to take nothing by way of food or drink or medicines after midnight” [Eucharist Law and Practice by Durieux page 179]

During the Vatican II changes about the fasting went from midnight to 3 hours. Then a decree by Pope Paul VI in November 1964 announced a concession:

“ In view of the difficulties in many places regarding the Eucharistic fast, Pope Paul VI, acceding to the requests of the bishops, grants that the fast from solid food is shortened to one hour before communion in the case of both priests and faithful. The concession also covers use of alcoholic beverages, but with proper moderation being observed.” [Documents of the Liturgy, 272, 2117]

This change in regulations confused a lot of people who questioned, why does a mortal sin change because a group of men decide it is no longer a mortal sin! What of all those people who have died without receiving Holy Communion because of mortal sin, how is that affected This opened a lot of questions, which are not easily answered. Others believed that a one-hour fast is too short to be defined as a fast and a possible 3-hour fast is much more fitting with the encounter of Christ.

Other changes included vestments were made of everyday material such as cotton and polyester. The chalices were reproduced in pottery, there were new names and meanings for the seven sacraments. Communion could be received on the hand and in a standing position, prayers at the foot of the Alter were shortened,

“ To promote active participation, the people should be encouraged to take part by means of acclamations, responses, psalmody, antiphons, and songs, as well as by actions, gestures, and bodily attitudes. And at the proper times all should observe a reverent silence.” [Sacrosanctum Concilium, Paragraph 30]

Another principle concern of the Second Vatican Council was one of Christian Unity.

## **The Constitution of Divine Revelation**

The Constitution of Divine Revelation or Dei Verbum (Word of God) was approved and published in November 1965.

Before the installation of this doctrine it was taught that the Bible came second in religious life and people were discouraged from reading it. Many home contained a Bible but mainly for storing date and names of baptism. The new constitution hoped to teach new respect for the scripture and the interpretation of the Bible, the Papacy hoped that by teaching that all religious truth are found in the Bible that Scripture and Church would become united. It encourages the Catholic scholar to read the Bible,

“ For the correct understanding of what the sacred author wanted to assert, due attention must be paid to the customary and characteristic styles of feeling, speaking and narrating” [Dei Verbum paragraph 12]

Since the publication of this document many Catholics have learnt to respect scripture and tradition. It is now permitted to read and study the Bible and it has also lead to new ways to teach the Bible in Seminary. This was a major shift fir the Church and an important transformation.

“ The word of God may spread rapidly and be glorified.” [2 Thess 3: 1]

Christ entrusted his message to his disciples. This has continued down through history within the Church, “ flow from the same divine wellspring” [Dei Verbum paragraph 9]

This tradition and teaching of scripture is the basis to our faith and belief. The interpretation of God’s word is entrusted to the teaching office of the Church,

“ above the word of God, but serves it” [Dei Verbum paragraph 10]

## **The Decree of Ecumenism**

Dogmatic Constitution of the Church was the fourth decree made. In the past the Reformation of the church was viewed as a super state and the Pope was the head of it. There was also a strong opposition to anything not related to the church. With this decree more emphasis was placed on making the church a mystery and as People of God with equality being a key element. “ An individual bishop is given collegial responsibility by his very ordination as

bishop. The permanent diaconate is revived; even married people may become deacons. The doctrine on Mary is included in the teaching on the Church; it is no longer something separated from the Church." Though another decree was made later it has relevance to the Dogmatic constitution of the church, it was the Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops. This Decree was instituted due to the Bishops not having a lot of authority or say in the administration. The changes with this decree helped bishops have control over other bishops and over their diocese of people.

### Bibliography

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