

## Vatican II and the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (CSL)

The **Second Vatican Ecumenical Council** was held in Rome in four sessions from October, 1962 until December, 1965. Vatican II was the first ecumenical council that included bishops from the whole globe -2540 bishops were present at the opening of the Council. Ecumenical councils are not simply meetings of Church leaders. They are gatherings of the Pope and all the world's bishops acting together. This kind of council produces the highest form of church law.

The first body of law to flow from the Vatican II was the **Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (CSL)**. The CSL provides a blueprint for ongoing liturgical reform in the Church. This reform, rather than beginning something new, builds on the understanding and practice of liturgy in the early Church, and yet is able to respond to the needs of the times. Its principles are anchored in the unchanging mystery of our faith. The depth of the reform outlined in the CSL cannot be implemented in a mere 40 years. Even today we are still in the process of understanding and implementing its liturgical vision

The **key principles** of the CSL are:

1. The heart of the liturgy is the celebration of the **Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ** – his life, death and resurrection by which we are redeemed. This means that there are no “theme” Masses. The “theme” of every Mass is the Paschal Mystery. Throughout the year the liturgy of the church reflects on various aspects of this Paschal Mystery (CSL #7, 102, 106).
2. Every liturgical celebration is an **action of Christ together with his body, the Church**. No other type of prayer or devotion can equal this sacred action (CSL #7).
3. In the liturgy, which includes the Mass, the Sacraments, and the Liturgy of the Hours, **Christ is present** in many ways – in the person of the **minister**, in the **Holy Eucharist** broken and shared, in the **Word of God** proclaimed, and in the **assembled people of God** who pray and sing **together** (CSL #7).
4. All the faithful should be led to **full, conscious and active participation in the liturgy**. This aim is to be considered above all else. Such participation is both their **right and duty** by reason of their baptism (CSL #14). This is not just desirable, but demanded by the very nature of liturgy.
5. **Catechesis** (religious education) of the clergy and the faithful is critical if the community is **to be fully aware of what it is doing**, actively engaged in the rite, and enriched by its effects (CSL #15-19).
6. The liturgy is made up of both immutable (unchangeable) elements, divinely instituted, and of **elements** subject to change. These not only may, but **ought to be changed with the passage of time** if they no longer **express the holy things they signify** (CSL #21).