



MASSES AND LECTIONARY

APPENDIX 1

The Liturgy and our SSCC Vocation and Mission

Renewal of liturgical life in the light of Vatican Council II

1. The first fruit of the Second Vatican Council was the Constitution on the Liturgy. The Liturgical Movement, which began at the end of the nineteenth century, allowed the Church to profoundly renew its life of prayer. The Council realized that in renewing the liturgy, it would “promote union among all who believe in Christ; (and) strengthen whatever can help to call the whole of mankind into the household of the Church.”¹ Renewing the way we celebrate the presence of God among us leads also to the renewal of our communion as religious and our mission in the world.
2. Several decades have passed since the end of the second Vatican Council and the fruits of this profound renewal are yet to mature. Since its foundation, our Congregation has seen the liturgical life as a privileged way of daily forming its sons and daughters centered in the hearts of Jesus and his mother. In the words of our founders, our vocation and mission is the “work of God.” Because of that this work is sustained first and foremost by the grace of God and then by our day to day efforts to respond faithfully to the love that we have gratuitously received. Our purpose in publishing this book, which contains the Congregation’s liturgical calendar and the principal celebrations which mark one’s becoming a member of the community, is precisely to renew this response to the gratuitous love of God.
3. Our religious consecration calls us to continual renewal. It must remain new and alive so that our whole life is praise of God. Each morning God renews his love for us and each evening we turn to him in thanksgiving for his faithfulness. The community’s prayer life thus becomes the first place of ongoing formation for all the members of the community.

The Founder and the liturgy

4. When on October 20, 1824 the Good Father petitioned the Holy See to approve our first Ceremonial he spoke in his request of “encouraging”² devotion to the Sacred Hearts and of “encouraging” the piety of the brothers and the sisters. “Devotion” and “piety” were two ways in which Father Coudrin referred to the interior life of his sons and daughters. It was that inner

¹ Constitution on the Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 1.

² Translators Note: The Latin original uses the verb “promovere” which can mean to move forward, cause to advance, enlarge, extend, effect, accomplish, egg on, promote.

life and deep relationship with God, which he himself experienced as a consecrated man and which he wanted to pass down to those who would follow the Lord in our religious family.

5. “Encourage” is a verb which has the sense of beginning something or moving a process toward a successful conclusion. It implies that prayer, both personal and communal, is not given or acquired once and for all. It is always something about which we can know and learn more. It is a dimension of our vocation that is in constant evolution and that has to grow, be nourished and be renewed continually. For that reason, in speaking of the ceremonial, the Founder says that it must help the novices, from the time of their reception, “appreciate what zeal must direct their souls, what charity must inflame their hearts, what fervour must animate their payer and what obedience must accompany all their actions.” With respect to the professed, the ceremonial was to help them during their whole lives “be fervent in psalmody, constant in adoration and reparation...” He ends stating that in prayer the brother will be renewed “in the spirit of their vocation.”
6. As religious, we enter religious life in the first place “to be with the Lord” and also “to be sent to preach.” (Mark 3:14). Being with God takes many forms. One that is very special is the community’s life of prayer and its liturgy. There we find the time and the place to “encourage” more and more each one’s commitment to the person of Jesus, with the kind of trust that the Virgin Mary had in the work of God.

“*Mens concordet voci*”, from action to spirit

7. St. Benedict is the secondary patron of the Congregation and Father of our rule. His rule is, in one sense, the inspiration of ours. In the nineteenth chapter of the rule he indicates the spirit that should inspire our recitation of the office, “Let us therefore consider how we are to conduct ourselves in the sight of the Godhead and of His Angels, and let us take part in the psalmody in such a way that our mind may be in harmony with our voice.” This is the source of the famous adage, “*mens concordet voci*,” quoted by the Second Vatican Council³ and the General Presentation of the Liturgy of the Hours⁴ among others. The first thing that the Father of Western Monasticism teaches, is that in the liturgy we are “*in praesentiae*” in the presence of God, in his presence, under his influence. And so each time we enter our community’s chapel, we place ourselves before God. The space, the actions and the words point toward an encounter with God.
8. This saying suggests that our spirit must concur with our voice. First there is the voice and then the spirit. In other words, I must allow my spirit to be pervaded by the Psalms and the Word of God. This Word is the Scripture that brings us the very person of Jesus. This is a particular insight of St. Benedict’s Rule: the relation that exists between our outer and inner self. The movement goes from our outer self to the very depth of our being as a religious person. First we pray with our body, as required by the liturgy. We lift up our voice and that action moves our “*mens*”: the spirit, mind, inner self. We see an example of this in the disciples of Emmaus. (Luke 24:13-35) They did not recognize Jesus or understand the Scriptures but when they welcome Jesus to their table they recognized him in truth. By practicing hospitality, they understood what had happened. It’s the same for us. By the act of entering into prayer we are filled with the spirit that led the Sacred Heart to “to lay down his life for his friends.” (John 15:13)

³ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 11 and 90.

⁴ General Introduction to the Liturgy of the Hours, nos. 19, 105 and 108.

We share in the Church's prayer. Celebrating our common faith

9. We pray as the Body of Christ to which we belong by baptism and in which we are assigned a special place with other religious. "Throughout the year, the liturgical seasons and feasts of the Church give spirit and form to our life of faith and of prayer."⁵ Over the course of the liturgical year Christ's paschal mystery unfolds and the liturgy allows us, as a community, to be one with that mystery, so that we might have life and "life in abundance". (Jn 10,10) The feasts of our religious family do not seek to replace the Church's liturgy⁶, but rather to unite us to it, so that on certain days of the year our prayer takes on a family character. We are reminded that within the Church's spirituality, our spirituality has its own particular characteristics, which are enriched and expressed by the particular accent we give our prayer and which are a heritage received from our founders.
10. The sacrifice of Jesus for His friends and for humanity is renewed in the celebration of the sacraments and particularly in the Eucharist.⁷ Liturgically it is a "sacrifice of thanksgiving". We give thanks to God our Father for all that He has done for us through Jesus and His Spirit. To recognize the work of God is a cause of joy and celebration for the believing community. What is true of the Eucharist is also true for all our prayers. Before anything else they must be a celebration: a celebration of the Mystery, a celebration of the presence of God in our midst and a celebration of the life of each community. We do not celebrate ourselves but the mystery of God's love whose presence is mediated in our life in various ways.
11. This spirit of celebration helps us see our daily liturgy not as an obligation or a task to be accomplished but as a feast. It is a celebration of faith in the midst of the joys and sorrows of each day. We are called to give life to our celebrations and to really be at home in places we set aside for prayer. We do that with the clear awareness that they in turn are a source of life for us. We do not live for the rite but we are often sustained by prayer. From the Word of God, prayed and sung, we receive strength for our mission and the wisdom to live our consecration to God.
12. The Church is always an assembly called together. We could say that there is nothing that is Christian that is not communal. We can only pray as members of the Body of Christ to which we belong by baptism. As a body, we are never alone, we are always with others, in others, in the Other. This body, which we are, shows itself when we are gathered in our chapels and in the material things present there that are so much a part of our history and spirituality. It manifests itself by prayer in common, such as the evening recitation of the Salve, which our founders saw as a bond of union in their young religious family. Each time a brother or sister finds him/herself alone with the Lord, they are in communion with the whole body, and the horizons of their prayer extend to far off lands, to the mission that the Lord has entrusted to us as religious.

The Calendar reminds us of our Vocation and Mission

13. At the beginning of the Congregation, at a very difficult moment in the society and the church, our Founders sought inspiration in many saints. "There is no doubt that the fragile community full of grand spiritual ambitions wanted to find the secret to a solid restoration of religious life in the history of the Church at a time when smoke was still rising from the ruins of religious life

⁵ Brothers' Constitutions no. 55.

⁶ "Through the Church's Liturgy we are united to the People of God who each year relive the different mysteries of Christ and thus participate in the work of salvation." (Sisters' Constitutions no. 41).

⁷ Institution narrative in the Eucharistic prayers.

in France.”⁸ In fidelity to our Founders and with the Church, we always seek to renew our vocation in the light of men and women of God who have gone before us.

14. Within the tradition of the Church, our Founders had a rich spiritual life. They were also very influenced and inspired by many of God’s saints. In remembering them, we are more surely united to our history and our spirituality. The God of Jesus Christ, the God of the Incarnation, has manifested himself to us in concrete persons and events. Our prayer brings them into the present and opens us to the future action of God.
15. The Statutes of the Brothers⁹ as well as those of the Sisters¹⁰ present a calendar of special feasts of the Congregation. They include the principal feasts, but not the only ones that we observe. The Sisters’ Statutes put the calendar of the particular feasts we celebrate in the articles on “Community Life” and the Brothers’ in the section dedicated to “Communion and Mission”. The importance of remembering these feasts is found in their ability to gather the “family”, the community, in communion with God, with our history and with the spirit that must inspire our mission. “In our communities we try to foster among all the members a climate that favours a sound life of personal and communitarian prayer”¹¹.
16. Our Founders saw these special feasts, as well as certain traditional prayers of the Congregation, as creating communion because they unite us in prayer. And so, for example, “the singing of the ‘Salve Regina’ especially at the end of the day is a filial homage to the Most Holy Virgin. This practice has been very dear to us since the time of our Founders.”¹² We know well that in the early years of the Congregation, the brothers and sisters all felt united to one another, knowing that the Salve was being recited at the same time in all the houses. It was a moment of communion. Such is the spirit that inspires the celebration of these family feasts today.
17. The Roman Rite for the dioceses of the Congo includes the invocation of the Saints at the beginning of the Eucharistic celebration. The whole community is invited to enter into communion with its history and with all those men and women who shaped that history. These are the people, who by their manner of living the Gospel of Jesus, are still sources of inspiration for us today. This is the same spirit that inspires our “SSCC family feasts”. We enter into communion with God by following in the footsteps of those who have gone ahead of us. The words of the Good Mother are well known, “all of heaven is there,” referring to certain moments in the community’s life of prayer. This remembering allows our religious community to really experience the communion of saints.

Organizing the day around communal prayer

18. In communion with the whole Church, our celebrations follow the rhythm of the liturgical year, which revolves around the two poles of Easter and Christmas, resurrection and incarnation. Similarly our day, with the Eucharist at the centre, is structured around two poles: Lauds and Vespers. Thus our mission finds its foundation in God and everything we do is coloured by the Word of God that we celebrate in common. “Community prayer is a key element in the plan of

⁸ Juan Vicente González ssc “El padre Coudrin, la madre Aymer y su comunidad”, Roma, 1978, p. 426 (Spanish Edition).

⁹ Brothers’ Statutes no. 18.

¹⁰ Sisters’ Statutes no. 20.

¹¹ Brothers’ Statutes no. 15.

¹² Brothers’ Statutes no. 21.

life with which we build our communities. The Liturgy of the Hours, especially Lauds and Vespers, will occupy a privileged place in this communal prayer...”¹³

19. “Our prayer is first of all a response to the love of God manifested in Jesus, a response that is as free and gratuitous as the love we received. It is not utilitarian; it has no *purpose*, it is not a *means* for attaining something, but it has “a value in itself”¹⁴. It is a living dialog of love and friendship between the heart of the disciple and the Heart of the Master”¹⁵. This gratuitous encounter with God does not happen by chance. Each person and the community must prepare well for it and really value it. This is why we take care to schedule time for prayer each day and to evaluate our prayer regularly as a community, so that it becomes a real help to our encounter with God. Our praise of God can unify us and the community will strive to join to its common prayer all its traditions and devotions in as much as they are compatible. This will eliminate repetition in prayer and superimposing one type of praise on another.

Adoration

20. Adoration is part of the original patrimony of our Congregation. It is a living tradition, a permanent source of life for our spirituality. In celebrating the Eucharist, the community’s life of faith has always been nourished at the two tables of the Word of God and the Eucharist. Adoration is the extension of both tables. Our way of making adoration can never be separated from the Eucharist. And will always refer back to the altar. In the same way, we must always listen to God’s Word, for it is Christ himself who “since it is He Himself who speaks when the holy scriptures are read in the Church.”¹⁶
21. Personal adoration has always been part of our tradition. Over time other ways of making adoration have been adopted and welcomed by the whole Congregation, such as communal adoration during congregation meetings and gatherings with the larger SSCC family. In different forms we enter into communion with God and that helps us enter into communion also with all those who are part of the Congregation or who live their lives in communion with it.
- The way we make adoration is both simple and profound. Our adoration has never been ostentatious but low key. We adore Christ. We adore the Father with Christ in the Spirit. Our adoration revolves around the sacrament of the altar, is nourished by God’s Word and gives great importance to silence so as to experience communion.

Attention to space and time

22. The community’s life of prayer follows the rhythm of the liturgical year. To help us better experience each of the liturgical seasons it is important to prepare the body and spirit. God’s Word, prayers and music along with the atmosphere of and care for our places of prayer help us to enter into the celebration of the mystery of God incarnate. In this way we allow the liturgical year to form us in a sense of the mystery of God (mystagogia).

¹³ Brothers’ Constitutions no. 57.

¹⁴ Brothers’ Constitutions no. 50.3.

¹⁵ Guillermo Rosas ssc “The Experience of God: Prayer, Sacraments, Liturgy” in *A Charism in the Church. The Congregation of the Sacred Hearts*, Rome 1998, p. 182.

¹⁶ Constitution on the Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 7.

23. To accomplish that, it is desirable that our liturgical space be appropriate for celebration. The use of the different liturgical colours, the visibility of the book containing God's Word, lighted candles and art of the local culture, among other things, create a sacred space that invites us to celebrate the Christian mystery. The law of incarnation invites us to look with confidence at the whole of creation, because God can manifest himself in everything. The liturgical space and its furnishings, the sacred objects and the different aesthetic elements as well as the music are at the service of the experience of God. They can create spaces and times when God's grace manifests itself in a living and effective way. We are always called to evaluate the quality of our celebrations and the appropriateness of the places and objects we use for prayer.
24. We know that God is everywhere and that it is impossible to say that he is present just in one place. But each of us encounters God in specific places and such an encounter makes those become places where we celebrate the encounter with God in a particular way. Our places of prayer, chapels and oratories are not sacred because of a particular *aura*, but by the fact that God has left signs of his presence in such places. The presence of the Blessed Sacrament in our oratories has particular significance, "...at the heart of the community, the sacrament remains, a reminder of the permanent presence of Christ in his Church, keeping it in unity, a sign of God's faithfulness to the covenant, and an invitation to respond to him with a like fidelity."¹⁷ To enter such a space is to go in search of God, to remember the action of God in our lives. And so we assure that these places facilitate such an encounter by their silence, atmosphere and arrangement.

Art of Celebrating

25. Concern for our places of prayer also involves care for developing our liturgical life and our prayer. An aspect of liturgy is the "art of celebrating." This involves attending to everything to be seen, heard, felt, sensed and tasted as part of the celebration, which allow the invisible of grace and faith to be fully manifested. And that is the heart of the matter, the full manifestation of the grace of God. Also involved is the "staging" of movement, song, people, attitudes and things. This all has to be at the right time, in the right place, respecting the space, communicated well and in keeping with what goes before and what comes after. We do all this to make visible and palpable the grace that comes from encountering God incarnate.
26. The Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium* says: "Christ is always present in His Church, especially in her liturgical celebrations... the sanctification of the man is signified by signs perceptible to the senses, and is effected in a way which corresponds with each of these signs; in the liturgy the whole public worship is performed by the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, that is, by the Head and His members. From this it follows that every liturgical celebration, because it is an action of Christ the priest and of His Body which is the Church, is a sacred action surpassing all others; no other action of the Church can equal its efficacy by the same title and to the same degree."¹⁸ The art of celebrating is at the service of this encounter with God and his work among us. We are called to use all necessary means to facilitate that encounter.

¹⁷ Rule of Life, no. 64.

¹⁸ Constitution on the Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 7.

Silence

27. Silence is part of every celebration. It favours recollection and prayer and it allows us to briefly meditate on what we have prayed, for example between two psalms. It calls us to praise after a hymn or a prayer of the community. “Even before the celebration itself, it is commendable that silence to be observed in the church, in the sacristy, in the vesting room, and in adjacent areas, so that all may dispose themselves to carry out the sacred action in a devout and fitting manner.”¹⁹ Being together for prayer does not mean filling the space with talk, songs or background music. Real dialogue with God includes silence, to allow God time to act in the midst of the community. “...Any sort of haste that hinders recollection must clearly be avoided. During the Liturgy of the Word, it is also appropriate to include brief periods of silence, accommodated to the gathered assembly, in which, at the prompting of the Holy Spirit, the word of God may be grasped by the heart and a response through prayer may be prepared.”²⁰

Prayers of the Congregation

28. In its tradition the Congregation has not had too many of its own prayers. The Founder promoted the Little Office of the Sacred Hearts, which was very brief as its name indicates. It is adoration that has always had the most prominent place. In some parts of the Congregation there is the tradition of saying prayers considered proper to the Congregation. The use of such prayers, which are meant to express and nourish our SSCC spirit, should not lessen in any way the centrality of the Liturgy of the Hours, particularly Lauds and Vespers. In our local communities, we pray them in communion with the whole Church giving them an SSCC accent on those days when our SSCC calendar indicates the celebration of a particular feast. Likewise, it is not in keeping with the sense of the celebration to multiply prayers, one after the other, either before or after the Liturgy of the Hours. Appropriate times for this type of prayer in community would be communal adoration, celebrations of the Word, at the beginning of communal exercises such as meditation, the beginning and end of a meeting etc. Of course, they are always valuable for use in personal prayer.

29. There are always brothers and sisters in the Congregation, who can compose beautiful prayers that express aspects of our spirituality. Some of them are still meaningful despite the passage of time. Others prayed for many years no longer correspond to the theological language of today. As an aid to personal and communal prayer, we offer on the Congregation’s webpage a collection of prayers that are connected to our spirituality, either because they were composed by an SSCC or they speak to a particular theme.

The Virgin Mary

30. As followers of Christ, we find in the Virgin Mary a model. We say that she precedes and accompanies us on the journey.²¹ She accompanies us and under the title of Our Lady of Peace, she has protected our missions. She goes ahead of us, and as the Immaculate Heart she has taught us to love her son Jesus with a pure heart. And so, since the very beginning of our Congregation, the community came together to pray to God and by tradition prayed the Salve. It is a moment of communion among all of us. Mary never ceases calling us together. Whether with the Salve or another suitable canticle, each evening we simply remember the wonders that

¹⁹ General Instruction for the Roman Missal (GIRM) Third edition, no. 45.

²⁰ GIRM Third edition, no. 56.

²¹ Brothers’ & Sisters’ Constitutions , no 3.

God has done in her and also in us. This genuine expression of our community's love for Mary can be enriched by the Angelus and the Rosary, by which we acknowledge our faith in the incarnate God. Both prayers place us before the mystery of the manifestation of the Saviour, upon which we can never tire of meditating.

Unity in Diversity

31. The different liturgical materials offered are meant to be resources for animation and communion in local communities and for each brother and sister. Nothing can substitute for the individual and communal effort to prepare, enhance and evaluate our communal celebrations. Then the capacity of each community, to adapt the different elements offered in the concrete reality of the community, with a deep sense of Christian liturgy, comes into play. Our communities' liturgy will be enriched if it expresses the culture in which the community lives. The spirituality of our Congregation, an international Congregation, is open to all people and is enriched in the measure in which the charism becomes present in other cultures and is expressed in different ways.