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Papal Address to Liturgical Institute

"Not Infrequently Tradition and Progress Are Clumsily Opposed"

VATICAN CITY, MAY 6, 2011 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Here is a translation of Benedict XVI's address today to members of the St. Anselm Liturgical Institute, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of its foundation.

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Eminence,

Reverend Father Abbot Primate,

Reverend Rector,

Illustrious Professors,

Dear Students,

I welcome you with joy on the occasion of the 9th International Liturgy Congress that you are holding in the context of the 50th anniversary of the foundation of the Pontifical Liturgical Institute. I greet each one of you cordially, in particular the Grand Chancellor, Abbot Primate Notker Wolf, and I thank him for the courteous words he addressed to me on behalf of all of you.

Blessed John XXIII, taking up the requests of a liturgical movement that wished to give new impetus and breath to the prayer of the Church, shortly before the Second Vatican Council and while it was being held, wanted the Faculty of the Benedictines on the Aventine Hill to be a center of study and research to ensure a solid basis for the conciliar liturgical reform. On the eve of the Council, in fact, the urgency of a reform in the liturgical field seemed ever more vital, put forward as well by requests made by several episcopates. Moreover, the strong pastoral demands that animated the liturgical movement called for fostering and arousing a more active participation of the faithful in liturgical celebrations through the use of national languages, and a deepening in the topic of the adaptation of the rites in different cultures, especially in mission lands. In addition, a need was revealed clearly from the beginning to study more profoundly the theological foundation of the liturgy, to avoid falling into ritualism or fostering subjectivism, the celebrant showing off, and for the reform to be well founded in the ambit of Revelation and in continuity with the tradition of the Church. Animated by his wisdom and prophetic spirit, to respond to these needs, Pope John XXIII created the Liturgical Institute, to which he wished to attribute immediately the name "Pontifical" to indicate its particular bond with the Apostolic See.

Dear friends, the title chosen for the Congress of this Jubilee Year is most significant: "The Pontifical Institute: Between Memory and Prophecy." In regard to memory, we must note the abundant fruits elicited by the Holy Spirit in half a century of history, and for this we must thank the Giver of all good, despite the misunderstandings and errors in the concrete realization of the reform. How could we forget the pioneers,

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present in the act of foundation of the Faculty: Cipriano Vagaggini, Adrien Nocent, Salvatore Marsili and Burkhard Neunheuser, who, receiving the requests of the Pontiff founder, committed themselves, especially after the promulgation of the Conciliar Constitution "Sacrosanctum Concilium," to reflect further on the "exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ. In the liturgy 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" (No. 7).

To the "memory" belongs the life itself of the Pontifical Liturgical Institute, which has offered its contribution to the Church committed in the reception of Vatican II, through some fifty years of academic liturgical formation. Formation offered in light of the celebration of the holy mysteries, of comparative liturgy, of the Word of God, of liturgical sources, of the Magisterium, of the history of ecumenical requests and of a solid anthropology. Thanks to this important formative work, a great number of those with diplomas and licentiates are already rendering their service to the Church in several parts of the world, helping the Holy People of God to live the liturgy as expression of the Church at prayer, as presence of Christ in the midst of men and as constitutive making present of the history of salvation.

In fact, the conciliar document puts in clear light the twofold theological and ecclesiological character of the liturgy. The celebration accomplishes at the same time an epiphany of the Lord and an epiphany of the Church, two dimensions that are combined in unity in the liturgical assembly, where Christ actualizes the paschal mystery of Death and Resurrection and the nation of the baptized drinks more abundantly from the sources of salvation. Subsisting in the liturgical action of the Church is the active presence of Christ: what he did as he went among men, he continues to make operative through his personal sacramental action, whose center is the Eucharist.

With the term "prophecy," our gaze opens to new horizons. The liturgy of the Church goes beyond the "conciliar reform" itself (cf. Sacrosanctum Concilium, 1), whose objective, in fact, was not primarily to change the rites and gestures, but rather to renew mentalities and to put at the center of Christian life and ministry the celebration of the paschal mystery of Christ. Unfortunately, perhaps, also for us pastors and experts, the liturgy was taken more as an object to be reformed rather than a subject capable of renewing Christian life, from the moment that "a very close and organic bond exists between the renewal of the Liturgy and the renewal of the whole life of the Church." The Church takes from the liturgy the strength for life." Blessed John Paul II reminds us of this in *Vicesimus quintus annus*, where the liturgy is seen as the beating heart of all ecclesial activity. And the Servant of God Paul VI, referring to the worship of the Church, affirmed with a synthetic expression: "From the *lex credendi* we pass to the *lex orandi*, and the latter leads us to the *lux operandi et vivendi*" (Address in the ceremony of the offering of the candles, Feb. 2, 1970).

The liturgy, summit to which the action of the Church tends and at the same time source from which her virtue springs (cf. Sacrosanctum Concilium, 10), with its celebratory universe, thus becomes the great educator in the primacy of the faith and of grace. The liturgy, privileged witness of the living Tradition of the Church, faithful to its original duty to reveal and make present in the hodie of human vicissitudes the opus Redemptionis, lives from a correct and constant relationship between healthy *traditio* and legitimate *progressio*, made explicit lucidly by the conciliar constitution in No. 23. The conciliar fathers wished to commit their program of reform with both terms, in equilibrium with the great liturgical tradition of the past and the future. Not infrequently tradition and progress are clumsily opposed. In reality, the two concepts are integrated: tradition is a living reality, which because of this includes in itself the principle of development, of progress. It is as if saying that the river of tradition has its source in itself and flows toward the outlet.

Dear friends, I trust that this Faculty of Sacred Liturgy will continue its service to the Church with renewed impetus, in full fidelity to the rich and valuable liturgical tradition and the reform desired by Vatican II, according to the guidelines of "Sacrosanctum Concilium" and the pronouncements of the magisterium. The

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Christian liturgy is the liturgy of the promise realized in Christ, but it is also the liturgy of hope, of pilgrimage toward the transformation of the world, which will take place when God is all in all (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:28).

Through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, in communion with the heavenly Church and with the patrons St. Benedict and St. Anselm, I invoke on each one the Apostolic Blessing. Thank you.

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