

I. WE ARE CREATED FOR INTIMACY AND COMMUNION WITH GOD

- 331 God created human beings in his image and likeness. He thus called them to enter into communion with him. The Lord revealed to his people his desire to communicate with them, and his desire is to hear them respond to his Word. He longs for his people to come to know him in love; he wants to fill them with his love.
- 332 The entire Old Covenant is the expression of God's desire to raise human beings to intimacy with him. The Old Testament law and commandments, the temple and sacrifices, the holy days—all these had as their goal the creation of appropriate conditions for human intimacy with God.
- 333 In the New Covenant, God makes humankind worthy to enter into full communion with himself. This is accomplished through Christ in the Holy Spirit. Indeed, the New Covenant was realized in Christ, the incarnate Son of God. Christ inseparably united in himself the life of God and the life of humankind. Our life in Christ—our prayer—is the deepening of this gift of communion.
- 334 Humankind grows in communion with God within the community of the faithful, the Church. The Church is Christ's Body. Thus, the fullest expression of prayer is ecclesial, liturgical prayer, that is, Divine Services. In these Services, we are united to God and one another, and "with one heart and one voice" form the family of God.

A. The Trinitarian Character of Divine Services

- 335 The prayer of the Church is commonly directed *to the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit*. "To the Father through the Son" because no one can come to the Father except through the Son; "in the Holy Spirit" because the Spirit prays within us "with sighs too deep for words" (*see Rom 8:26*). By the action of the Holy Spirit, the Church's prayer rises to the Father through the Son. Every time that we invoke the name of the Most Holy Trinity at the start of our prayers or daily affairs, we confess our oneness with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and fill our whole life with the light of the Most Holy Trinity.

B. The Ecclesial Character of the Divine Services

- 336 Christ taught his disciples to turn to God together as a community of God's children with the words: "Our Father..." (*see Mt 6:9ff*). The

prayers of Divine Services rise from the entire community of the faithful. The prayer of the Church as the Body of Christ unites all the faithful; the Church on earth is united with the heavenly Church through prayers to the saints and veneration of their icons.

337 The liturgical community is richly endowed with the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Because of these gifts, each of the faithful is an active participant in the Divine Services. All gifts and all ministries are intertwined and complement each other, so that all are directed to the growth of the entire community as a single body.

C. The Eschatological Character of Divine Services

338 The Liturgy of the Church's divine services reveals the kingdom of God which is already among us (see Lk 17:21), and which at the same time is yet to come. Indeed, we pray "*Thy kingdom come...*" Divine Service: unite in themselves the already accomplished fullness of the kingdom and the expectation of its manifestation in the "*age to come.*" The ecclesial community *already* finds itself in the fullness of God's presence. At the same time, aware of its limitations and weaknesses, it invokes the Lord: "Have mercy on us," and "Save us."

339 In this unceasing growth (of the experience of God's presence) the divine *already* overpowers the human not yet. This is evident, for example, in the Liturgy. The Eucharistic Prayer actually memorializes the second and glorious coming as something that has *already* happened. This is also what we see on the icon of The Saviour in Glory. The splendour of liturgical vestments, rites, and vessels already points to the experience of heavenly glory, reflecting "heaven on earth" and the "angelic; heavenly Liturgy."

340 The nave of the church (the "temple of the faithful") is the image of the fullness of the Christian community as the Body of Christ. Thus, the faithful are oriented in expectation towards the sanctuary. This area around the Holy Table represents the fullness of the kingdom of God—"what no eye has seen" (see 1 Cor 2:9). The iconostasis of the church reveals this fullness and at the same time indicates that we must continue journeying to the kingdom.

D. The Cosmic Character of Divine Services

341 "In many and various ways" (Heb. 1:1) the unseen God revealed himself to humankind through the words of divinely chosen persons—and through creation. "In these last days he has spoken to us by a Son" (Heb.