



# Lay Guardians of the Sacred Liturgy Without Borders *KNOWLEDGE COURAGE ACTION*

## LITURGICAL LITERACY PROGRAM (LLP)

### MODULE 1



### ***WHY DO WE NEED TO BE LITURGY LITERATE***

I will answer this question based on my own personal experience. To start with, I am a cradle Catholic, like probably most Catholics. I developed the discipline and practice of coming to Mass every Sunday as my parents taught me, following every gesture, saying the responses and singing the hymns as everyone in the congregation did. Every time I attended the Mass, I participated ***actively*** in the liturgy by doing all the actions that everybody was doing, and saying the words that everybody was saying. But I did not really know what I was doing and why I was doing what I was doing like the gestures and the words. In other words, I did not know the meaning and significance of the words and the actions. I just did and uttered as everybody did. Sounds familiar?

In 2008, the Assistant Pastor of the parish I belonged to was promoted as Parish Priest of another parish, and he passed on to me his liturgist role, in particular, preparing the Sunday liturgy. He trained me on how to prepare the liturgy script and taught me things I needed to know about the sacred liturgy. As it is my nature to want to know more about a new undertaking or endeavour, to learn what I can and cannot do, I did my own research. I found several documents about the sacred liturgy: *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM), the Order of the Mass (Roman Missal), *Redemptionis Sacramentum* and other resources on the sacred liturgy. I studied the documents and learned a lot about the sacred liturgy, liturgical celebrations and breaches of liturgical rules and norms which the Church documents refer to as liturgical abuses. I learned most of all that I cannot change anything at all in the liturgy. No one can! NOT Even the clergy.

### ***As a Participant***

By studying and learning about the sacred liturgy, as a participant in the celebration of the Mass, I acquired a better understanding and appreciation of the sacred liturgy, why we need to attend the Mass apart from it being an obligation and the meaning of the words and actions that we do at Mass. I learned to love the Mass more. I learned the meaning of the words that we say and the actions that we do in the Mass. My learnings enabled me to find a deeper meaning and the significance of the sacred liturgy so that when I do the actions and say the word of the responses and prayers in the Mass, it gave me the consciousness to understand the essence of the nature and spirit of the sacred liturgy as praise, glorification and thanksgiving to God. It was transformational! It totally transformed me and attending the mass brought a deeper meaning into attending it. Acquiring the knowledge about the truth of and in the liturgy enabled me to live it, and bring the sacred liturgy to my family and the community at large.

The primary purpose of the reform of the sacred liturgy through the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*) is to promote the full, conscious and active participation of the faithful in the sacred liturgy, the Mass. This can only be achieved if the faithful are liturgy literate. The clergy as mandated in the Constitution are supposed to educate and catechize the faithful on the sacred liturgy. Unfortunately, this is one of the failures of the clergy. And so, the Guardians of the Sacred Liturgy Without Borders is picking up the slack by taking the initiative of enabling the faithful to be liturgy literate through its Liturgical Literacy Program (LLP).

### *As a Lay Guardian of the Sacred Liturgy*

With the new knowledge that I acquired, my eyes were opened to the state of liturgical celebrations in the Catholic Church, the liturgical impropriety committed in the sanctuary especially at the altar of the Lord. I was, and still am appalled today at the extent of abuse that I witness in liturgical celebrations. I get disturbed and feel short-changed every time I attend a liturgy that is fraught with liturgical abuses in various parts of the Mass.

Sadly, as acknowledged by the Universal Church, liturgical abuse is widespread in the Catholic world. It is a global concern, not only of the Universal Church but of the faithful of the Catholic world as evidenced by complaints and comments in different social media platforms. So, what can ordinary lay people do to stop the liturgical abuse?

The juridical document *Instruction Redemptionis Sacramentum* prescribes the duty and obligation of all the people of God including the LAY people to protect the sacred liturgy from any irreverence or distortion and to stop liturgical abuse. To wit,

*[183.] In an altogether particular manner, let everyone do all that is in their power to ensure that the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist will be protected from any and every irreverence or distortion and that all abuses be thoroughly corrected. This is a most serious duty incumbent upon each and every one, and all are bound to carry it out without any favouritism. (emphasis supplied)*

*[184.] Any Catholic, whether Priest or Deacon or lay member of Christ's faithful, has the right to lodge a complaint regarding a liturgical abuse to the diocesan Bishop or the competent Ordinary equivalent to him in law, or to the Apostolic See on account of the primacy of the Roman Pontiff. It is fitting, however, insofar as possible, that the report or complaint be submitted first to the diocesan Bishop. This is naturally to be done in truth and charity. (emphasis supplied)*

The Lay Guardians of the Sacred Liturgy Without Borders have taken up this mission seriously. But to be able to carry out this mission, the Lay Guardians need to be imbued with the spirit of the sacred liturgy. To achieve this, the Lay Guardians need to be formed into the truth of and in the sacred liturgy by acquiring the requisite knowledge of the ecclesiastical laws, rules and norms in the proper celebration of the liturgy, the *ars celebrandi*. They need to be liturgy literate, just like the clergy, to be able to identify deviations or improprieties that are considered liturgical abuse.

The lay people of God will acquire liturgical literacy through the Liturgical Literacy Program (LLP) of the Lay Guardians of the Sacred Liturgy Without Borders. Then and only then can lay people serve as Lay Guardians of the Sacred Liturgy.