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Audience with teachers and students of the Pontifical Liturgical Institute

Today, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the teachers and students of the Pontifical Liturgical Institute, on the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of its founding.

The following is the Holy Father's address to those present:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning and welcome!

Thank you, Father Abbot Primate, for your introduction. Your Italian has improved! It is good. I greet the Father Rector, the Father Dean, the professors, and all of you, dear students and former students of the Pontifical Liturgical Institute.

I am happy to receive you on the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of its founding. It came about as a response to the growing need of the People of God to live and participate more intensely in the liturgical life of the Church; a need that found enlightening verification in Vatican Council II with the Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. Your institution's dedication to the study of the liturgy is now well recognized. Experts trained in your classrooms promote the liturgical life of many dioceses, in very different cultural contexts.

Three dimensions clearly emerge from the conciliar spirit of renewal of the liturgical life. The first is active and fruitful participation in the liturgy; the second is ecclesial communion inspired by the celebration of the Eucharists and the Sacraments of the Church; and the third is the impetus to the evangelizing mission, starting out from the liturgical life that involves all baptized persons. The Pontifical Liturgical Institute is at the service of this threefold need.

First of all, training to live and promote *active participation in liturgical life*. The in-depth and scientific study of the

liturgy should encourage you to foster, as the Council wished, this fundamental dimension of Christian life. The key here is to educate people to enter into the *spirit of the liturgy*. And to know how to do this, it is necessary to be imbued with this spirit. At Saint Anselm, I would say, this is what should happen: to be imbued with the spirit of the liturgy, to feel its mystery, with an ever-new wonder. The liturgy cannot be possessed, no; it is not a profession: the liturgy is learned, the liturgy is celebrated. To reach this attitude of *celebrating* the liturgy. And one only participates actively to the extent that one enters into this spirit of celebration. It is not a question of rites, it is the mystery of Christ, who once and for all revealed and fulfilled the sacred, the sacrifice and the priesthood. Worship in spirit and in truth. All this, in your Institute, must be meditated on, assimilated, I would say "breathed in". In the school of the Scriptures, of the Fathers, of Tradition, of the Saints. Only in this way can participation be translated into a greater sense of the Church, which makes us live evangelically in every time and in every circumstance. And even this attitude of celebrating suffers temptations. On this point I would like to underline the danger, the temptation of *liturgical formalism*: going after forms, formalities rather than reality, as we see today in those movements that try to go backwards and deny Vatican Council II itself. In this way, the celebration is recitation, it is something without life, without joy.

Your dedication to liturgical study, on the part of both professors and students, also makes you grow in *ecclesial communion*. Indeed, the liturgical life opens us up to the other, to the nearest and farthest from the Church, in common belonging to Christ. Rendering glory to God in the liturgy finds its counterpart in the love of neighbour, in the commitment to living as brothers and sisters in everyday situations, in the community in which we find ourselves, with its merits and its limitations. This is the road of true sanctification. Therefore, the formation of the People of God is a fundamental task for living a fully ecclesial liturgical life.

And the third aspect. Every liturgical celebration always concludes with the mission. What we live and celebrate leads us to go out towards others, to encounter the world that surrounds us, to encounter the joys and the needs of many who perhaps live without knowing the gift of God. The genuine liturgical life, especially the Eucharist, always impels us to charity, which is above all openness and attention to others. This attitude always begins and is founded in prayer, especially liturgical prayer. And this dimension also opens us up to dialogue, to encounter, to the ecumenical spirit, to acceptance.

I have briefly dwelt on these three fundamental aspects. I emphasize again that the liturgical life, and the study of it, must lead to greater ecclesial unity, not division. When liturgical life becomes something of a banner of division, there is the odour of the devil, the deceiver, in there. It is not possible to worship God and at the same time turn liturgy into a battlefield for issues that are not essential, or indeed for outdated questions and to take sides, starting from the liturgy, on ideologies that divide the Church. The Gospel and the Tradition of the Church demand that we are steadfastly united on the essential matters, and in sharing legitimate differences in the harmony of the Spirit. Therefore, the Council wished to prepare abundantly the table of the Word of God and the Eucharist, to make possible the presence of God in the midst of his People. Thus, the Church, through liturgical prayer, prolongs the work of Christ in the midst of the men and women of every age, and also in the midst of creation, dispensing the grace of his sacramental presence. The liturgy must be studied while remaining faithful to this mystery of the Church.

It is true that every reform creates resistance. I remember, when I was a boy, when Pius XII began with the first liturgical reform, the first one: you can drink water before communion, fasting for an hour... "But that's against the sanctity of the Eucharist!", they rent their garments in despair. Then, the Vespers Mass: "But, how come, Mass is in the morning!". Then, the reform of the Easter Triduum: "But how is it possible, on Saturday the Lord must rise, now they postpone it to Sunday, to Saturday evening, on Sunday they don't ring the bells... And where do the twelve prophecies go?". All these things scandalized closed minds. It also happens today. Indeed, these closed mindsets use liturgical matters to defend their own point of view. Using the liturgy: this is the drama we are experiencing in ecclesial groups that are distancing themselves from the Church, questioning the Council, the authority of the bishops... in order to preserve tradition. And the liturgy is used for this.

The challenges of our world and of the present moment are very strong. The Church today, as always, needs to live the liturgy. The Council Fathers did a great job to ensure that this was the case. We must continue this task of being formed *by* the liturgy. The Blessed Virgin Mary, together with the Apostles prayed, broke the Bread and lived charity with everyone. Through their intercession, may the liturgy of the Church make present, today and

always, this model of Christian life.

I thank you for the service you render to the Church and I encourage you to continue in the joy of the Spirit. I bless you with all my heart. And I ask you, please, to pray for me. Thank you.