

True Life in God Liturgical Celebrations

I have been asked to address the rubrics pertaining to True Life in God liturgical celebrations. The question presented to me is as follows: Can the clergy of all Christian faiths “concelebrate”, that is, join together in the celebration of the Mass?

In answer, when Jesus in the True Life in God messages speaks of gathering his people to “celebrate around one altar” (TLIG, October 20, 1990),¹ he is not speaking of what the eastern and western churches refer to as “concelebration” in the strict sense of the word. To better understand Jesus’ words, I spoke to Vassula on numerous occasions of the meaning of “celebration” and ‘concelebration’ in the TLIG messages, and am well aware of her position on the matter. I am no less aware of the rubrics of the eastern and western churches governing both liturgical expressions.

First, in the TLIG messages the expression, “celebrate around one altar” conveys four important teachings:

- 1) Respect of each Christian liturgical Rite and Divine Service during all TLIG events: the Catholic and Orthodox Rites and Protestant Divine Services.
- 2) No confusion among Rites and Divine Services. Neither the church nor Vassula permitted *all* clergy ‘concelebrating’ at the altar simultaneously – she followed the rubrics of the three Christian faiths, celebrating their respective liturgies separately. For the mixing of Rites and Divine Services lends to the impression of pan-Christianism.
- 3) In the TLIG messages Jesus uses the expression, “around one altar” in relation to both clergy and laity whom he refers to as his “children” and in the plural form of “you,” thereby avoiding its reductionist application solely to clergy. To Vassula, Jesus reveals:

“Behold, what joy I will have when around One Altar you will gather and around this same Altar you will praise Me; acknowledging your mistakes, repenting for your rebellion and remembering My Love for you and loving one another as I love you; children, be perfect!” (TLIG, April 19, 1988).

Jesus also refers to all the Christian faithful in the plural form of ‘you,’ sharing one cup around one altar:

¹ *“All I ask from you [‘you’ is in the second person plural] is love... with your expiations and your fervent prayers offered to Me with love you can alter coming disasters; you can alter natural disasters; you can extinguish the flaring wrath of My Father; God can relent, with your prayers He can relent; you can embellish My Church; you can bring together My People under My Name to celebrate Mass around one altar; you can repair their shepherd’s staff, this staff they broke first in half, then into splinters; for men this unity appears impossible, but for Me everything is possible; so pray and expiate for your brothers”* (TLIG, October 20, 1990).

“My House has been neglected; every house is paid by someone; I have bought My House with My Own Blood; why has no one listened to My supplication while I prayed to the Father that you may be one? today, had you responded to My call by showing obedience, you would be sharing one Cup around one altar” (TLIG, Dec. 10, 2001).

4) The Church permits that which the TLIG messages reflect, i.e., during TLIG gatherings the clergy whose ordination derives from the Apostolic Succession celebrate and/or concelebrate their Rite only, e.g., Catholic priests celebrate Mass according to the rubrics governing the Catholic Rite; Orthodox priests celebrate Mass according to the rubrics governing the Orthodox Rite; Protestant pastors celebrate their Divine Service according to the rubrics governing Protestant Divine Services. While the three Christian forms of liturgical worship are not, strictly speaking, “celebrated” together *at* the altar, all of the clergy may join in such celebrations² and alternate in celebrating their respective Rites and Divine Services. During liturgical celebrations the clergy from Christian churches not of the Apostolic Succession, while not *at* one altar, “actively participate”³ ‘*around one altar.*’ As the liturgical rubrics governing the Catholic Mass permit altar servers to remain in the sanctuary of the altar during the entire Mass, it likewise permits the same from clergy of the three Christian faiths who are shepherds of the People of God.

A word on the ecclesial term, “concelebration.” Jesus’ words to Vassula in footnote 1, “...*you can bring together My People under My Name to celebrate Mass around one altar...*” do not denote the ecclesial expression (in the strict sense), ‘celebration.’ The ecclesial sense signifies a Mass offered by a validly ordained priest of the Apostolic Succession. Rather, Jesus’

² The following teaching of the document, “*Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism*,” issued in 1993 by the Vatican City’s Dicastery of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

118: “*In liturgical celebrations taking place in other Churches and ecclesial Communities, Catholics are encouraged to take part in the psalms, responses, hymns and common actions of the Church in which they are guests. If invited by their hosts, they may read a lesson or preach.*”

119: “*Regarding assistance at liturgical worship of this type, there should be a meticulous regard for the sensibilities of the clergy and people of all the Christian Communities concerned, as well as for local customs which may vary according to time, place, persons and circumstances. In a Catholic liturgical celebration, ministers of other Churches and ecclesial Communities may have the place and liturgical honors proper to their rank and their role, if this is judged desirable. Catholic clergy invited to be present at a celebration of another Church or ecclesial Community may wear the appropriate dress or insignia of their ecclesiastical office, if it is agreeable to their hosts.*”

104, e: “*Since Eucharistic concelebration is a visible manifestation of full communion in faith, worship and community life of the Catholic Church, expressed by ministers of that Church, it is not permitted to concelebrate the Eucharist with ministers of other Churches or ecclesial Communities.*”

Cf. link: <https://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/documenti/testo-in-inglese.html>

The Church’s Code of Canon Law adds:

Can. 907: *In the eucharistic celebration deacons and lay persons are not permitted to offer prayers, especially the eucharistic prayer, or to perform actions which are proper to the celebrating priest.*

Can. 908: *Catholic priests are forbidden to concelebrate the Eucharist with priests or ministers of Churches or ecclesial communities which do not have full communion with the Catholic Church.*

³ The Vatican II Council makes no less than fifteen references to the laity’s “active participation” in the Mass [*actuosa participation*] (Sacrosanctum Concilium, nn. 11, 14, 19, 21, 27, 30, 41, 48, 50, 79, 113, 114, 121 and 124. Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Dec. 4, 1963).

expression, ‘celebration,’ signifies (in the broad sense), an active participation in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass that culminates with the Eucharistic consecration. Likewise the ecclesial expression (in the strict sense), “concelebration,” denotes a Mass offered by more than one validly ordained priest of the Apostolic Succession, with the other shepherds and laity “actively participating” in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.⁴ As for the clergy whose ordination derives from the Apostolic Succession and the clergy whose ordination does not, the former stand *at* the altar and extend their hands over the bread and wine during the consecration, while the latter stand *around* the altar offering gestures or expressions of worship and praise toward Jesus’ Real Presence in the Eucharist. All the clergy contribute to the Mass with prayers and readings, both from the Holy Bible and from liturgical texts.

I hope this information has been helpful. May God continue to bless all of you, and may we all be one as the Father and Jesus are one (Jn. 17:21).

In Christ,

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⁴ Cf. footnote 3.