

Sacred art and liturgical art: the rules (1)

In the history of sacred art dedicated to liturgy there is a date that marks a transition from the beautiful (i.e. the real, the good and the only) to the spontaneity (that is, insignificant, aesthetic relativism, improvisation, Marxist neo-pauperism) a sort of “freedom for all”, never pronounced but so long-awaited to be misunderstood and then accepted: it is 1965, the closing year of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council.

Yet the official documents of the Council do not contain statements that can in the least mislead, indeed there are documents of a narrative fortress and dispositive of great scope.

So what happened then? Why in the years immediately following have we had so many mistakes and disorientations also (and above all) in the artistic and architectural field?

The reasons are of different nature and size. I try to name a few, like an example:

- A personal attitude of cultural and psychological subjection on the part of pastors, not all with sufficient preparation to face the social changes underway;
- I'm moving away from the essential aspects of faith and practice of the sacraments (Saint Paul VI spoke of the smoke of Satan who had entered the Church”: Referring to the situation of the Church today, the Holy Father claims to have the feeling that «from some crack the smoke of Satan has entered the temple of God». There is doubt, uncertainty, problems, anxiety, dissatisfaction, confrontation. One no longer trusts the Church; one trusts the first profane prophet who comes to talk to us from some newspaper or from some social movement to chase him and ask him if he has the formula of true life. And we do not feel that we are already masters. Doubt entered our consciences, and entered through windows that instead should be opened to the light. From science, which is made to give us truths that do not detach us from God but make us seek him even more and celebrate with greater intensity, came instead criticism, came doubt. Scientists are those who most thoughtfully and painfully curl their foreheads. And they end up teaching: «I don't know, we don't know, we can't know». The school becomes a gym of confusion and sometimes absurd contradictions. Progress is celebrated in order to be able to demolish it with the strangest and most radical revolutions, to deny everything it has conquered, to return primitive after having so exalted the advances of the modern world.
- This state of uncertainty also reigns in the Church. It was believed that after the Council a sunny day would come for the history of the Church. Instead came a day of clouds, of storm, of darkness, of research, of uncertainty. We preach ecumenism and detach ourselves more and more from others. We try to dig abysses instead of filling them.
- The impoverishment of the arts: let's just think about music. The so-called classical music, that celebrated in the great concerts, the music of Beethoven, Bach, Mozart, Vivaldi, Chopin, Schubert, Verdi... was born in the 16th century and developed until the second half of the 19th century. Then began a period of involution and therefore lack of harmonic creativity, as if returning to the dawn, to the drums and flutes, with the repetitiveness typical of the music of the Roman era. Listening to a piece of dodecaphonic music produces an inner state of discomfort:
- Arnold Schönberg invents dodecaphonic music:
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-yso_ySlTCY
- listening to a piece of Chopin maybe we can reconcile with someone...
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9E6b3swbnWg>

Certainly there is to keep in mind that we have lived a century, the “900, among the bloodiest and atrocious and this must have marked the arts in their essence and communication. Two world wars, Vietnam, Stalinist massacres, Hitler and concentration camps. Yet even in this dark and oppressive sky there were artists who gave hope, with their arts: poetry, literature, sculpture, painting, music, architecture, theatre, cinema.

When God is eliminated from the life of men everything becomes dark, hopeless. When reason falls asleep monsters are generated...



Reading from the document **Observance of liturgical norms and ars celebrandi**

We return to the subject of the lesson, but these premises are important to understand why there have been the evolutions (or involutions) that we will now study.

This study can help us to better understand how to elaborate our artistic capacity, which is undoubtedly made up of a percentage of technique (that everyone must learn to dominate and develop, getting to innovate) but mainly by content.

If in designing a chalice for the s. Mass we have in mind (and in the heart) the Last Supper of Jesus, his words, if we identify with the disciples of Emmaus, if we are at the foot of the cross to collect his precious blood, Well, we will certainly design a holy chalice. Otherwise we will adapt ourselves to repeat a glass of wine, and not of Christ's Blood.







Reading some passages of the document THE CRUCIFIED AT THE CENTRE OF THE ALTAR

In conclusion: by sacred art we mean the art that is at the service of the liturgy. Liturgy has rules, sacred art has rules.

In the next lesson we will go into the details of the rules.