

**This past Thursday marks the 50th anniversary of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, the first fruit of the Second Vatican Council. On that day the bishops of the world voted to change how we worship, which had a profound effect upon our lives as Catholics.**

**The mass used to be in Latin; now vernacular languages may be used. The priest presided with his back to the people; now he usually faces them. Only ordained ministers used to perform the ceremonies; now lay people help too. During the mass people prayed the rosary or other devotions; today they sing songs, make responses, and join in common prayer. Mass used to start with prayers at the foot of the altar; today it begins with a different penitential act. In the Liturgy of the Word we used to hear 1% of the Old Testament and 17% of the New Testament; today you hear 14% of the Old Testament and 71% of the New. The priest used to give a sermon about doctrines; today you hear a homily usually based on the scriptures. Prior to the Council mass did not include the Prayer of the Faithful; today it does. The offertory used to include prayers that sounded as though the consecration had already taken place; today those have been removed and completely revised. We used to have only one eucharistic prayer; now we have ten. People exchanged no sign of peace; today we may. The faithful received communion under one form; today they may also drink from the cup. Mass used to conclude with a Last Gospel and a prayer to St. Michael; today the conclusion is simpler. The Council did all this with one aim: the full, conscious, active participation of the people.**

**Participation is what John the Baptist wanted too. "Repent," he says, "for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." John challenged people not just to watch for Jesus, but to change their lives for him.**

**Change is always hard, even when it promises wonderful results. The changes that Vatican II brought were hard on people. But because our parents accepted change, we have the mass we share today.**

**The greatest honor we can give them and the Council is to participate fully every time we come to mass, even if that means changing the way we pray. Come on time. Sing the songs. Make the responses. Then put down your booklets and listen to the scriptures. Don't read along. Pray for those who need help. Contribute to the collection. Offer to God the sacrifice of your life. Give thanks for what God has given you. Receive both the body and the blood of Christ. Go into the world as disciples. Do everything with meaning.**

**For Christ is coming not only at the end of time, but right now during the eucharist under the form of bread and wine. If we change our ways we can prepare the way for his coming.**