

Need to change hearts, not just books, to improve liturgy, pope says

VATICAN CITY — The sacred liturgy is meant to help the people of God conform their heart, mind and actions more closely to Christ, Pope Francis said.

“We know that it is not enough to change liturgical books to improve the quality of the liturgy. To just do this would be a deception,” he said.

“For life to truly be a prayer that is pleasing to God, a change of heart is in fact necessary,” he said Feb. 14 during an audience with members of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments.

The pope encouraged the congregation to continue helping the church and noted how the Vatican and individual bishops’ conferences are meant to work together through dialogue, cooperation and synodality.

“The Holy See, in fact, does not stand in for the bishops, but rather collaborates with them in order to serve the prayerful vocation of the church in the world in its wealth of various languages and cultures.”

The path to pursue, he said, is one of ecclesial communion “in which unity and variety find harmony. It’s a question of harmony.”

Their fundamental task is to help “spread among the people of God the splendor of the living mystery of the Lord, who is manifest in the liturgy,” and to help the faithful love the liturgy as an experience where they encounter the Lord together with their brothers and sisters, Pope Francis said.

“The liturgy is life that forms, not an idea to understand,” he said, which is why it is important the liturgy, like other areas in life, not end up being the object of “sterile ideological polarizations” that often emerge when one’s own ideas are held as valid for all contexts.

If people are inspired by a need to react against some of the “insecurities” in today’s

world, “they risk falling back into a past that no longer exists or escaping into a supposed future.”

“The starting point instead is to recognize the reality of the sacred liturgy, a living treasure that can not be reduced to tastes, recipes and trends, but is welcomed with docility and promoted with love” because it is an irreplaceable source of nourishment for the faithful, he said.

“The liturgy is not a ‘do-it-yourself’ place,” he said.

“The ‘we’ and not the ‘I’ — the real community, not the ideal subject — resound in the prayers and the gestures,” he said.

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