

Pope on Liturgy Changes: Not New Mass but New Epoch

Excerpts from the Holy Father's discourse at the weekly General Audience of November 10, 1969, as published in L'Osservatore Romano:

We wish to draw your attention to an event about to occur in the Latin Catholic Church: the introduction of the liturgy of the new rite of the Mass... the Mass will be celebrated in a rather different manner from that in which we have been accustomed to celebrate it in the last four centuries, from the reign of St. Pius V, after the Council of Trent, down to the present.

This change has something astonishing about it, something extraordinary. This is because the Mass is regarded as the traditional and unchangeable expression of our religious worship and the authenticity of our faith. We ask ourselves, how could such a change be made? What effect will it have on those who attend Holy Mass?

Answers will be given to these questions and to others like them, arising from this innovation. You will hear the answers in all the churches. They will be amply repeated there and in all religious publications, in all schools where Christian doctrine is taught. We exhort you to pay attention to them. In that way you will be able to get a clearer and deeper idea of the stupendous and mysterious notion of the Mass.

But in this brief and simple discourse we will try only to relieve your minds of the first, spontaneous difficulties which this change arouses. We will do so in relation to the first three questions which immediately occur to mind because of it.

How could such a change be made? Answer: It is due to the will expressed by the Ecumenical Council held not long ago. The Council decreed:

"The rite of the Mass is to be revised in such a way that the intrinsic nature and purpose of its several parts, as also the connection between them, can be more clearly manifested and that devout and active participation by the faithful can be more easily accomplished.

"For this purpose the rites are to be simplified, while due care is taken to preserve their substance. Elements which, with the passage of time, came to be duplicated, or were added with but little advantage, are now to be discarded. Where opportunity allows or necessity demands, other elements which have suffered injury through accidents of history are now to be restored to the earlier norm of the holy Fathers."

The reform which is about to be brought into being is therefore a response to an authoritative mandate from the Church. It is an act of obedience. It is an act of coherence of the Church with Himself. It is a step forward for Her authentic tradition. It is a demonstration of fidelity and vitality, to which we all must give prompt assent.

It is not an arbitrary act. It is not a transitory or optional experiment. It is not some dilettante's improvisation. It is a law. It has been thought out by authoritative experts of sacred Liturgy; it has been discussed and meditated upon for a long time. We shall do well to accept it with joyful interest and put it into practice punctually, unanimously and carefully.

The second question is: What exactly are the changes?

You will see for yourselves that they consist of many new directions for celebrating the rites. Especially at the beginning, these will call for a certain amount of attention and

care. Personal devotion and community sense will make it easy and pleasant to observe these new rules. But keep this clearly in mind: Nothing has been changed of the substance of our traditional Mass...

The Mass of the new rite is and remains the same Mass we have always had. If anything, its sameness has been brought out more clearly in some respects.

The unity of the Lord's Supper, of the sacrifice on the cross, of the representation and renewal of both in the Mass is inviolably affirmed and celebrated in the new rite just as they were in the old. The Mass is and remains the memorial of Christ's Last Supper. At that Supper the Lord changed the bread and the wine into His Body and His blood, and instituted the sacrifice of the New Testament. He willed that the sacrifice should be identically renewed by the power of His Priesthood, conferred on the Apostles. Only the manner of offering is different, namely, an unbloody and sacramental manner; and it is offered in perennial memory of Himself, until His final return...

In like manner we reply to the third question: What will be the results of this innovation? The results expected, or rather desired, are that the faithful will participate in the liturgical mystery with more understanding, in a more practical, a more enjoyable and a more sanctifying way. That is, they will hear the Word of God, which lives and echoes down the centuries and in our individual souls; and they will likewise share in the mystical reality of Christ's sacramental propitiatory sacrifice.

So do not let us talk about "the new Mass." Let us rather speak of the "new epoch" in the Church's life. With Our Apostolic Benediction.

ON THE RIGHT SIDE

An Affirmation Of Faith

By Father Paul J. Cuddy

It seems such a pity and such a waste that there are so many unhappy people. Why are people unhappy?

I think it is because they are uncertain about needed answers. They seek love but hold truth suspect. This is as impossible as a stick with only one end.

There are many people who don't know why they are. Strange! They remind me of a man who keeps running for the bus after he has gotten on. It seems to me that uncertain people who suffer from "identity crisis" really suffer from no-identity. The old catechism, which is a great book, gave questions and answers. But many befuddled people are unhappy at clear, true answers. Some are rather snooty about us who like clear, true answers.

The catechism gave answers to questions: "Who is God?" and "Why did He make me?" "What is man?" and "How does he save his soul?" "Who is Jesus Christ?" and "What is the Church?"

If I could not answer these ques-

tions with joy and conviction, I should be unhappy too; and perhaps take to pot or to drink. But I do not need pot or drink because Christ did come. Christ did teach. He suffered. He died, He rose really!

After His resurrection Christ came many times to people, especially to His apostolic Bishops. He certainly did establish His Church on Peter and on his conferees. He pledged to His Church: "I am with you all days..."

Poor, lovable, unhappy people, those with faith so frothy in substance and weak in conviction that Jesus is the God-man, the Word made Flesh. Poor, lovable, unhappy people who agitate themselves with uncertainty whether the Church is really and truly the Voice of Jesus Christ.

Karl Rahner is probably the number one Catholic theologian today. In an article entitled: "Today's Priest and His Faith" he writes this: "Let us not mince words; no Catholic priest may harbour a faith that open-

ly or covertly (like a false-bottomed trunk) differs from the faith of the Church as explicitly formulated by the magisterium." (Toward a Theology of Christian Faith)

Christ died. Christ has risen. Christ lives all days in His Church.

I am happy to be certain that I am on board the Barque of Peter. Since I'm already there, wouldn't it be foolish to keep swimming feverishly to get on?

There are some who say: "We must have an open mind about everything." Chesterton said: "The purpose of the open mind is to close it on something solid." What a life omniscient people must have, who never recognize a certain conclusion.

By faith I know that what the Church teaches is true, and that I am identified with Christ in the Church by my baptism and my priesthood because God has willed it so.

Thanks Be to God.



EUROPEAN SCENE

He's Revolutionary but Quiet

By Robert Holton

The Hague—Being tiny in a world of giants can be a drawback. But the mini-sized Dutch Catholic hierarchy has turned it into a distinct advantage.

In fact, the seven-member Dutch episcopate finds its greatest strength in its small numbers.

Along with that, their area of jurisdiction and responsibility is as small geographically as the prelates are numerically.

In no small measure these two circumstances have shaped the Catholic Church in Holland. So, too, have they been responsible for some of the outside criticism of the renewal pace the Netherlands Church has set for itself.

In the United States, for example, where there are almost 300 prelates in the episcopal conference, that group meets together in full session only twice a year.

In Holland, the six bishops and their cardinal meet in plenary session at least twice a month and sometimes as many as four times in a 30-day span.

A similar distance problem as in the U.S. is faced by bishops in other parts of the world, even in some remote countries where their numbers are few but due to the miles that

stretch between each of their headquarters their meetings must be few.

Holland is not only small—less than the size of Vermont and Massachusetts put together—but its rail transportation system is superb.

Traveling by train between any two of the major centers of population such as Amsterdam, The Hague, Utrecht, Rotterdam and Haarlem is usually no more of a challenge than moving by subway from The Bronx to Staten Island.

All of this has, from this reporter's observations, built up an association of closeness, understanding and trust among the seven men.

They often disagree, and being Dutchmen they waste no time letting each other know it. But because they meet so frequently there is little time to permit the building up of tensions, something that often happens when principals in a disagreement are denied personal contact for long periods of time.

Their numerous meetings and small number also help to speed up action.

In the United States, for example, a bishop from the South might have a far different opinion on a Church matter which touches on the social, cultural and other habits than his colleagues in the North. What might be

good in New England might be harmful, on a practical level, in Alabama.

This overall ease of operation has been a major factor in the pace for change in line with Vatican II that the Dutch Catholics have kept.

Decisions seldom are put off in the Dutch Church. This is not to say that adequate study is not given to problems. It is. The speed comes in the ability of the Dutch bishops to rapidly distill the thinking of seven men and come up with a majority opinion.

Perhaps if the bishops of many other nations were as few and could meet as often as the Dutch prelates, they, too, would have long ago come up with the same decisions on Church renewal experiments that the Dutch have.

The Vatican is probably the worst offender in the field of putting off action. It is no secret that the Italian Churchman in the Vatican is, by his very nature, a procrastinator. He has been trained over the centuries always to remember that Mother Church must move slowly.

Taking into consideration these two opposite philosophies and circumstances that permit the Dutch to act quickly, no one need wonder too long why there has been tension between the Holy See and the Catholic Church in the Netherlands.

COMMENTARY

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ALL IN THE FAMILY

More to Children Than IQ Marks

By Sarah Child

A recent news story concerns a psychiatrist who maintains that all families should be limited to two children.

The psychiatrist believes that a larger number of kids per home is not good for several reasons.

One reason: The doctor says it has been proven that men and women who are either only children or were members of very small families are bigger achievers than those from larger families. (Wonder what the Eisenhowers and the Kennedys and even the Rockefellers would have to say about that?)

Second, the psychiatrist maintains that the quality of attention and affection a mother can give a larger family must suffer by comparison with the way she could minister to fewer kids.

A third reason says the psychiatrist is that researchers have shown that kids from large families have lower IQs than they would if there were fewer of them competing for attention.

The doctor, incidentally, has two children. And knowing nothing about them but what I've read of their father's beliefs, I feel just a little sorry for them.

As the oldest of five, let me say right off that I have no quarrel with those parents who want only two or less children. That is their prerogative and certainly their business and surely they must know what is better for them than anyone else.

On the other hand, I do not care for the psychiatrist's methods of intimidating those of us who happen to think that three, four, five or more children happens to be right for us.

To answer one of the charges he made about the quality of the mother's attention, I think it sufficient to point out that everyone knows mothers of two or fewer children who manage to neglect their important emotional needs. Then there are those moms with six and eight kids who manage to nourish both bodies and souls of all their offspring without draining themselves dry.

Perhaps a more pertinent point is that too many of today's kids are being smothered by too much attention in the absence of real communication between parent and child.

But the charge which interests me the most is the one in which the psychiatrist says that IQs suffer because of large families.

Should it be true (and I have my doubts since poverty and discrimination sound like more logical causes to me) then it would probably surprise the doctor to discover that here is one member of a large family who gladly would sacrifice a few IQ points for the advantage of having several brothers and sisters.

Biased, I know, by my own background, I find it difficult to cite any achievement comparable in importance to the singular joy, comfort, and security and just plain fun in belonging to a family of several children.

There was the pleasure of each other's friends, the reliance of one upon another, the knowledge that we were a unit in ourselves. Even now that we are scattered near and far that same knowledge is a special part of our lives. That unique relationship between sisters and brothers serves to enrich relationships now with our own families. There is a sustaining love and companionship that hundreds of miles between us cannot strain.

Hopefully we are better friends and neighbors because we know something about sharing and needing.

Thus the doctor is welcome to his higher IQs. There are other things much more valuable.



RACL VIEWPOINTS

Making the New Mass 'Work'

By J. E. Koller

This week a transition period of several years' duration comes to an end with the introduction in this diocese of final revised forms for important portions of the Mass. These innovations were preceded by a number of other changes including the gradual introduction of the vernacular and the adoption of four new alternate forms for the Eucharistic prayers.

This entire process has been carried out as a result of decisions reached in the Second Vatican Council to simplify and clarify liturgical practice. It can validly be described as "liturgical renewal," and somewhere along the way the old passive expression "to hear Mass" has been replaced by what is intended to be a much more active and emphatic phrase "to celebrate the Liturgy."

While the success of the changes made to date is no longer even a valid subject for debate, a recent experience causes me to question whether or not we are yet ready for the idealized new expression.

The past five Sundays have found me in five parishes in four different cities and dioceses in three states. In one of the five locations I think I "heard Mass" but the words which came from the sanctuary were so unintelligible and the response of my fellow worshippers was so listless that I wasn't quite sure.

In another there could be no doubt that I had helped to "celebrate the Liturgy." A rare combination of intelligence, taste, sensitivity and enthusiasm on the parts of the clergy and the congregation led to this con-

clusion. Incidentally, these two parishes are in the same diocese which, for the record, is not Rochester.

In the other three locations, my Sunday experiences would have to be described with expressions which fall between these two extremes. In all three cases, dialogue prayers were exchanged between celebrants and their parishioners with sincerity and lay involvement has manifested by lectors who carried out the usual functions with confidence. In all three pastors, or assistants, as parts of their homilies, explained one or more portions of the new Mass rite with understanding and enthusiasm. But in all three cases something was lacking.

Perhaps the missing items on these three Sundays can best be considered as liturgical flourishes which added a great deal on the fourth. An intelligent review of the scriptural themes by the celebrant or lector would have helped in each case. Sincere and imaginative improvisation, particularly in the offertory rite, would have added relevance. Above all, musical expression was missing. In two of the parishes music was entirely lacking while in the third the hymns chosen were so simplistic and hackneyed and so poorly sung by the congregation that complete silence would have been more exciting and more reverent.

In retrospect, it appears that one of these liturgical experiences stood out above the others because of planning and preparation. My host attributed this to the energy and talent of one of the assistant pastors who had apparently spent considerable

time in selecting liturgical materials and in rehearsing an unusually interesting and suitable group of hymns with the congregation. He was also on hand to aid the celebrant and an articulate lector in conducting the proceedings.

Most pastors and assistants now seem to have acquired a genuine interest in liturgical matters but it is a rare and fortunate parish which has the services of a priest who can personally produce such inspiring results. For the rest of us, the answer probably lies in the establishment of active parish liturgical committees. In this way the time and energies of all members of the parish, both clerical and lay, can be utilized to develop the most appropriate possible forms for local community worship and to prepare parishioners for their practice.

In July 1968, the Liturgical Commission of the Diocese of Rochester urged the establishment in each parish of liturgy committees with a majority of lay members. The last time I talked with Msgr. William H. Shannon, chairman of the diocesan commission, positive response to the recommendation was still at a very low level. This seems like an excellent time for parishes without liturgy committees, and without really successful liturgical programs, to take up the question again.

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