Landas 23:1 (2009) 122-134

ON THE REFORMED MASS OF VATICAN II AND BENEDICT XVI'S LETTER *MOTU PROPRIO* SUMMORUM PONTIFICUM

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Introduction: Before the Council

Catholics who had the good fortune to be born in the 40s and 50s, perhaps even earlier, will no doubt have had experience of Holy Mass before the liturgical reform of Vatican II – the Mass was then celebrated in Latin. It began with the Prayers at the Foot of the Altar. The celebrant faced the same direction as the congregation,[1] with the Eucharistic Prayer or Canon recited in a low voice (the silent Canon), and with only the Mass server responding to the priest. The readings were also in Latin, as well as the sung parts of the Mass, which only the choir at the choir loft sang. Holy Communion was placed on the tongue of the communicants kneeling at the Communion rail. The Last Gospel (the Prologue of Saint John) was recited at the Gospel side of the altar after the dismissal, as well as the Leonine Prayers at the foot of the altar, before the celebrant and server exited back to the sacristy. Our present Liturgy of the Word used to be called Mass

[1]This position of the celebrant at Mass derived from the ancient practice of facing east, where the sun rose, an ancient symbol of Jesus Christ as the "Sun of Justice."

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of the Catechumens, and our Liturgy of the Eucharist was then called Mass of the Faithful.

Holy Mass was then celebrated in basically two forms: Low Mass and High Mass. The basic difference between the two was that Low Mass or *Missa Recitata* was recited and was the ordinary form of celebration, and which might or might not be accompanied by some singing, while High Mass[2] was the more solemn form, with more elaborate movements of celebrant and altar servers, with Gregorian chant and responses in Latin, and the use of incense. Also, the celebrant at High Mass was normally assisted by a deacon and a subdeacon, or by ordained priests taking the role of deacon or subdeacon. This more solemn form was normally celebrated during high feast days.

Vatican II: *Aggiornamento*

In 1962, Blessed Pope John XXIII convened the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council or Vatican II, in order to, in the blessed pope's own words, "open the windows of the Church" to let in the fresh wind of renewal and change, and ostensibly to pave the way for Church unity.[3] The keyword then was *aggiornamento*, or updating, to let the Church "keep up with the times." It is no coincidence that that era was also the time when changes began to be felt in the secular world: social ferment and student activism were on the rise, reactions against current moral standards, exemplified by the "flower power" and hippie generation were beginning to surface, and social mores were changing. The very

[2]High Mass either took the form of *Missa Cantata* (Sung Mass with only one celebrant), *Missa Solemnis* (Sung Mass with subdeacon, deacon and celebrant), or *Missa Pontificalis* (Sung Mass of the bishop, either at the throne or at the faldstool).

[3]One of the documents to come out of the Council was the Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis redintegratio,* published on November 21, 1964. It was followed by subsequent documents from the Holy See on the same topic from 1965 to 1973.

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first document to come out of that council that lasted until 1965 was *Sacrosanctum concilium* (Constitution on Sacred Liturgy), published on December 4, 1963.

A pontifical commission, the *Consilium,*[4] under the leadership of Father (later Archbishop) Annibale Bugnini, was created to plan, oversee and implement the directives for reform contained in the Constitution on Sacred Liturgy. The changes envisioned by the *Consilium* sought to strip the Mass of its medieval accretions, with a view to restoring it to its original "noble simplicity" which is a characteristic of the Roman rite (cf. *SC* 50). In its work of restoration, the *Consilium* sought the help of experts, including Protestant consultants.[5] According to the *Consilium,* the presence of the Protestant observers at the Council was to know their reactions to the decrees and deliberations,[6] and the consultants invited to sit in the commission were supposed to

[4]The Latin word *consilium* means "advice," "counsel," or "a group of advisers." Archbishop A. Bugnini, who was secretary of the *Consilium* since its foundation and later became secretary of the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, says that the *Consilium* was set up on December 3, 1974 (*Notitiae,* 1973, p. 395). However, presumably in the absence of any other documentation on its inception, Pope Paul VI's *motu proprio, Sacram Liturgiam,* and the date of its publication (January 25, 1964) have usually been associated subsequently with the inauguration of the *Consilium.* The *Consilium* ceased to have an independent existence on May 8, 1969, when Pope Paul VI, by his Apostolic Constitution, *Sacra Rituum,* made it part of the new Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, which he set up by the same Apostolic Constitution. The Pope directed that the *Consilium* would persist as a special commission of the Congregation until the reform of the liturgy should be completed, retaining its members and consultors (see *AAS* 61 [1969], 299 and 301).

[5]There were six official Protestant consultants: Dr. George, Canon Jasper, Dr. Shepherd, Dr. Kunneth, Dr. Smith and Bro. Max Thurian, representing respectively the World Council of Churches, the Anglican and Lutheran Communions, and the Taizé Community. Bro. Thurian of Taizé later converted to Roman Catholicism and eventually became a Roman Catholic priest.

[6]They did not take part in the deliberations on the floor, and did not vote.

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ensure that the new rites and prayers of the reformed liturgy would be acceptable to Protestants in order to facilitate ecumenical dialogue between Catholics and Protestants.[7]

Notwithstanding the General Instruction which accompanied the new Roman Missal of 1970, the first steps in the celebration of the reformed rite were understandably tentative; it was obvious that everybody, beginning with the bishops, was not quite sure of what steps to take. Stories abound concerning the fumbling steps of so many of the clergy who were unfamiliar with this new terrain of liturgical renewal. In fairness, the Holy See did not introduce changes at one fell swoop. Rather, change was gradual. The first to undergo change was the language of the Mass: from entirely Latin to some parts in the vernacular; second, the position of the celebrant with regard to the altar: from facing the same direction as the congregation, to facing the people. The resulting external form of the Mass was clearly transitional in character, with older elements retained from the Mass before the reform, like the *Prayers at the Foot of the Altar* and the *double or triple Collects*, and some new elements introduced from Vatican II, like *the Prayers of the Faithful, Offertory Procession,* and *the Kiss of Peace.* If my memory serves me right, this took place sometime in 1965.[8] The Ordinary of the Mass of 1965 was still essentially the Tridentine Mass, but celebrated completely in the vernacular. Before Vatican II, it was inconceivable to celebrate the Mass in any other language except Latin.

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[7]And probably with a view to attracting them to the Catholic Church as well.

[8]The Instruction *Inter Oecumenici,* issued by the Sacred Congregation of Rites on September 26, 1964, gave instructions on the proper implementation of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and Pope Paul VI's Motu Proprio *Sacram Liturgiam* (January 25, 1964). This was followed by *Tres abhinc annos,* the second instruction on the proper implementation of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* on May 4, 1967*,* and the Apostolic Constitution *Missale Romanum* of Pope Paul VI promulgating the new Roman Missal and the reformed Rite of the Mass, thus effectively ending the manner of celebrating Holy Mass as known in the Latin Roman Rite up until then.

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The celebrant always faced the same direction as the people. Prior to 1963, of course, changes already began to be introduced in the Mass. Pope Pius XII, for example, allowed the celebration of the dialogue Mass in the 1950s with readings in the vernacular, and some hymns, also in the vernacular, which the congregation could join in. The Mass remained, however, basically the same, still celebrated in Latin, with priest and people facing the same direction.

The Mass of Paul VI

In 1969, Pope Paul VI authorized the publication of the first official edition (*editio typica*) of the Roman Missal in Latin, which came out in 1970. Its translation in the various vernaculars came out soon after. That first official edition of the Roman Missal, by which the reformed Mass, then called *Missa Typica* or *Missa Normativa,* was celebrated, radically altered the face of the Mass as celebrated for over 1,500 years, codified and given its definitive form by the Council of Trent, authorized by Pope Pius V, in the 16th century, now referred to as the "Tridentine Latin Mass." The Roman Missal of 1970 was accompanied by a General Instruction that described how each part of the Mass was to be carried out by the celebrant and other ministers.

Notwithstanding the General Instruction, many, if not most, of the clergy who were formed in the former (Tridentine) way, felt lost. Some of the older priests refused to celebrate the Mass as reformed by Vatican II and sought permission to continue celebrating Mass in the Tridentine rite. Others, perhaps the majority of the clergy, reveled in the new-found freedom of celebrating Mass without the rigidity of detailed rubrics of the older form of celebration, which they might have felt was constricting. Even the vestments of the priest were altered. In tropical countries like the Philippines, only the cassock or the alb was used under the chasuble, and the stole which used to be worn under the chasuble began to be worn as an overlay stole over the chasuble. The chasuble itself, which up until then was in the shape of a violin and usually with brocade embroidery, became a flowing robe, poncho-like, and could remain white with only the stole in the liturgical color of the

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day. Concelebration was allowed,[9] and the sanctuary, which used to be the exclusive domain of the clergy, became no longer so – anyone could set foot in it. In time the Communion rail was removed; Holy Communion was given with the communicant standing up instead of kneeling. The tabernacle, which used to be located at the center of the apse above the altar, was relocated to the right side.[10]

At about this same time too, the veil of women worshippers began to gradually disappear. Before this time, women used to worship with their heads covered with *mantillas*, either rectangular or triangular. By the mid-70s the *mantillas* had morphed into small round doilies perched atop their heads. By the end of that decade the veil had disappeared completely. The most visible change took place at the altar table itself which was pushed forward to the edge of the sanctuary closer to the nave and the people, and had the appearance of a meal table, and the chair for the celebrant began to make its appearance at the place vacated by the tabernacle. The priest who celebrated Mass was no longer called celebrant but "presider" or "president." One of the significant changes also took place in the name for the Mass. While before it used to be referred to as the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, it now began to be called the Eucharistic celebration or, in some places, also the "Supper of the Lord."[11]

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[9]Decree *Ecclesia Semper,* issued by the Sacred Congregation of Rites on March 7, 1965, on Concelebration and Communion under Both Species.

[10]The reason given for the tabernacle's relocation was that at the Mass, the center of the celebration is the altar table where the Sacrament was confected and not the tabernacle in which the Sacrament was reserved.

[11]It is interesting to note that the Protestant reformers of the 16th century used this term instead of what they called the "Popish Mass" and replaced altars against the wall with wooden tables in their churches "for the use of an altar is to make sacrifice upon it; the use of a table is to serve men to eat upon." (cf. Michael Davies, *Cranmer's Godly Order: The Destruction of Catholicism through Liturgical Change* [1984], 97). The change signified their rejection of sacrifice, which is explicitly expressed in the Roman Catholic Mass.

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"Creativity" and Improvisation

Having been relieved of the strict and rigid rubricism of the Tridentine Latin Mass, many priests, in their new-found posture of facing the people, also began to *ad lib* in the celebration in the name of "creativity."[12] The early 70s were heady days of experimentation. Improvisations became the order of the day, depending on the "creativity" of the priest. Some priests even went to the extent of celebrating Mass using *pan de sal* and *lambanog* in place of bread and wine, and using other readings from non-Christian sources in place of the Scriptures. This situation gave rise to the phenomenon of varying "styles" of celebration, depending on who the celebrant was. Owing perhaps to the fact that there was really no concerted effort to reorient the priests in the reformed rite of the Mass—recall that we did not have any clear direction on how the reform was to be carried out[13]—priests as celebrants had to make do with what they thought should and could be done. The result was that the priest did pretty much "his own thing" and the more "creative" he was, the better. The only thing clear then was that this was part of *aggiornamento* or updating. As an aside, I have observed that some of the strongest reactions to corrections on the manner of celebrating the reformed Mass of Vatican II come from older priests who were trained in the

[12]The Instruction *Tres abhinc annos* seems to allude to and warn against improvisations in the liturgy of the Mass: "It seems necessary to take this opportunity of recalling to mind the capital principle of ecclesiastical discipline which was solemnly reiterated by the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy: 'the regulation of the sacred liturgy depends solely on the authority of the Church… Therefore no other person, even if he be a priest, may add, remove or change anything in the liturgy on his own authority' (*SC* 22: 1, 3)."

[13]The Instruction *Inter Oecumenici,* referring to the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, art. 15, 16, 17 & 18, gave instructions on the liturgical formation of the clergy, but these were in broad terms. Much of the instructions on the celebration of Mass according to the reformed rites of Vatican II were contained in the General Instruction on the Roman Missal of 1970.

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Tridentine tradition. This is perhaps a reaction, albeit unconscious, to the time when they felt oppressed by the rigid rubrics of bygone days. There were certainly dissenting voices worldwide to the reforms initiated by Vatican II; they refer to it as more of a liturgical *revolution* rather than a *reform*, much akin to the Protestant revolution of the 16th century. Traditional Catholics regret the changes—some merely dragging their heels, others with bitter resistance. Many had mixed responses: confusion, relief at the easier discipline, shock at the easier discipline, apathy, and a readiness to give up going to church. But the dissenters are sadly in the minority. The majority of Catholics, including Filipino Catholics, were docile to the changes. Their only source of information was the press which was united in extolling the merits of the innovations, which were endorsed by the bishops and which came with the authority of the Pope.

Today, much of the experimentation has, by and large, ceased, although there are still pockets here and there of enterprising celebrants who resort to improvisation and *adlib*bing. As far as I know, this is not something that we priests are conscious of, but it seems to me that the underlying mentality in the reformed Mass of Vatican II is that the priest, because he faces the congregation, is the center, and animator, of the celebration and the people are his audience. The "spotlight" is on him, as it were. While there is no official document from the Holy See telling priests to improvise, the rubrics themselves of the reformed Mass give ample go signal for improvisation in its directives which have been liberally interpreted by liturgists. A case in point is the article, "Style and Presence in Celebration"[14] written in 1967 by Father Robert Hovda, and the book on liturgical presidency, *Strong, Loving and Wise,* also by the same author, which became *de rigueur* reading matter for candidates for Ordination in the late 1970s.[15] Unwittingly, because of the encouragement to improvise in order to avoid looking

[14]*Worship* 41/9: 514-22.

[15]Robert Hovda, *Strong, Loving and Wise: Preaching in Liturgy* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1976).

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stiff and monotonous, there is pressure on the priest to "perform," and the congregation, because of the blessing of modern media, especially television, also unconsciously expects entertainment similar to what can be seen on television shows. Admittedly there are priests who can measure up to the challenge of presiding in an impressive and deeply stimulating celebration or who can make a celebration of the reformed Mass an inspiring and devotional celebration simply by the force of their personality, but they are the exception. The majority of priests are incapable of such *tour de force* performances. Through no fault of their own, they cannot make the celebration of Mass living and relevant. They do the best they can with the God-given talents they have, and they cannot be expected to do more. Otherwise, they would look silly and ridiculous in the sanctuary. Here, the question is: to whom is Holy Mass addressed? To God or to the people? Putting it more bluntly, is Holy Mass still considered the unbloody sacrifice of Calvary, a communal worship rendered to God by His people, the body of Christ, under the headship of Jesus Christ to Whom the priest is configured,[16] or an entertainment with audience participation? The plea of some devout Catholics for a restoration of the sense of the sacred, of mystery and awe in the celebration of Mass is not without merit.

Summorum Pontificum

It is in the light of the foregoing that the most recent document from the Holy See, written as a letter on his own initiative by Pope Benedict XVI, *Summorum Pontificum*, is to be considered. The

[16]The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that the Eucharist is "the very sacrifice of the Body and Blood of the Lord Jesus which He instituted to perpetuate the Sacrifice of the Cross throughout the ages until His return in glory. Thus He entrusted to His Church this memorial of His death and Resurrection. It is a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a paschal banquet, in which Christ is consumed, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us" (CCC 1322-1323; 1409).

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document was published on July 07, 2007 together with a covering letter addressed to bishops detailing the reasons for the document, which would take effect on September 14, 2007, Feast of the Triumph of the Holy Cross.

In brief, the *motu proprio* regularizes the celebration of the Tridentine Latin Mass. It affirms that the celebration of Mass in the Roman Rite has two forms: the reformed Mass of Vatican II as the ordinary form, and the Tridentine Mass as the extraordinary form. The document supersedes the Apostolic Letter *Ecclesia Dei* of Pope John Paul II issued in 1988, which allowed bishops to indicate churches/places where Mass following the rite of the 1962 Missal could be celebrated.

In *Summorum Pontificum* the Pope affirms that the Tridentine Mass was never abrogated in the Church, and that in private Masses, any priest is free to use either Pope John XXIII's Missal of 1962 or Pope Paul VI's Missal of 1970. Further, that the Missal of 1962 could be used on any day except during the Easter Triduum. There is no need for the priest to obtain permission either from the Holy See or from the bishop in order to celebrate the Tridentine Mass. The faithful may also attend such private Mass if they so desire.

With regard to public Masses, the Pope asks pastors and rectors of churches to allow the celebration of the Tridentine Mass on Sundays and solemnities if there is a stable group of the faithful who request it. Pastors may also administer the sacraments of Baptism, Matrimony, Penance and Anointing of the Sick, and bishops may administer Confirmation, in the Tridentine rite, if it is for the good of the faithful. The rites of Holy Orders, however, are only to be celebrated according to the rite of the reformed liturgy.

The bishop is also given the right to erect 'personal' parishes for the Tridentine rite and to appoint chaplains who can celebrate in those places. Should a bishop or a priest refuse the request for the celebration of Mass and the sacraments in the Tridentine rite, the faithful may have recourse to Pontifical Commission *Ecclesia Dei* in Rome which will give its decision on the matter.

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The Covering Letter

In his covering letter, the Pope states the reason for his decision to regularize the celebration of the Tridentine Mass, thereby placing it on equal footing with the reformed Mass of Vatican II: it is to work toward "interior reconciliation in the heart of the Church" between the Church and traditionalist Catholics opposed to the reformed Mass of Vatican II, *e.g.,* the *Society of St. Pius X.* The Pope adds that while in the past it was thought that interest and attachment to the Tridentine Mass among its older adherents would eventually wane, it turns out that now there are young people who express attraction to the Tridentine Mass which they experience as the form of Eucharistic celebration with which they can resonate. Due to fears expressed in some quarters in the Church *vis-à-vis* the effect of the document on reforms achieved by the council, the Pope assured doubters that his decision does not mean he was turning his back on the authority of Vatican II. According to him, since the celebration of the Tridentine Mass presupposes a prolonged period of formation in the Tridentine liturgy and requisite familiarity with the Latin language, the reformed conciliar Mass (our present way of celebrating Mass), remains the ordinary form of the Roman Rite of Eucharistic celebration. In other words, there is only one Roman Rite in the Catholic Church, and it has two forms: the ordinary (the Mass of Paul VI) and the extraordinary (the Mass of John XXIII).

As far as we are concerned, I believe that there is no reason for the majority of Catholics to expect that the celebration of Holy Mass according to the reformed rite of Vatican II will be changed anytime soon. There are many good reasons going for the reformed Mass of Vatican II: principally the variety of readings for the Liturgy of the Word, as well as the deeply theological contents of the variety of Prefaces and Eucharistic Prayers. These advantages assure us that Holy Mass as we celebrate it now will not soon disappear. Also, the advantage of the congregation comprehending the flow of the celebration is a plus sign for the reformed Mass of Vatican II. However, we also need to admit that some changes do need to be set in place (reform of the reform?). In this, it seems that Pope Benedict XVI himself is setting

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the example which others may follow, not so much by official liturgical directive, but simply by his quiet witness.[17]

Conclusion: Need for Catechesis

Finally, while I personally see as positive the present trend that Catholics are now more appreciative and more aware of what is going on at the Mass, still there is much to be done. One of the apparent reasons for the convocation of the Second Vatican Council was to attract our separated Christian brethren, the Protestants and Eastern Orthodox, to the Catholic Church in order that we may all be one as Our Lord prayed for at the Last Supper. Looking at the present situation, it is the Catholics who seem to be bolting out of the Catholic Church to join other denominations. I must confess that I am not knowledgeable of the reverse trend from other denominations to the Catholic Church. The number of defections from the Catholic Church to other religious denominations is alarming. This is perhaps part of the fallout resulting from the reform of Vatican II, and is perhaps to be expected. If our former Catholic brothers and sisters are happy where they are, we give thanks to the Lord for that. God acts and saves even outside the confines of the Church. But if we can do something to stem the tide of defections, it is imperative that we do it. One of the most glaring lacunae that I see at present is the lack of organized catechesis, not only on the Mass, but also on the doctrines of the Catholic Church. We are thankful for the rise and continuing growth of lay movements in the Church and the Vatican itself is cognizant of this, but the hunger for spirituality and deeper communion with God among Catholics persists. Such spiritual hunger, I believe, needs to be accompanied and nourished by an informed faith, and in this catechesis is of paramount importance. The liturgical reform initiated by Vatican II is only some 40-odd years distant from us. We do not

[17]Alciun Reid, "What is Pope Benedict doing to Catholic Liturgy?" in *CANews* (July 2008), 28-29.

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know what is yet to come in a hundred years. The Council of Trent exerted its influence on the Church for over 400 years, so 44 years is just a drop in the bucket in the history of reform in the Church. For now, however, I believe that we need to acquaint ourselves with the tenets of our faith so that we can truly worship in spirit and in truth the Lord God Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

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