

Tridentine Community News

March 11, 2007

The Organic Development of the Liturgy Part 2 of 2

The fundamental question that arises from last week's discussion of the Vatican II Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, is, "What exactly is the liturgy of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*?" Is the Novus Ordo Mass, in fact, what Vatican II desired?

One always benefits from 20/20 hindsight, of course, so consider these thoughts a reflection more than a criticism of what has happened over the past 40 years.

According to many modern liturgical scholars, including our present Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, the essence of what went wrong with the liturgy after Vatican II was that it represented too much of a rupture with tradition. Never before had the Mass been altered so much in so short a time.

The 1965 Missal

Often forgotten in discussions of the post-Vatican II liturgical reforms is the transitional missal issued in 1965. This missal, plus its slightly-modified descendant published in 1967, were essentially the Tridentine Mass with certain portions optionally in the vernacular. St. Josaphat Mass-goers will be interested to know that we use a 1965 Missal in the pulpit for the vernacular readings when a celebrant prefers not to use the Old English ("thee" and "thou") translations that we publish in the weekly handouts and which are used in most hand missals. Modern English had been chosen for the 1965 Missal, presumably by the U.S. Bishops.

Some of the changes incorporated in the 1965 Missal include:

- The Prayers of the Faithful were introduced after the Credo.
- The priest no longer recited the parts of the Mass sung by the choir (Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, Agnus Dei).
- The formula for distribution of Holy Communion was shortened to the priest saying, "Corpus Christi" and the communicant responding, "Amen."
- The Last Gospel was suppressed.
- Celebration *versus populum* (facing the people) was permitted.

Overall, however, the structure of the Mass was recognizably an evolution of the Tridentine. More changes were introduced at one time than since the Council of Trent, and many new options were introduced. This in and of itself was not necessarily welcome or even needed, but the Mass was not vastly oversimplified as it became in 1970 with the promulgation of the Novus Ordo.

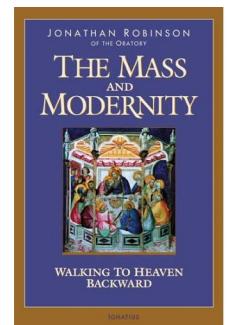
It is for these reasons that a cogent argument can be made that the 1965 Missal is the "Mass of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*". One writer has even put together a small blog, "The Mass of Vatican

II", that makes an extensive case for this: <http://traditionalromanmass.blogspot.com>

Writers' Views

Dr. Alcuin Reid's 2004 book, "The Organic Development of the Liturgy" (yes, we borrowed his title for his column), points out that the promulgation of the Novus Ordo was an act of ecclesiastical authority rather than an evolutionary development. A commission had been formed to create the new liturgy, and created it indeed is. There have been an excessive number of additions and deletions in the 1970 vs. 1962 missals. For example, the 2002 edition of the Novus Ordo has 13 Eucharistic Prayers, whereas the Tridentine missal has one. Going from 1 to 13 in such a short period cannot be considered evolutionary.

Fr. Jonathon Robinson, CO, the founder of the Toronto Oratory, in 2005 wrote a book entitled, "The Mass and Modernity", in which he made the case that the Novus Ordo, at least how it is typically celebrated nowadays, has adapted too much to modern culture. This excessive spirit of modifiability has resulted in the average Catholic failing to understand the sacrificial character of the event. The liturgy need not conform to society; quite the contrary, it needs to set an example of the sacred which mankind must recognize and yearn for.



Practical Observations

Academic arguments are not the entire story. If one wants to experience a reverent, "organically developed" Novus Ordo Mass, one can find it at the London Oratory, St. Agnes Church in St. Paul, Minnesota, and indeed here at St. Joseph Church, among other places. These parishes do the best they can within the Novus Ordo rubrics to offer a Mass that demonstrates continuity with Catholic liturgical tradition.

Any attempt to "reform the reform," or modify and standardize the Novus Ordo, can learn as much from observing these Mass sites as it can from reverting to a 1965 Missal as a basis for reform. There are those who believe "reverence" is identified just as much by traditional rubrics and sacred music, as by the actual words of the Mass.

The problem is, our generation too easily forgets history. We need an unchanging rock, and the Traditional Latin Mass is that rock. For a while, the Tridentine Mass needs to remain unmodified: No changes to the calendar, no new readings, no simplification of rubrics. We need the Tridentine Mass to remain as is, and indeed to be freer of restrictions on its celebration, to provide a living example of what Catholic liturgy can be and long has been. Only with that example available to us can the Church more thoughtfully bring about the kind of liturgical reform that Vatican II envisaged.