

Tridentine Community News

April 26, 2009

De Defectibus – Part 1 of 4

Our April 12, 2009 column addressed the role and benefits of Precision in the Sacred Liturgy. The Church is very specific in what She expects of the celebrant during the Extraordinary Form of Holy Mass. Rubrics are spelled out in detail in the altar missal. Supplementary rulings have been issued by competent Vatican departments to clarify matters still in question. But did you know that the Tridentine Mass has “Thou Shalt Not” rules in addition to the “Thou Shalts”?

An instruction at the beginning of the 1962 Roman Missal, *De Defectibus* (On Defects Occurring in the Celebration of Mass), identifies and discusses possible faults in the celebration of Holy Mass. There are ten chapters. It is short and enlightening, and succinctly conveys Holy Mother Church’s concern not only for the Blessed Sacrament, but also that the faithful receive a valid Sacrament. We therefore present the entire document:

I. Defects of the Missing

1. The priest who is to celebrate Mass should take every precaution to make sure that none of the things required for celebrating the Sacrament of the Eucharist is missing. A defect may occur with regard to the matter to be consecrated, with regard to the form to be observed and with regard to the consecrating minister. There is no Sacrament if any of these is missing: the proper matter, the form, including the intention, and the priestly ordination of the celebrant. If these things are present, the Sacrament is valid, no matter what else is lacking. There are other defects, however, which may involve sin or scandal, even if they do not impair the validity of the Sacrament.

II. Defects of the Matter

2. Defects on the part of the matter may arise from some lack in the materials required. What is required is this: bread made from wheat flour, wine from grapes, and the presence of these materials before the priest at the time of the Consecration.

III. Defect of Bread

3. If the bread is not made of wheat flour, or if so much other grain is mixed with the wheat that it is no longer wheat bread, or if it is adulterated in some other way, there is no Sacrament.

4. If the bread has been made with rose-water or some other distillation, the validity of the Sacrament is doubtful.

5. If the bread has begun to mold, but it is not corrupt, or if it is not unleavened according to the custom of the Latin Church, the Sacrament is valid, but the celebrant is guilty of grave sin.

6. If the celebrant notices before the Consecration that the host is corrupt or that it is not made of wheat flour, he is to replace that host with another, make the offering at least mentally and continue from where he left off.

7. If he notices this after the Consecration, or even after having consumed the host, he is to put out another host, make the offering as above and begin from the Consecration, namely from the words *Qui pridie quam pateretur*. If he has not consumed the first host, he is to consume it after taking the Body and the Blood, or else reserve it somewhere with reverence. If he has already consumed the first host, he is nevertheless to consume the one that he has consecrated, because the precept of completing the Sacrament is more important than the precept of fasting before Communion.

8. If this should happen after the Blood has been consumed, not only should new bread be brought, but also wine with water. The priest should first make the offering, as above, then consecrate, beginning with the words *Qui pridie*. Then he should immediately receive under both species and continue the Mass, so that the Sacrament will not remain incomplete, and so that due order will be observed.

9. If the consecrated Host disappears, either by some accident such as a gust of wind or by some animal’s taking it, and It cannot be found, then another is to be consecrated, beginning from the *Qui pridie quam pateretur*, having first been offered as above.

10. In the cases referred to in paragraphs 5-9 above, the elevation of the Sacrament is to be omitted, and everything is to be done so as to avoid, as far as possible, any scandal or wonderment on the part of the faithful.

IV. Defect of Wine

11. If the wine has become mere vinegar, or is completely bad, or if it has been made from sour or unripe grapes, or if so much water has been mixed with it that the wine is adulterated, there is no Sacrament.

12. If the wine has begun to turn to vinegar or to become corrupt, or if it is souring, or if it is unfermented, being made from newly pressed grapes, or if it has not been mixed with water, or if it has been mixed with rose-water or some other distillation, the Sacrament is valid, but the celebrant is guilty of grave sin.

13. If the celebrant notices before the consecration of the Blood, even if the Body has already been consecrated, that there is no wine in the chalice, or no water, or neither wine nor water, he should immediately put in wine and water, make the offering as above and consecrate, beginning with the words *Simili modo*, etc.

14. If after the words of the Consecration he notices that there was no wine in the chalice, but only water, he is to pour the water into some vessel, put wine and water into the chalice and consecrate, starting again from the words *Simili modo*, etc.

15. If he notices this after consuming the Body, or after drinking the water in question, he is to set out another host to be consecrated, together with wine and water in the chalice, offer both, consecrate them and consume them, even though he is not fasting.