

Tridentine Community News

August 16, 2009

Active Participation in the Mass: A Statistical Study – Part 1 of 4

One of the most frequently debated topics about the Extraordinary Form of Holy Mass relative to the Ordinary Form is the level of “active participation” in the Mass. As envisioned by theologians up to and including Pope Benedict XVI, “active participation” means much more than just vocally responding at Mass. It means a level of involvement in prayer and focus on the Holy Mysteries taking place at the altar, following the Ordinary and Propers of the Mass, uniting one’s intentions with the priest’s, recollecting oneself before Holy Communion and making thanksgiving afterwards, and so on. Many advocates of the Tridentine Mass would say that the structure and rubrics of the Extraordinary Form fosters such interior participation to a greater degree than the Ordinary Form.

Conversely, Novus Ordo supporters often place a greater emphasis on exterior forms of participation. They maintain that the congregation has a greater role in the Ordinary Form, primarily with making responses. The Tridentine is a more quiet Mass, they say, with the congregation left to do their own thing. How can one really be involved in the Mass if the priest is facing the wall, mumbling in Latin?

Not surprisingly, the editorial position of this column sides with our Holy Father on this issue: Active participation is all-encompassing, and not just vocal. Nevertheless, let’s consider the opposing view: If “active participation” does mean making responses at Mass, then just how many responses are made in the Ordinary Form versus the Extraordinary?

The Numbers Tell the Story

Below, we present a numbered listing of the responses in the Extraordinary Form and the Ordinary Form. Both sides are presented in English. Longer responses are abbreviated to save space, as the idea is to count the responses, not to write them out in entirety. If you wish to see a complete comparison of the texts of both forms of the Mass, please see the series of columns we presented in early 2008, available at the web site below.

The typical sung Sunday Mass is presented, including the *Aspérages*. In some churches, the congregation makes the responses to the Prayers at the Foot of the Altar silently, and not out loud. We thus show two counts: The first number includes these responses, while the second, bracketed number does not. It must be stated that the notion of silent responses may be a new concept to those unfamiliar with the Extraordinary Form. We maintain that those are responses nonetheless, just as the priest’s silent Canon is indeed a prayer.

Extraordinary Form/Tridentine Mass

Ordinary Form/Novus Ordo Mass

RITE OF SPRINKLING WITH HOLY WATER

1. [1.] (sung) Thou shalt sprinkle me, O Lord, with hyssop...
2. [2.] As it was in the beginning...
3. [3.] Thou shalt sprinkle me, O Lord, with hyssop...
4. [4.] And grant us Thy salvation.
5. [5.] And let my cry come unto Thee.
6. [6.] And with Thy spirit.
7. [7.] Amen.

PRAYERS AT THE FOOT OF THE ALTAR

8. [7.] To God, Who giveth joy to my youth.

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9. [7.] For Thou art, God, my strength...
10. [7.] And I will go in to the altar of God...
11. [7.] Hope in God, for I will still give praise to Him...
12. [7.] As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be...
13. [7.] To God, Who giveth joy to my youth.
14. [7.] Who made heaven and earth.

ACT OF CONFESSION

15. [7.] May almighty God have mercy on thee...
16. [7.] I confess to almighty God, to blessed Mary ever virgin, ...

INTRODUCTORY RITE

1. Amen.

GREETING

2. And also with you.

ACT OF CONFESSION

- [Option 2 and Option 3 are available, Option 1 proceeds thus:]
3. I confess to almighty God...