

Tridentine Community News

June 11, 2006

The Tridentine Calendar

In addition to the differences in format between the unchanging parts, or “Ordinary”, of the Novus Ordo and Tridentine Masses, the two forms of the Roman Rite follow different liturgical calendars (often referred to as “kalendars,” to differentiate the concept from that of the temporal calendar). For example, most of the summer consists of “Sundays in Ordinary Time” in the Novus Ordo, while those are “Sundays After Pentecost” in the Tridentine. Another example is the Tridentine pre-Lenten season of Septuagesima, which does not exist in the Novus Ordo. This is why during Advent, you will see both Tridentine and Novus Ordo calendars for the new year available at the back of the church.

The Novus Ordo has a three year cycle of readings for Sundays (called A, B, and C); and a two year cycle for weekdays (called I and II). In 2006, we are in Year B for Sundays and Year II for weekdays. The Tridentine Rite has only a one year cycle; every year employs the same readings. On Sundays and major feast days, the Novus Ordo has three readings; on weekdays and lesser feast days, only two readings. The Tridentine Mass generally has only two readings. Opinions differ as to which philosophy of readings is superior.

These readings, together with the Orations (the Collect, Secret, and Postcommunion prayers) and Antiphons (Gradual, Tract, and/or Alleluia; Offertory; and Communion) constitute the “Propers” of the Mass.

If you have seen the list of Feast Days in the Tridentine Calendar that is often published on the last page of the weekly Latin/English Mass Propers Handout, you may have noticed that some, but not all, weekdays are feast days of a particular saint or event. Other weekdays are “ferias,” or days in which the Propers are those of the previous Sunday; special days with unique Propers, e.g. “Tuesday of Holy Week”; or days of Votive Masses, in which Mass Propers of a codified event, such as “Mass for the Anniversary of the Election of a Pope,” are used at the option of the celebrant.

Feast Days are either First, Second, or Third Class. This is basically a determination of importance of the Feast. An example of a First Class Feast is Corpus Christi; Second Class: The Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary; Third Class: St. Francis Xavier.

Prior to 1956, Feast Days were also classified as double, semidouble, simple, or ferial. Older hand missals use those terms, but they no longer apply to the 1962 rubrics and calendar that is presently in force.

National Feasts

Certain saints and martyrs have special significance for certain countries. To accommodate, Holy Mother Church allows national Bishops’ Conferences to establish special feast days for their own lands. Many comprehensive Tridentine hand missals list these special feasts at the rear of the book. For example, the Baronius Press Missal has sections for Scotland; England & Wales; and the United States. While Canada’s Holy Day schedule is listed, it is interesting to note that no unique feast days for Canada are mentioned.

External Solemnities

Today we often hear about Holy Days being “transferred” to a nearby Sunday. For example, in the dioceses of Michigan, the Feast of the Ascension is transferred from its traditional Thursday to the subsequent Sunday, in the Novus Ordo. The effect of that transfer is that the usual Mass for that Sunday is overridden by the Mass of the transferred Holy Day.

The 1960 General Rubrics of the Roman Missal provide guidelines for a similar option, known as an “External Solemnity.” While the details are much more complicated than the Novus Ordo’s “Transfer” of a Feast, in a nutshell, this option allows a feast to be moved to the Sunday immediately preceding or following the specified date of the Feast. Typically, the decision to observe an External Solemnity in place of the usual Sunday Mass is made at

the discretion of the parish priest, assuming that the transfer is permitted in that country. There are numerous additional rules, the main one being that a First Class feast on a Sunday may not be displaced.

Commemorations

Unlike the Novus Ordo, when an External Solemnity is observed, the Mass of the transferred day does not entirely override the Mass of the Sunday. With few exceptions, the overridden Sunday’s Collect, Secret, and Postcommunion prayers are read immediately after the External Solemnity’s. That is why you occasionally see two of these prayers listed in the Latin/English Handout. Only one conclusion (“Per Dóminum nostrum...”) is usually read, after the second prayer.

Coming right up...

We will be observing three External Solemnities in the coming weeks: On June 18, that of Corpus Christi (U.S. only); on June 25, that of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (U.S. & Canada); and on July 2, that of Ss. Peter & Paul (U.S. only).

