

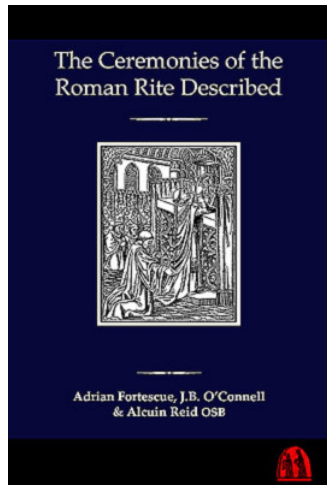
# Tridentine Community News

May 28, 2006

## *Fortescue: The Benchmark for Rubrics*

If you have been around the Tridentine Mass world for a while, you may have heard the name Adrian Fortescue. Just who is this Fortescue guy, and why do people talk about him so much?

The Traditional Mass is precisely defined. Every movement, every prayer, every sign of the cross and genuflection are specified in the “rubrics”, or official rules of celebration. But those rubrics are scattered all over the place. In the *Missale Romanum*, or official altar missal, they are printed in red Latin text. They say nothing about what altar servers or musicians are to do. In ceremonial books for bishops, one finds additional rubrics for those elaborate celebrations. But no official Vatican document ties everything together. Detecting a need for a universal book of rubrics for everyone involved in the Mass, Fr. Fortescue wrote the first edition of his now-classic work, “The Ceremonies of the Roman Rite Described,” in 1917. It is meticulously footnoted,



referencing Vatican documents and rulings to support its recommendations. The book went through multiple revisions over the years. Fellow British priest, Fr. John B. O’Connell took over from Fortescue, and not only continued to update and fill out gaps in the book, but also wrote his own similar tome, “The Celebration of Mass”, in 1949.

Other comparable guides have appeared over the years. Some were designed as tutorials for altar servers, others as references for sacristans and members of altar guilds. But none were as complete as “Fortescue,” and none benefited from the continual revision that work has experienced.

## *Updated for Today’s Environment*

In 1996, as it became clear that the Tridentine Mass was being restored to the life of the Universal Church, an enterprising individual, also from England, Dr. Alcuin Reid, undertook an updating of the 1962 edition of Fortescue. He brought it in line with the 1962 edition of the *Missale Romanum* that Pope John Paul II decreed was to be the norm for Tridentine Mass celebrations (the 1962 edition of Fortescue was actually published before the 1962 edition of the missal came out).

Reid continued to work on the book, and in 2003, published yet another revision, the 14<sup>th</sup> actual edition of the book. This time, he took into account practical realities not anticipated before Vatican II. For example, how was a priest to incense a freestanding altar? What is practical to do in an age of declining vocations, when deacons and subdeacons are not to be found everywhere?

Reid’s work attracted attention. His latest edition contains a foreword by Dario Cardinal Castrillón Hoyos, the President of the

Pontifical Commission Ecclesia Dei. Aside from the Pope, no one other than the PCED President can speak more authoritatively about the Tridentine Mass. This endorsement reinforces the perception of Fortescue as the premiere rubric reference guide. It is more up-to-date than any alternative publication. It is practical, imbued with common sense suggestions rather than strict requirements for difficult-to-execute maneuvers. Virtually everyone agrees that there is no better reference. It is the tie-breaker when opinions differ on certain details. We rely on it extensively here at St. Josaphat and St. Michael’s.

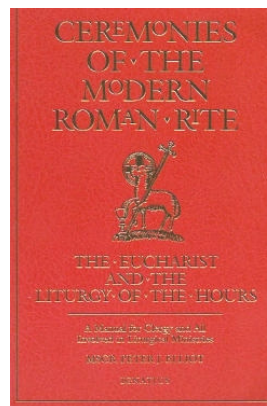
This is not to say that alternative references do not have merit of their own. For example, Fortescue has separate sections of the book for altar servers, deacons, subdeacons, priests, and so forth. If one is conducting a rehearsal for a Solemn High Mass, one has to flip back and forth through the book to see what everyone is supposed to be doing. The O’Connell book, by contrast, combines all parties’ duties into a unified description of what is supposed to occur at any one point in time.

In today’s generally free-for-all liturgical climate, it is easy to understand why the Tridentine Mass’s stability and predictability are appealing. No matter where you go in the world, the Tridentine Mass will be celebrated essentially the same way. In large part, we have Fortescue, O’Connell, and now Reid, to thank for that.

## *Liturgical Experts Make Local Appearance*

Dr. Alcuin Reid will be visiting metro Detroit next weekend. He will be speaking at a conference entitled, “Looking Again at the Liturgical Reform: The Implementation of *Sacrosanctum concilium*” at the Inn at St. John’s in Plymouth all day Sunday, June 4. Also speaking at this conference is chant expert Dr. J. Richard Haefer, who is one of the principal organizers of the Tridentine Indult Masses in Phoenix. More information is at: [www.liturgicalrenewal.org](http://www.liturgicalrenewal.org)

## *And What of the Novus Ordo?*



Sensing a need for there to be a similar volume targeted at celebrations of the Novus Ordo Mass, an Australian priest, Msgr. Peter Elliott, wrote “Ceremonies of the Modern Roman Rite.” While not quite as detailed as Fortescue, this book has no peer in its thoroughness of research and recommendations for reverent celebrations of the new rite. A second edition was recently published, reflecting the changes in the 2002 General Instructions of the Roman Missal.

And now for the kicker: Msgr. Elliott visited St. Josaphat in October, 2005, to participate in an *ad orientem* Novus Ordo Latin Mass organized by the same group that is bringing Dr. Reid to town. Small world, indeed.