

Tridentine Community News

March 4, 2007

The Organic Development of the Liturgy Part 1 of 2

The election of Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger as Pope Benedict XVI has given rise to all sorts of speculation about possible forthcoming rulings concerning the Sacred Liturgy. Foremost among those rumors, indeed so prominent that some newspapers, including the Windsor Star, have given it front page coverage, is that His Holiness may issue broader permission for priests to celebrate the Tridentine Mass without requiring the permission of local bishops.

Along similar lines, there is discussion about the Holy Father possibly mandating certain changes to the Novus Ordo Mass, such as increased use of Latin and more detailed rubrics better resembling those of the Traditional Mass. The idea is to introduce more discipline into the Mass, and to demonstrate its historical continuity with the previously normative Tridentine.

Historically, the Mass developed in very small increments over time. Saints were added to the calendar every now and then, and relatively small changes to the Mass occurred. For example:

In 1956, the ceremonies of Holy Week were revised, as was described in the March 26, 2006 edition of this column (available on-line at www.windsorlatinmass.org).

In 1961, the Server's (second) Confiteor before the distribution of Holy Communion was abolished.

In 1962, St. Joseph's name was added to the Canon, and *Benedicamus Domino* was no longer permitted at the conclusion of Mass except in the case of a procession immediately following. Previously, this conclusion was specified in place of *Ite, Missa est* during Advent and Lent.

Sacrosanctum Concilium

Two of the most distinguished liturgical scholars of our era, the late Fr. John Mole, OMI, and Dr. Alcuin Reid, among others, have urged us to study just what Vatican II ordered in the realm of the liturgy. The Vatican II Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, is the actual reference on the matter, so let us examine a few selected quotes from that document:

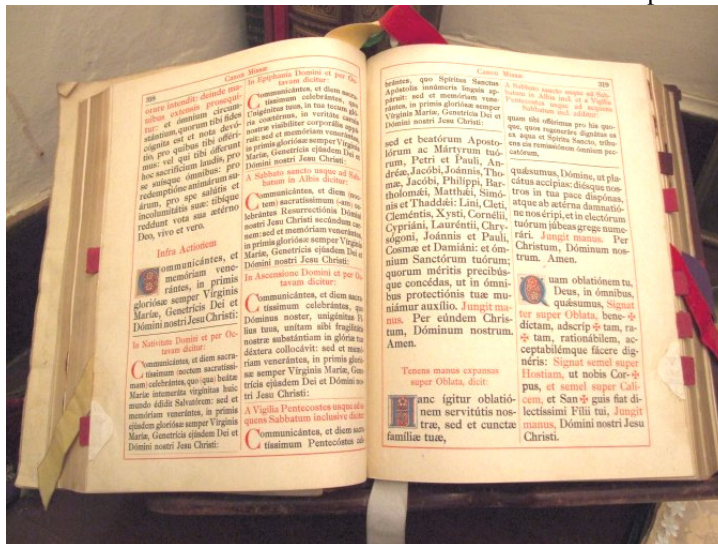
"4. ...in faithful obedience to tradition, the sacred Council declares that holy Mother Church holds all lawfully acknowledged rites to be of equal right and dignity; that she wishes to preserve

them in the future and to foster them in every way. The Council also desires that, where necessary, the rites be revised carefully in the light of sound tradition, and that they be given new vigor to meet the circumstances and needs of modern times." (There is debate whether the Tridentine Mass constitutes a separate rite, or whether it is merely a different Order of Mass within the Latin Rite. The latter is arguably more accurate, considering that the same bishops oversee Tridentine and Novus Ordo congregations.)

"22. 3 ...no other person, even if he be a priest, may add, remove, or change anything in the liturgy on his own authority."

"23. That sound tradition may be retained, and yet the way remain open to legitimate progress, careful investigation is always to be made into each part of the liturgy which is to be revised.

This investigation should be theological, historical, and pastoral. Also the general laws governing the structure and meaning of the liturgy must be studied in conjunction with the experience derived from recent liturgical reforms and from the indulgences conceded to various places. Finally, there must be no innovations unless the good of the Church genuinely and certainly requires them; and care must be taken that any new forms adopted should in some way grow organically from forms already existing.



"As far as possible, notable differences between the rites used in adjacent regions must be carefully avoided."

"35. 1 In sacred celebrations there is to be more reading from holy scripture, and it is to be more varied and suitable." (One of the most agreed-upon areas in which the Tridentine Mass could use updating.)

"36. 1 Particular law remaining in force, the use of the Latin language is to be preserved in the Latin rites."

"54. ...steps should be taken so that the faithful may also be able to say or to sing together in Latin those parts of the Ordinary of the Mass which pertain to them."

"116. The Church acknowledges Gregorian chant as specially suited to the Roman liturgy: therefore, other things being equal, it should be given pride of place in liturgical services."

In the real world, of course, what we have experienced in most parishes since Vatican II deviates significantly from these guidelines. Excessive departures from Holy Mother Church's liturgical norms foster a break with Catholic tradition. Next week, we will consider what actual "Organic Development" might be, and where the Tridentine Mass fits into a Reform of the Reform.

Questions? Comments? Ideas for a future column? Please e-mail info@windsorlatinmass.org with your thoughts.