

Tridentine Community News

June 29, 2008

The Traditional Anglican Movement

One of the purposes of studying History and Social Studies in school is to learn about cultures other than our own. The Church teaches that ours is the One True Faith, but it is nevertheless instructive to observe certain developments outside the Roman Catholic world.

Today, we will examine the liturgical challenges facing our Traditional Anglican brethren. For simplicity, we will refer to this Christian denomination as Anglican, though in the U.S. it is better known as the Episcopal Church. In fact, Traditional Episcopalians often refer to themselves as Anglicans, to associate themselves more closely with the historic Church of England.

The media would have us think that the Anglican Church is primarily engrossed with the ordination of women and homosexuals. These are, indeed, lightning rod issues to many Anglicans, but styles of worship are also eliciting debate.

Ordinary and Extraordinary Forms...Anglican Version

The “missal” of the Anglican Church is the Book of Common Prayer. In 1979, an updated version of the BCP was imposed upon Anglican churches, causing the beginnings of liturgical dissent. Accompanying the new prayer book, some churches reoriented their sanctuaries, with the priest facing the people.

The previous book, the 1928 BCP, employed hierarchical language (thee and thou), and its derivation from the Tridentine Mass was evident in many places.

The early 1980s was a time for Anglicans similar to the late 1980s for traditional Catholics: Bishops resented use of the old Prayer Book. Congregations were told to get with the times. But unlike most Catholic parishes, even some of the allegedly “modern” Anglican churches using the 1979 BCP, such as Christ Church Cranbrook in Bloomfield Hills, offer their service *ad orientem* and with a traditional music repertoire. Neighboring Catholic churches offer an entirely different kind of worship experience.

Detroit’s “High Church” Anglican parish is St. John’s, across Woodward from the Fox Theatre. Committed to the 1928 Prayer Book but struggling for many years, St. John’s was given new life by two things: a strong music program plus a parking lot that became a major revenue producer, located next to the Fox/Comerica Park entertainment district. St. John has such a commitment to music that its choir is mostly professional. It also hosts an Organ Scholar apprentice program. Even in its weakest days before the Fox took off, St. John’s never wavered from its belief that traditional music was integral to solemn prayer.

St. John’s “Holy Communion” service in many ways resembles the Tridentine Mass. Some of the music is in Latin, in fact many of the same selections we often employ. A deacon and subdeacon are often used, giving a visual effect similar to a Solemn High Mass. Anglican Chant, derived from the Anglican Gradual, sounds like an English version of the Latin Chant we hear from the *Liber Usualis*. St. John offers Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament that is virtually indistinguishable from our own ceremony. The preaching at St. John’s has cited Catholic saints as

worthy of veneration. Often, they even refer to their own service as “the Mass” rather than “Holy Communion”, the more conventional term.

We aren’t strangers: The pastor of St. John’s, Fr. Steven Kelly, has worked with Fr. Borkowski on a number of issues, ranging from the odd (blessing animals at the Fox Theatre) to the logical (exchanging information on vestments). Members of St. John’s Choir have assisted at Assumption-Windsor, St. Joseph, St. Josaphat, and even All Saints-Flint on occasion, providing key talent that was already familiar with the music in our repertoire. Fr. Kelly and St. John’s web site editor, Christopher Sayers, have been especially supportive, keeping their congregation aware of St. Josaphat and the significance of the *Motu Proprio*.

Catholic teaching tells us that Anglican Orders are invalid, and thus Anglican sacraments are also invalid. Catholic teaching forbids Catholics from receiving Communion at an Anglican church, just as Anglicans may not receive Holy Communion at a Catholic church. We are not suggesting that there is sacramental merit to attending an Anglican service. Rather, what is notable is that to a casual observer off the street, the reverent Anglican ceremonial offers a serious, reverent atmosphere akin to a Tridentine Mass. There is obvious concern for, and understanding of, what liturgy should be. Arguably more concern than is seen at a typical Catholic parish nowadays, which gives one pause. One look at the Church Music Schedule published in each Saturday edition of the Times of London (England) newspaper shows that Anglican churches perform more traditional Catholic music, such as Orchestral Masses, than do Catholic Churches themselves.

Anglicans have in some instances been surprisingly inviting to Traditional Catholics: The 2006 C.I.E.L. Convention in Oxford, England was held in an Anglican chapel, with a temporary altar stone placed on the center of the high altar, as the Catholic Mass requires. And just last Saturday, June 21, England’s Winchester Cathedral hosted a (Catholic) Tridentine Mass.

Uniting With Rome

If Traditional Anglicans are so sympathetic to Catholic concepts, why do they remain separated from Rome? Of course, there are a myriad of practical and political issues involved in any possible unification. But Rome’s Pastoral Provision of 1980 has created a standard procedure for Anglican congregations to unite with Rome and still retain elements of BCP-style worship via a “Book of Divine Worship” Missal. Anglican priests, married or not, can go through formation and ordination that lets them offer valid sacraments, yet continue a recognizably Anglican worship.

In the U.S. there are six “Anglican Use” parishes plus five missions united with Rome. The best known is Our Lady of the Atonement in San Antonio, Texas, which, interestingly, offers a *Novus Ordo* Latin Mass in addition to the Anglican Use Mass.

As Catholics, we are obliged to pray for the conversion of non-Catholics to the Holy Roman Faith. As decent human beings, we should recognize and applaud the sincere efforts of Traditional Anglicans to promote reverent liturgy, as greater awareness of the beauty of solemn worship benefits all of us.