

Tridentine Community News

August 24, 2008

Kneeling for Holy Communion

Pope Benedict XVI has recently established a new norm that all who receive Holy Communion from him must do so kneeling and on the tongue. Secretary of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments Archbishop Albert Malcolm Ranjith Patabendige Don has stated that he will follow the Holy Father's lead and also distribute Communion in this manner.

By so doing, our Holy Father is calling attention to the fact that receiving Holy Communion while standing, and receiving in the hand, are *indults*, that is, exceptions to the norm established by the Vatican. The mainstream Catholic press, including our local Michigan Catholic newspaper, have published articles on this development.

The posture of kneeling has developed a certain meaning of respect in our Western culture. Arguments for modern liturgical practices seem to either needlessly force antiquity upon us ("This is how the first Christians did this") or impose entirely new



practices out of nowhere ("the new Eucharistic Prayers for Children add so much more richness to the liturgy"). Holy Mother Church, however, has long advocated slow, organic growth to the Mass. The

evolution of kneeling as the norm in the West befits a culture where kneeling expresses something.

On a practical level, objections against the traditional posture hold little water. It takes no longer to distribute Holy Communion at the Rail as it does standing in a procession. Receiving on the hand is no more unsanitary than distributing into unwashed hands that most recently have been touching pews, books, and so forth. And distributing on the tongue is also no more unsanitary than distributing the Precious Blood from cups. Most importantly, distributing on the tongue is far less prone to sacrilege than in the hand. Consider that if a host is dropped onto a paten or Communion Rail, it is easily noticed by the communicant, priest, or altar server. If it is dropped onto the floor as part of a standing procession, not only is it less likely to be noticed – not in the least because patens are rarely used when Communion is distributed standing – but the Host may well be trampled upon by the parade of communicants.

Consider how the university professor who recently intentionally committed an act of sacrilege against the Blessed Sacrament obtained his Host. It would be far easier to sneak off with a Host placed into one's hands, than it would if the Host were placed on one's tongue, alongside others observing the process. One could make an argument for reestablishing the universal practice of

kneeling for Communion simply because it reduces the ease of committing both major sacrilege of this type, as well as minor sacrilege caused by careless or uninformed behavior.

We have to consider a fundamental point: If we Catholics really believe that the Host truly is our Lord Jesus Christ made present, why would we not kneel in adoration before receiving Him? We stand when greeting a friend, we bow when meeting the Queen of England, we kiss the ring of a bishop; would we not kneel in front of God, Him Whom we adore with all our being?

By implementing this new standard, our Holy Father is hopefully demonstrating to the world the sheer common sense of this traditional Catholic practice.

Pittsburgh Mass Broadcast Live

Once again, the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania Tridentine Mass Community at St. Boniface Church is breaking multi-media ground by being perhaps the first Tridentine Mass in North America to be broadcast live on the radio, every Sunday at 6:00 PM on Pittsburgh's WKHB, 620 AM.

Longtime readers of this column will recall that our friends in Pittsburgh long ago used billboards and signs on buses to get the word out about their Mass. Today they vie with St. Frances de Sales in St. Louis, Missouri for the highest attendance of any Tridentine Mass in North America. We're still waiting for the Super Bowl ads, but for now, we're mighty impressed with the continued publicity initiatives taken by this group. Hopefully their attendance increases yet more as a result.

Tridentine Mass Webcasts

The radio station broadcasting the Pittsburgh Mass is not (yet) offering a live feed on the Internet, but fortunately, at least one other Extraordinary Form Mass site is. St. Martin of Tours Church in Louisville, Kentucky has offered a webcam broadcast of their Tridentine Mass at 12:30 PM every Sunday since 1999. Visit www.louisville-catholic.net. If you are aware of any other webcasts presently operating, please e-mail the address at the bottom of this page with details so we may make mention of them.

Lest anyone think that a simple camera and microphone are all that are needed, consider the various acoustic challenges of recording the choir, celebrant, and congregation. Volume levels have to be carefully balanced. This is not a simple task.

Closer to home, we would be remiss without mentioning that recorded snippets of both the Assumption-Windsor and St. Josaphat Tridentine Masses have been posted on YouTube by our web gurus Aaron Scherle and Chris Stuckey, respectively.