

Tridentine Community News

August 22, 2010

The Diverse Perspectives of Traditionalists

A priest reader of this column who does not attend the Extraordinary Form Mass had an interesting conversation with this writer about “reputation”.

This priest suggested that in his diocese, the Traditional Latin Mass had acquired a bad reputation among his brother priests primarily because of the stridency of the Society of St. Pius X, at least as perceived through the media. No matter how much good diocesan-approved Tridentine congregations had accomplished, they were still tainted with an “SSPX reputation”, resulting in priests’ bias against them. While he personally understood that this was an inappropriate association to make, he believes it will take years if not decades for this reputation to be overcome.

In response, this writer pointed out that most Tridentine Mass group members simply love the Mass. There is usually no agenda except a thoughtfully-considered preference for this form of the Sacred Liturgy. To use a phrase we have been repeating oft of late, it is possible to love seafood and not hate steak. Furthermore, one should not confuse one’s opinion of the individuals involved (whether correct or not) with the merits of the Traditional Mass itself. Some beautiful aspects of parish life have been established by Tridentine Mass Communities which may go unnoticed.

Prior to the 2007 Motu Proprio, it was a sad fact that traditional liturgy was not exactly encouraged in many dioceses. Now that it has essentially unfettered legal freedom, the burden of support has shifted from bishops to those who desire it. Realistically, traditionalists care little what other kinds of Masses a parish might offer, as long as the Extraordinary Form is part of the picture. Indeed, cooperation with those of other liturgical preference(s) is often the key to meeting a parish’s financial and volunteer needs.

While it is safe to say that few who attend the Tridentine Mass would elect to attend an Ordinary Form Mass with modern music or similar elements, it is more a question of preference, taste, and reflected consideration, not of impassioned love or hate.

It is frustrating to witness judgmentalness on the part of either side, if that party has not actually experienced the other’s liturgy or observed those in attendance. It is not intellectually honest to condemn the Tridentine Mass if one has not assisted at a few in recent years. Likewise, while virtually everyone has attended the Novus Ordo, traditionalists should not automatically condemn it when said in Latin *ad orientem*, without having attended one.

This is not to say that we who support diocesan-approved Extraordinary Form Masses have any agenda against the SSPX. On the contrary, we pray for their complete reconciliation with Rome. However, they are simply one part of a worldwide Latin Mass movement that attracts people of countless perspectives.

The SSPX Does Not Speak For All Traditionalists

We thus appeal to those who might not recently have attended the Traditional Mass: The SSPX does not speak for all supporters of

the Extraordinary Form, any more than the Los Angeles Religious Education Congress liturgies speak for all who prefer the Ordinary Form. Nor is every SSPX member troublesome or argumentative, indeed many are active supporters of diocesan Masses. The press tends to focus on the negative and divisive, so it is understandable that controversial SSPX matters would receive much coverage, just as that same press often characterizes the Catholic Church in general as a behind-the-times institution in its disciplines and government. Yes, there may be some hard-liners in a particular Tridentine Mass congregation, but not to any greater degree than challenging individuals exist in virtually every parish.

Murmuring over something erroneously perceived as “bad” or against what the Church wants is never good, but is especially unfortunate when done by those in leadership positions in the Church. Somehow we need to convey charitably to such leaders that while we respect their non-preference for traditional liturgy, in this post-*Summorum Pontificum* world, their personal preferences cannot get in the way of legitimate, well-intentioned celebrations of the Extraordinary Form. There are plenty of locations where modern liturgy is offered; don’t be threatened by the relative handful of sites that want a Tridentine Mass. If the Church sanctions it, and a practical means for its celebration and administration has been devised, don’t create obstacles.

In this respect, we hold up as a model an individual who might not be the first on people’s minds: Chicago’s late Joseph Cardinal Bernardin. It was under His Eminence’s administration that the Archdiocese of Chicago grew to host the largest number of Tridentine Masses of any diocese in North America. He deserves credit for letting those Masses flourish. Some might say he was a “true liberal”, others might say that he was simply following Vatican recommendations. Whatever his motivations, in the end it is simply his record on this subject which will endure.

Do you know a bishop, priest, deacon, or religious with a negative predisposition towards the Traditional Mass? Invite him or her to one of our Masses. Offer to attend a Mass of their preference with them as well. Help them *appreciate* the Extraordinary Form and those who attend it, even if they don’t like it. As an analogy, you might not be interested in Quicken Loans as a company, but you nonetheless understand the benefits that their relocation to downtown Detroit brings to the city. So should your guest come to understand the role of traditional liturgy in the Church today.

Tridentine Masses This Coming Week

With the increasing number of scheduled and special Extraordinary Form Masses available to the readership of this column, we will commence a section at the end of this column listing those in the upcoming week. Abbreviations are used to conserve space. Principal Sunday Masses are omitted. This listing may be omitted on certain weeks when space does not allow.

Mon. 08/23 7:00 PM: Low Mass at St. Josaphat (S. Philip Benizi)
Tue. 08/24 7:00 PM: High Masses at both Assumption-Windsor and St. Josaphat (St. Bartholomew)
Sun. 08/29 Noon: High Mass at St. Albertus

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