

Tridentine Community News

April 29, 2012 – The Third Sunday After Easter

Papal Support of “Praying the Rosary During Mass”

One of the most commonly-heard clichés about the Traditional Latin Mass is that it does not “actively” involve the faithful as much as the Ordinary Form. Newer readers of this column might be interested in reading our previous essays debunking this assertion, namely our March 19, 2006 column defining Active Participation according to the mind of the Church; and the four-part series of columns from August-September, 2009 showing that there are actually *more* responses for the faithful in the Extraordinary Form than in the Ordinary Form. Like all of our back columns, those are posted on our web site.

A particularly frequently-heard comment is that prior to Vatican II, some of the faithful were praying the Rosary during Mass. This is oft stated in the sort of scornful tone one might use to describe people texting during Mass, as though one should never even *think* of doing such a thing. It might therefore surprise some people to learn that in paragraph 108 of the 1947 encyclical *Mediátor Dei*, Pope Pius XII acknowledges the legitimacy of such devotions, in truly pastoral language. This author has even seen a combination missal-prayer book from that era with a foreword *recommending* personal devotional prayer during Mass, citing this papal document. Additionally, in 1883 Pope Leo XIII issued *Suprémi Apostolátus Officio*, a document establishing October as the Month of the Rosary. In it, and in an 1886 clarification, he asks that the Rosary be prayed [during October] while Mass is being said or while the Blessed Sacrament is exposed.

While most modern scholarship argues that “pray[ing] the Mass”, as Pope St. Pius X said, is a more complete ideal for the faithful, one cannot overlook the 1883 and 1947 papal endorsements, at least with regards to the Extraordinary Form. The subsequent document *Mariális Cultus*, from 1974, did recommend against praying the Rosary during Holy Mass, but rulings from that era strictly regarded the Ordinary Form. We thus present the section of *Mediátor Dei* which addresses the subject:

105. Therefore, they are to be praised who, with the idea of getting the Christian people to take part more easily and more fruitfully in the Mass, strive to make them familiar with the “Roman Missal,” so that the faithful, united with the priest, may pray together in the very words and sentiments of the Church. They also are to be commended who strive to make the liturgy even in an external way a sacred act in which all who are present may share. This can be done in more than one way, when, for instance, the whole congregation, in accordance with the rules of the liturgy, either answer the priest in an orderly and fitting manner, or sing hymns suitable to the different parts of the Mass, or do both, or finally in high Masses when they answer the prayers of the minister of Jesus Christ and also sing the liturgical chant.

106. These methods of participation in the Mass are to be approved and recommended when they are in complete agreement with the precepts of the Church and the rubrics of the liturgy. Their chief aim is to foster and promote the people’s piety and intimate union with Christ and His visible minister and to arouse those internal

sentiments and dispositions which should make our hearts become like to that of the High Priest of the New Testament. However, though they show also in an outward manner that the very nature of the sacrifice, as offered by the Mediator between God and men,[102] must be regarded as the act of the whole Mystical Body of Christ, still they are by no means necessary to constitute it a public act or to give it a social character. And besides, a “dialogue” Mass of this kind cannot replace the high Mass, which, as a matter of fact, though it should be offered with only the sacred ministers present, possesses its own special dignity due to the impressive character of its ritual and the magnificence of its ceremonies. The splendor and grandeur of a high Mass, however, are very much increased if, as the Church desires, the people are present in great numbers and with devotion.

107. It is to be observed, also, that they have strayed from the path of truth and right reason who, led away by false opinions, make so much of these accidentals as to presume to assert that without them the Mass cannot fulfill its appointed end.

108. Many of the faithful are unable to use the Roman missal even though it is written in the vernacular; nor are all capable of understanding correctly the liturgical rites and formulas. So varied and diverse are men’s talents and characters that it is impossible for all to be moved and attracted to the same extent by community prayers, hymns and liturgical services. Moreover, the needs and inclinations of all are not the same, nor are they always constant in the same individual. Who, then, would say, on account of such a prejudice, that all these Christians cannot participate in the Mass nor share its fruits? On the contrary, they can adopt some other method which proves easier for certain people; **for instance, they can lovingly meditate on the mysteries of Jesus Christ or perform other exercises of piety or recite prayers which, though they differ from the sacred rites, are still essentially in harmony with them.** [*Emphasis our own*]

109. Wherefore We exhort you, Venerable Brethren, that each in his diocese or ecclesiastical jurisdiction supervise and regulate the manner and method in which the people take part in the liturgy, according to the rubrics of the missal and in keeping with the injunctions which the Sacred Congregation of Rites and the Code of canon law have published. Let everything be done with due order and dignity, and let no one, not even a priest, make use of the sacred edifices according to his whim to try out experiments. It is also Our wish that in each diocese an advisory committee to promote the liturgical apostolate should be established, similar to that which cares for sacred music and art, so that with your watchful guidance everything may be carefully carried out in accordance with the prescriptions of the Apostolic See.

Tridentine Masses This Coming Week

Mon. 04/30 7:00 PM: Low Mass at *St. Josaphat* (St. Catherine of Siena, Virgin)

Tue. 05/01 7:00 PM: High Mass at *both Assumption-Windsor and St. Josaphat* (St. Joseph the Worker)