

Tridentine Community News

June 24, 2012

Differing Forms of the Low Mass

Get a group of traditional Catholics together, and sooner or later the subject of the Low Mass will come up. On few subjects are opinions so strongly held, yet diversity so explicitly tolerated. Let's examine some history:

Thinking back to the pre-Vatican II days, some believed the Low Mass was the norm for liturgy. It was relatively quick, though exactly how quick is the stuff of legend. It is difficult to imagine a non-Requiem Low Mass taking less than 35 minutes, yet tales abound of 20 minute Masses. The Church never intended the Low Mass to be the common parishioner experience: First, the Mass was meant to be sung. The *Missale Romanum* (Altar Missal), the *Graduale Romanum*, and the *Liber Usualis*, the main texts of the Mass, all presume a sung liturgy. Low Masses – and side altars – became prevalent because each priest is obligated to offer an individual Mass each day, which could not always be done at the main altar by every priest of a busy parish church.

Nevertheless, the Church is not blind to the needs of society. People do not necessarily have the time for High Masses each weekday, and that includes clergy and volunteers as well as the faithful attending weekday Masses. A more brief Mass can be better suited to a busy weekday schedule.

Each Holy Mass offers the same graces to the faithful, from the most humble Low Mass to the most elaborate Pontifical, or even Papal, Mass. Man needs the ceremony; God does not. Therefore we need to keep in mind that assisting at *any* Holy Mass offers infinite graces. Better to attend a Low Mass than none at all, especially on a weekday.

All this having been said, there are three general categories of Low Masses:

The Silent Mass: Perhaps the most common form of Low Mass is one in which the congregation makes none, or very few, of the responses. This sort of Mass tends to appeal to those with more experience with the Traditional Liturgy, but can be offputting to newcomers not accustomed to lengthy silence.

Dialogue Mass: The 1958 Vatican document *De Musica Sacra* outlined various forms of vocal participation of the faithful. It offered support for a Dialogue Low Mass, in which the

congregation joins with the altar servers in making all of the Mass responses, optionally including even the Prayers at the Foot of the Altar. In practice, Dialogue Masses usually leave those preliminary prayers exclusively to the altar servers.

Low Mass with Hymns: This is the variation that has become standard at Assumption-Windsor and St. Josaphat. At many Tridentine Mass sites, it is even the norm on Sundays. An Entrance, Offertory, and Closing hymn, along with a Communion Motet, may be sung. None of the Mass parts or Propers are sung.

Variations in the Sung Mass

Many of our readers know Brother John Tonkin, a member of the Canons Regular of the New Jerusalem who hails from Windsor. Recently an article was published in Crisis Magazine, and excerpted on The New Liturgical Movement blog, about his group. The gist was that they advocate the full implementation of *De Musica Sacra*, to the point where they advocate the congregation joining in on singing the Propers.

That is a highly unusual and extreme, though permissible, implementation of the 1958 norms. Almost everywhere, the chanting of the Propers is left to the choir, which is entirely appropriate especially for the more complex Propers settings found in the *Liber*.

The point to be made in relating all of the above is that far from being rigid in rubrics, the Traditional Latin Mass allows for numerous variations of form. Whether those variations are “standard” in the sense of one being likely to see them in practice will vary quite a bit.

New Relic at St. Josaphat

After Monday night Low Masses at St. Josaphat, devotions to Our Lady of Perpetual Help and Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament are held. In recent weeks, following Benediction, Fr. Darrell has instituted Veneration of the Relic of the Veil of the Blessed Mother. Fr. Darrell brought this relic to St. Josaphat when he arrived at the parish last year.

LMS Talks Recorded

Talks from the June 9 Conference of the Latin Mass Society of England and Wales were recorded. MP3s have been posted at: <http://www.lms.org.uk/news-and-events/news-blog/june-2012#conference-mp3-downloads>

Tridentine Masses This Coming Week

Mon. 06/25 7:00 PM: Low Mass at *St. Josaphat* (St. William, Abbot)

Tue. 06/26 7:00 PM: Low Mass at *Assumption-Windsor* (Ss. John & Paul, Martyrs)

Fri. 06/29 7:00 PM: High Mass at *St. Josaphat* (Ss. Peter & Paul, Apostles)

