

Tridentine Community News

November 24, 2013 – Last Sunday After Pentecost

Active Participation According to the Mind of the Church Part 1 of 2

A reader suggested that we revisit a topic which never seems to go away: The widespread misunderstanding of *Participatio Actuosa*, Active Participation in the Sacred Liturgy. In Latin, the word *Actuosa* means an interior form of activity, as distinguished from the exterior form of the adjective, *Activa*. As a result, especially in English-speaking lands where there is only the one adjective, *active*, a misunderstanding has arisen that restricts the interpretation of participation to merely vocally and to some degree physically taking part in the proceedings of the Mass.

The starting point for discussion is recognizing that the celebrant offers the Mass to God, not to the congregation. One of the many advantages of celebrating Holy Mass *ad orientem*, facing the same direction as the people, is that it makes clear Whom the priest is addressing. The priest says much of the Tridentine Mass quietly, because he is not speaking to the congregation; he is praying to God. This is one reason why the choir chants the Propers while the priest continues on with the Mass; the choir at that point serves the congregation in a different capacity than the priest, by making the Antiphons of the Mass take life in song.

The role of the faithful is to join their worship with the priest's. In the Extraordinary Form, this can indeed take the part of vocally responding at the appropriate points in the Mass. For example, the faithful are encouraged to sing the responses in a High Mass. It is permissible, though not required, for the faithful to make the responses at a Low Mass, though in most locales the custom is for only the servers to respond to the Prayers at the Foot of the Altar at the beginning of Mass. The definitive reference document as to forms of vocal participation in the Extraordinary Form is 1958's *De Música Sacra*, easily found on-line via Google.

Active Participation in a liturgical context is more concerned with mental and spiritual engagement with the Mass than with outward action. Pope St. Pius X encouraged the faithful to "pray with the priest the holy words said by him in the name of Christ and which Christ says by him," and to "associate your heart with the holy feelings which are contained in these words". Not in opposition, but as an alternative aid to prayer, Pope Pius XII in the 1947 encyclical *Mediátor Dei*, and Pope Leo XIII in the 1883 document *Suprēmi Apostolátus Officio* and in an 1886 clarification both supported praying the Rosary or other devotions during Mass. Consider this quote from *Mediátor Dei*: "...[the faithful] 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."

A person actively, but robotically and perhaps distractedly, uttering the responses during Mass is arguably less engaged with the liturgy than someone prayerfully and quietly following along a Mass, with or without a missal. An analogy might be that students intensely studying in a library in preparation for exams are less actively engaged in an exterior sense than those involved in a lab

session in a science class, yet the former may very well be more motivated and more focused in the learning process.

This correct understanding of Active Participation explains and offers justification for the fully silent Low Mass, where the congregation offers no audible responses whatsoever. Many traditionally-minded Catholics find great spiritual sustenance in the silent Low Mass, as it provides a distraction-free environment in which to pray. At the same time, Catholics cannot pretend that other teachings like *De Música Sacra* do not exist. Organic development of the Sacred Liturgy has supported the development of the Dialogue Mass as an option. We should also recognize that a totally silent Mass might be off-putting to a Catholic new to the Extraordinary Form. If we are to be evangelists for Sacred Tradition, we must make it accessible to Catholics who are seeking something more to their spiritual sensibilities but still see merit in vocal participation.

St. Josaphat Sunday Masses Moved to St. Joseph Church

St. Josaphat Church has been forced to close temporarily because of safety concerns raised by the wind storm damage to the central steeple. Because repairing the steeple is too costly for the parish to afford, the steeple unfortunately will have to be removed.

The Sunday 9:30 AM Tridentine Masses have been relocated to St. Joseph Church for the indefinite future. The Monday and First Friday Tridentine Masses have not (yet) been moved to St. Joseph and are therefore on hiatus. More information about the Mass schedule will be posted as decisions are made.

Michigan Catholic Ads to Commence

Starting with the November 29 issue, there will be recurring display ads in the Michigan Catholic newspaper listing the special Masses in the Extraordinary Form which will be held in metro Detroit and Windsor over the upcoming weeks.

There is a continual challenge in getting the word out about our local Masses. We need to reach many more people than just those who read this column and subscribe to our weekly e-mail broadcast. We are taking a cue from the Latin Mass Society of England and Wales, which runs similar ads in many Catholic newspapers in England. That effort is in no small part responsible for the thriving Tridentine Mass scene in the U.K.

Tridentine Masses This Coming Week

Tue. 11/26 7:00 PM: Low Mass at *Assumption-Windsor* (St. Sylvester, Abbot)

Fri. 11/29 7:00 PM: Low Mass at *Ss. Cyril & Methodius, Sterling Heights* (St. Saturninus, Martyr) – Young adults age 18-35 are invited to the YOLO Young Adults dance after Mass

Sun. 12/01 2:00 PM: High Mass at *Assumption-Windsor* (First Sunday of Advent) – Mass will be held this week [only] in the Rosary Chapel, adjacent to the main church.