

Tridentine Community News

December 5, 2021 – Second Sunday of Advent

Levels of Solemnity in the Traditional Mass

Unlike in the Ordinary Form, there are strictly defined levels of solemnity in the Traditional Latin Mass:

A **Low Mass** is defined as one in which the celebrant chants nothing. While there can be music at a Low Mass, it is disjointed from the liturgy. The choir is not allowed to sing the Propers or the Ordinary (Kyrie, Glória, Credo, Sanctus, Agnus Dei) of the Mass, as doing so would make it a High Mass. Instead, they may sing hymns or motets, or organ music may be played. Vernacular hymns and motets are permitted. Gregorian Chants are permitted as well, as long as they are not the Propers of that day's Mass. At the altar, two candles are lit. There can be a maximum of three altar servers: Acolyte 1 (on the Epistle side; rings the bells); Acolyte 2 (on the Gospel side; moves the book); and an optional Master of Ceremonies. Incense cannot be used. All of the above is meant to establish that this is a scaled-down form of the Mass.

A **High Mass**, more accurately called a **Missa Cantata**, is defined as a Mass in which the celebrant and choir chant their respective parts. The celebrant chants the opening Collect, the *incipit* (beginning) of the Glória and Credo, the readings, the Preface, and the Postcommunion Collect. The choir chants the Propers and Ordinary of the Mass. Anything sung inside the Mass must be in Latin; the vernacular is only permitted for the opening and closing hymns, which are outside the Mass. Four or six candles are lit on the altar. Additional altar servers are permitted: In addition to Acolytes 1 & 2 and an MC, there can also be a Thurifer, (Incense) Boat Bearer, Crucifer, and between two and six Torch (candle) Bearers. A deacon, if present, does not have a liturgical role specific to the order of deacon, though he is permitted to chant the Epistle and preach the homily.

A **Solemn High Mass** kicks it up another notch, with a Deacon and Subdeacon who have precisely defined roles. The Subdeacon, who must at least be an instituted Acolyte, chants the Epistle, and the Deacon chants the Gospel. The Sign of Peace, not given in Low and High Masses, is given from the celebrant to the Deacon to the Subdeacon to the MC to the Thurifer. This is the most elaborate form of Mass that a regular priest may celebrate.

Requiem Masses are modified forms of the above. Enough is different in a Requiem Mass that special missals and altar cards are preferred at the altar. Special grey missals are typically provided for the congregation. There are four settings of Propers for the Requiem Mass: The three Masses of All Souls Day; the Funeral Mass; Mass on the 30th day after or annual anniversary of a death; and the Daily Mass for the Dead. The latter is the commonly observed weekday Requiem Mass. All may be followed by the ceremony of Absolution, held at a catafalque, or fake coffin, when the body is not present.

When a Bishop celebrates the Traditional Mass, there are three options currently permitted:

A **Pontifical Low Mass** is like a regular Low Mass, except that the bishop vests in front of the altar before Mass and unvests there after Mass. Two “chaplains”, really Masters of Ceremony, assist him, one of whom must be in major orders, i.e. a deacon or priest. The bishop does not use altar cards; rather, a special book, the *Canon Missae*, is opened in front of the tabernacle and used for the Ordinary of the Mass.

A **Pontifical Solemn Mass at the Faldstool** is a much more elaborate form of Mass, requiring additional clergy to assist the bishop. It is the form specified for an auxiliary bishop, or for a bishop who is celebrating Mass in a diocese other than his own. A faldstool is a bench on which the bishop sits, since a throne is not appropriate for bishops who do not rule locally.



A **Pontifical Solemn Mass at the Throne** is the form used for the Ordinary of a Diocese when he is celebrating in his own diocese, as well as for Cardinals anywhere, as they have universal permission to celebrate in this form.

Sadly, the **Pontifical Missa Cantata**, which was so popular in the Archdiocese of Detroit, the Diocese of Lansing, and

the Diocese of London, Ontario, was prohibited by the Pontifical Commission Ecclesia Dei in a ruling dated June 14, 2017. The reason given was that this was not a form commonly used in 1962 but rather gained popularity in 1963 and later, and therefore does not fit the requirement of following the '62 rubrics. The problem is, unlike in 1962, few clergy nowadays are familiar with the complex supporting roles in the Pontifical Solemn Mass, nor is every bishop interested in the lengthier ceremonies that these forms of Mass entail. The Pontifical Missa Cantata was a happy medium that bishops in our region enjoyed. We should be in the business of encouraging bishops to celebrate the TLM, not giving them reasons not to do so. It also seems odd that a bishop is not permitted to celebrate a form of the Mass that regular priests continue to be able to offer.

The best compromise we can provide, such as when Bishop Donald Hanchon has offered the Tridentine Mass and Confirmations in the Extraordinary Form at Old St. Mary's in Detroit, is to offer a Pontifical Low Mass with an elaborate music program, the highest of Low Masses, as it were.

Tridentine Masses This Coming Week

Wed. 12/08 7:30 PM: Solemn High Mass at *OCLMA/Orchard Lake Shrine Chapel* (Immaculate Conception) – Celebrant: Fr. Lukasz Iwanczuk, Deacon: Deacon Daniel Mikolajewski, Subdeacon: Mr. James Murphy

Sat. 12/11 7:00 AM: Low Mass at *St. Mary of Redford* (Rorate Mass – Saturday Votive Mass of Our Lady) – by candlelight