

## The New Missal II

July 1969

LAST MONTH we advised Catholics to steel themselves for the arrival (in Advent) of the Drybones Mass, as certified by the Holy See—and to have the courage to stay at Peter's side for as long as it takes to cross today's cultural desert. We now add that the decision to remain loyal to the Church, and thus to the Pope, does not mean that one should supinely accept everything he may find tomorrow in a Catholic church. There is no obligation to be content with ugliness or irreverence or bad taste. And there certainly is no obligation to ignore threats to the integrity of Catholic worship; in fact, to every Catholic there is given the most emphatic duty to oppose such threats with all means appropriate to his station.

**T**he most important danger awaiting Catholics today and tomorrow is not that the Mass they are asked to attend may be ugly, but that it may not be a Mass. Of course that hazard existed before the New Missal: the possibility of an invalid Mass is always theoretically present because it is always theoretically possible that the celebrating priest does not intend what the Church intends. But such worries are now realistically in order, for the first time since the Reformation.

For one thing, it is notorious that significant numbers of practicing Catholic priests withhold full assent either from the doctrine of transubstantiation or the conception of the Mass as the reenactment of Christ's Sacrifice on Calvary, or both. For another, the Pope's mere *plea* to respect the new Ordinary, which retains the formal requirement of orthodoxy, has been received by workaday renegades (the Jesuits connected with *America* magazine, for example) as an invitation to further experiment in heterodoxy. Again, serious question has been raised as to whether the studied mistranslation of the Latin "pro multis" into the vernacular version of "pro omnis" at the Consecration does not deliberately distort Christ's own teaching about the efficacy of the Sacrifice.

But the most convincing evidence of heresy comes explicitly from the spokesmen of the Liturgy Club (as recorded periodically in *Worship* magazine, for example) who insist that the Mass is any number of things—an offering by the congregation of themselves, a memorial, a meal—anything so long as it is not what the Pope in the Pauline Creed insisted it is: "the Sacrifice of Calvary rendered sacramentally present on our altars" . . . Now any priest who has adopted the dominant view of the Liturgy Club on this matter is, quite simply, incapable of saying a valid Mass.

Are such priests "saying Mass" today in your diocese? In your parish?

It is admittedly a grave matter to encourage or confirm such suspicions in the minds of the faithful. But it is both grave and criminal to let persuasive evidence of heresy go unnoticed and scandal unchecked. Any other view makes a mockery of the Reformation martyrs, to say nothing of Christ. We suggest, then, these guidelines.

1. Let there be, in all cases, a *presumption* of a Mass's validity. Without persuasive evidence to the contrary; let no Catholic take it upon himself to doubt that what purports to be a Mass is a Mass.

2. Let prudent steps be taken, however, to confirm that the Mass in question *is* valid—that the celebrant does indeed intend what the Church intends. To that end, let parishoners politely and respectfully request of their priests an affirmation to this effect. It is perfectly reasonable for priests to comply; after all, any sophisticated priest appreciates the seriousness and prevalence of the danger and should thus appreciate the need to reassure his flock. Bishops should support such requests in principle, and the better bishops will take the initiative in prescribing the affirmation.

3. Let laymen demand of their priests, priests of their bishops, and bishops of the Holy See, that any future "experimentation" move in the direction of creating a liturgy truly conducive to the expression of the sacral in the postmodern age. If there is to be experimentation, let us be bold enough to plunge intelligently into the future—and to reserve it for Christ. And this, we may find, is the true case for the Latin Mass.

The argument for the use of Latin tomorrow will not be built around its venerability, but around its peculiar aptness for inspiring in man a sense of the sacred. It will also be peculiarly useful when nationalism with its worship of mother tongues will be moribund or dead. Again, an age closer attuned to the silence of outer space than to the cacophonies of the discotheque will surely find an apter expression in the haunting strains of Gregorian chant, than in the nerve-wrenching thumping of electric guitars. In an age of simultaneous translation, and of abolition of space, the purity of doctrine will be maintained better by a language as universal and stable as Latin.

In short, we may find that the new will indeed embrace the old, in a natural alliance of the permanent things. The future may reveal, as has the past, that there is no apter setting and no greater surety for the integrity of the worship of our immolated God than the majestic splendors of the *Kyrie*, *Gloria*, *Credo*, *Sanctus*, and the *Agnus Dei*; and the awesome thunder of the silent Canon.

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