

INTRODUCTION

The Liturgy Changes

In its *Admonition* of Nov. 18, 1992, the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines reaffirmed the position of the *Conciliar Church*, namely, that the “*changes in the liturgy*” were “*decreed by Vatican II*”. This statement is demonstrably false: The Council did not decree the suppression of the traditional Roman Rite of Mass and its replacement with a new rite of Mass. The institution of a new rite of Mass is a formal act of disobedience to the Council.¹ The Second Vatican Council decreed that the liturgy of the Roman Rite be revised. It did not decree a radical reform that would produce an entirely new rite of Mass. The Liturgy Constitution, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* states:

The rite of the Mass is to be revised in such a way that the intrinsic nature and purpose of its several parts, as well as the connection between them, may be more clearly manifested, and that devout and active participation by the faithful may be more easily achieved. For this purpose the rites are to be simplified, due care being taken to preserve their substance ... (SC 50)

There are some key passages in this text and elsewhere in this conciliar document that must be examined in order to determine if the creation of a “New Rite of Mass” and the abolition of the traditional rite corresponds to the express wishes of the Second Vatican Council, or if it is rather a rejection of both that Council and the teaching and tradition of the Church.

The key passages are:

- 1. *The rite of the Mass is to be revised ...*

The revision of the ancient Roman Rite is prescribed: it is not to

be transformed into a “new rite of Mass”², but “care must be taken that any new forms adopted should in some way grow organically from forms already existing.” (SC 23) The rites are to ***“be revised carefully in the light of sound tradition ...”*** (SC 40), with ***“due care being taken to preserve their substance”***. (SC 23)

- 2. ... ***the intrinsic nature and purpose of its several parts ... (to be) more clearly manifested ...***

The sacred mystery of the altar, which is to say, the propitiatory sacrifice and the real and substantial presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament must be clearly manifested; it must not be obscured in the sort of ambiguities with which the *Novus Ordo* abounds.

- 3. ... ***restored according to the pristine norms of the holy Fathers ...***

Restoration “according to the pristine norms of the holy Fathers” means that the Church “allows and makes provision for some innovations in exterior forms, mostly when they are in conformity with the ancient past.”³ Radical changes with an ***“ecumenical dimension”*** and a ***“new foundation of eucharistic theology”***⁴ violate the pristine norms of the holy Fathers.

- 4. ***Finally, in faithful obedience to tradition, the sacred Council declares that Holy Mother Church holds all lawfully recognised rites to be of equal right and dignity; that she wishes to preserve them in the future and to foster them in every way.*** (SC 4)

Sacrosanctum Concilium stated that “the liturgy is made up of unchangeable elements divinely instituted, and of elements subject to change”. (SC 21) This does not mean that the “elements subject to change” may simply be discarded or radically modified. The customary liturgical rites of the Church must be preserved: it is a defined teaching of the Catholic Church that the Mass is to be offered according to the custom of the Church,⁵ and therefore the Profession of Faith solemnly prescribes adherence to the traditional rites.⁶ The

proposition that the traditional rite can be changed into a new rite by any church pastor whosoever⁷ is a solemnly anathematised heresy: “If anyone says that the received and approved rites of the Catholic Church customarily used in the solemn administration of the sacraments may be despised, or may be freely omitted by the ministers without sin, *or may be changed into other new rites by any church pastor whosoever*, let him be anathema.”⁸

It is not, as some have argued, that no one below the rank of Pope may change the customary rites into new rites, and that such new rites would be illicit unless the Pope approves them. First of all, the canon in question does not deal with the matter of who may change the rites into new rites, but rather it very clearly condemns the proposition that the rites can be changed by anyone (including the Pope), i.e. “by any ecclesiastical pastor whosoever”. The Roman Pontiffs solemnly professed (*tibi profiteor beate Petre*) since the pontificate of St. Agatho (678-681) that it was their duty, and therefore they solemnly swore (*quam professionem meam ... propria manu subscripsi et tibi, beate Petre ... iureiurando sinceriter optuli*) to “guard undefiled the discipline and *rite* of the Church as I have found it handed down by my holy predecessors, *to preserve undiminished the state of the Church* and ... to diminish or change nothing of the preserved tradition which I have received from my most upright predecessors, or to allow any novelty.”⁹

In obedience to the infallible teaching of the Church, the Council directed that “in faithful obedience to tradition ...” the rites be “revised carefully in the light of sound tradition” with “***due care being taken to preserve their substance***”, and “any new forms adopted should in some way grow organically from forms already existing”.

In order that changes in the liturgy be lawful, they must be done in the customary manner which preserves their substance. In order that the substance of the rites be preserved, changes may only take place according to the principle of organic development. Since “Custom is the best interpreter of the law”.¹⁰ the universal and perpetual custom of the Church is the criterion which determines what kind of changes in the liturgy may be considered lawful. Throughout the history of

the Church, changes in the liturgy have been the result of a gradual, organic development,¹¹ and therefore, gradual organic development is the only lawful manner in which changes in the liturgy of the Mass may take place.¹²

Since, as has been demonstrated above, adherence to the traditional liturgy is required by the dogma of the faith, and hence, as the Popes have professed in their oath of coronation, pertains to Divine Law as *divina et celestia mandata*: to break with the traditional liturgy of the Church would, therefore, constitute a schismatic act. Even a pope who would “not wish personally to follow the universal customs and rites of the Church” or would “change all the ecclesiastical ceremonies”, by doing so would “go against the universal customs and rites of the Church” and would cease to “be in proper communion with the Church”, and would therefore “fall into schism”.¹³

In obedience to the infallible teaching of the Church, Pope St. Pius V declared in *Quo Primum*:

Let all everywhere adopt and observe what has been handed down by the Holy Roman Church, the Mother and Teacher of the other churches, ***and let Masses not be sung or read according to any other formula than that of this Missal published by Us.***

In the next sentence, Pope St. Pius V ***decreed***:

This ordinance applies henceforth, now, and forever, throughout all the provinces of the Christian world, to all Patriarchates, Cathedral Churches, Colleges and Parish Churches, be they secular or religious, both of men and of women, even of Military Orders, and Churches or Chapels without a specific congregation in which conventual Masses are sung aloud in choir or read privately in accord with the rites and customs of the Roman Church. ***This Missal is to be used by all Churches ...***

Furthermore, by these presents (these laws), ***by Apostolic Authority***, We grant and concede ***in perpetuity*** that, for the chanting or reading of the Mass in any church what-

soever, ***this Missal is hereafter to be followed absolutely, without any scruple of conscience or fear of incurring any penalty, judgement, or censure, and may freely and lawfully be used.*** Nor that superiors, Administrators, Canons, Chaplains, and other Secular Priests, or Religious, of whatever order or by whatever title designated, be obliged to celebrate the Mass otherwise than enjoined by Us: [here St. Pius V makes it indisputably clear that these are not mere ecclesiastical laws that can be revoked, but on the contrary, they are of their very nature permanent and irreformable, and therefore the Supreme Pontiff solemnly and infallibly declares *ex cathedra*:] “... ***we likewise [by apostolic authority] statute and declare*** that no one whosoever is to be forced or coerced to alter this Missal ***and that this present document cannot ever be revoked or modified at any time, but remains always valid and retains its full force.***”* [emphasis mine]

It is luminously clear from the norms set forth in the text of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* that the Council envisaged a revision of the liturgy according to the customary norms established by Tradition. Michael Davies observes that, “By no possible stretch of the imagination can Vatican Council II be interpreted as mandating or sanctioning the destruction of the Roman Rite. It contained stipulations which appeared to make any drastic remodelling of the Traditional Mass impossible.”¹⁴ Not unlike the Council of Trent, Vatican II decreed the revision and preservation of the ancient Roman Rite.

* Here the Pope speaks with the charism of infallibility. (See [Appendix I](#) for commentary.)