

G. Why We Love the Traditional Mass?

With pilgrims, we will especially emphasize the positive reasons for our attachment to the traditional liturgy (body of the text). The passages thus presented are not intended for complete and indiscriminate reading: they are mainly intended for the heads of chapters, to deepen the reasons for our attachment to this liturgy, and to be able to answer questions.

Dear pilgrims,

During our pilgrimage, Masses are celebrated according to the traditional form, also called the Mass of Saint Pius V or the Tridentine Rite, that is to say according to the form of the rite in use before the liturgical reform of 1969.

The main components of this traditional Mass were present from the 4th century.

What are the underlying reasons which cause the pilgrimage to remain attached to the traditional liturgy?

To answer this question, we must go back to the main principles of the liturgy.

Lex orandi, lex credenda

In the Mass, we can distinguish two things: the heart of the Mass itself, and the rite which surrounds and accompanies it.

First there is the heart, the invisible mystery: when a Mass is validly celebrated, Jesus is truly present under the appearance of bread and wine, and his sacrifice is re-presented on the altar. It is the treasure of the Mass, like a jewel of great price: but it is an invisible jewel, we do not see it with our own eyes, we believe it by faith.

So, to better express this mystery, to support our faith, the Church has developed since the origins of its history the rite of the Mass: a set of liturgical signs, prayers, gestures, words, vestments and objects which, in their own way, will help us approach the mystery of the Mass. The rite of the Mass is like the case that contains the jewel. The rite of the Mass therefore aims to express the invisible through visible signs, and thereby to manifest and support our faith. You undoubtedly know the adage "*lex orandi, lex credendi*": the law of prayer is the law of faith. Show me how you pray, I'll tell you what you believe.

The liturgical reform of 1969 did not destroy the jewel, far from it! It is always the same invisible mystery that is accomplished before our eyes, it is the Mass! But the setting has changed, on certain important points.

The sacrificial character of the Mass

Let us first remember what the Mass is. The Mass is "*the sacrament of the Passion of the Lord*", "*the actualization and sacramental offering of the unique sacrifice of Christ*." It "*is not a simple commemoration of the suffering and death of Jesus Christ, but a sacrifice in the literal sense*". It is the only sacrifice acceptable to God, renewed on the altars, offered by Christ to God to give him the glory due to him, to forgive our sins, and to unite men to God.

This fundamental dimension of sacrifice is highlighted by different prayers of the Mass, the multiple crosses on the offerings; and especially, by the ancient rite of the offertory which manifests that the Mass is a propitiatory sacrifice (that is to say a sacrifice of satisfaction for sins), and that the faithful go to Mass to offer themselves in sacrifice with Jesus, and thereby find their salvation.

This dimension of propitiatory sacrifice of the Mass is less visible in the liturgical reform. Several changes are significant: especially by replacing the offertory with a simple "*preparation or presentation of the gifts*", and the disappearance of some prayers of a propitiatory nature, or which mark the offering made to the whole Trinity. A consequence: today few Christians still understand that the Mass is a sacrifice offered to God to forgive their sins, and that they must participate in it by offering themselves with Christ.

The Real Presence

In a consecrated host, Our Lord is truly present with all his humanity and divinity. This real presence requires great respect and gestures of adoration.

At the traditional Mass, this is marked by the many genuflections of the priest; the servants and the assembly are often on their knees; the priest keeps the thumb and index finger of each hand, joined, from the consecration until the purification of his fingers, because these fingers have touched the body of Christ and they must neither be defiled nor should the smallest piece of the host be allowed to escape. Communion on the tongue is also of great importance: it is an attitude of adoration, of humble reception; and this gesture avoids the risk of losing pieces of host which, however small they may be, are the body of Christ. To this, we can add the numerous purifications of the sacred vessels, of the body, the presence of the communion plate... so many gestures which help the priest and the faithful to understand that "*It is the Lord!*"

In the new liturgy, there is a reduction in the number of these signs of veneration to the holy species: few genuflections of the priest, purification of the sacred vessels which is often no longer done, no more obligation of joined fingers, the tabernacle sometimes relegated to the back of the apse or in a side chapel... Finally, the generalization of communion in the hand - which has almost become an obligation in certain places, contributes greatly to the obscuration of this truth of Faith which is real presence.

The role of the priest in relation to that of the faithful

The priest, at Mass, has a unique role: he acts "*in persona Christi*", that is to say that Christ acts through him, using him as an instrument to re-actualize his sacrifice. The faithful, for their part, offer themselves at Mass and offer Christ, and in this sense, they are "priests", offering spiritual victims: but they cannot in any case consecrate the Eucharist and act *in persona Christi*: they cannot say, like the priest, in the name of Christ: "*This is my body.*" Without an ordained priest, there is no Mass.

This sacred role of the priest means that he is "set apart": this is the origin of priestly celibacy, so attacked today. In the traditional Mass, this distinction between the priest and the faithful is highlighted by the orientation of the priest who, turned towards the Lord, acts as a bridge between God and the faithful. This is why the first priests, the bishops, are called pontiffs. This distinction is also underlined by the fact that in the liturgy, the priest performs certain actions apart from the faithful: such as reciting the Confiteor, or his own communion.

Since the reform, this difference between the priest and the laity has been less well expressed, for example in the recitation of the Confiteor or in communion, now common to the priest and the faithful, but also through a strong insistence on the common priesthood of the faithful in the detriment to the ministerial priesthood of the priest. We will then insist on the fact that it is the Church and the community which celebrate, and no longer the priest alone: so much so that certain priests no longer think it necessary to celebrate Mass in the absence of the faithful.

Dear pilgrims: why do we go to Mass? Some will say: to pray; others: to nourish ourselves with the Eucharist, find peace, etc. All this is right, but it is not primarily that. The Mass is above all the worship rendered to God by Jesus Christ himself, in which all the faithful join, to honour God, and in return to be filled with his graces. In the liturgy, it is God who is celebrated, and not man.

The Mass is the Act of Christ: how great it is! How sacred!

To express this, the liturgy has developed a whole set of rites to show that the Mass is a sacred action. Thus, the liturgical ornaments, the incense, the solemnity, the Gregorian chant, the Latin, the orientation of the altar, everything is there to remind us that what happens at Mass is sacred, and to make us grow the virtue of religion in ourselves, this virtue which pushes us to deploy all our efforts to render to God the worship which is due to him.

On this point, a certain number of liturgical changes in the liturgical reform have contributed to attenuating this sacred, "transcendent", vertical dimension of the liturgy. Celebration "*facing the people*" (which was not planned by the Second Vatican Council, but which has become almost universal in practice) can encourage "*the self-celebration of the assembly*" (criticized by Benedict XVI) and concentrates attention on the celebrant, and no longer on God. The use of Latin, the sacred language of the Church, although requested by the Second Vatican Council, has almost completely disappeared in parish celebrations, as has the Gregorian repertoire, the sacred song of the Church *par excellence*, giving way to new songs and even secular musical instruments. The disappearance of silence is also eloquent, especially that which accompanies the sacred moment of the Canon (much regretted by Benedict XVI).

A liturgical problem

The liturgy has always evolved, it is not fixed in one era. But this evolution has always taken place like the evolution of a living being, a slow and harmonious evolution, respectful of the past. This is one of the difficulties of liturgical reform, on which Cardinal Ratzinger also insisted a lot: "*What happened after the Council [is that], in place of the liturgy the fruit of a continuous development, we put a manufactured liturgy. We have left the living process of growth and becoming to enter into manufacturing. We no longer wanted to continue the organic development and maturation of living things over the centuries, and we replaced them – in the manner of technical production – by manufacturing, a banal product of the moment.*"

This promotes a real instability of the Reformed liturgy. Indeed, if we were able to create a liturgy to match the mentality of the time, then we can do it again and again. Thus we find ourselves, depending on the place, with multiple and varied liturgies, according to the inventiveness and desires of the community. It was the disintegration of the liturgy that Cardinal Ratzinger lamented. The possibility of "*liturgical abuses*" is also favoured by the large number of options included in the reform as a liturgical construction.

Conclusion

Of course, no liturgy is perfect; none can perfectly express the mystery it envelops. But each year the pilgrimage "*experiences Tradition,*" and sees how the traditional Mass is truly a formidable means of mission, conversion, teaching, to touch souls and lead them to God. We have given here the theological and doctrinal reasons for our liturgical attachment: but it is also, as Dom Gérard said, a marriage of love which binds us to her. We fall in love

with the traditional Mass, because it is beautiful, and because it seduces the soul and makes us touch Heaven. This is why it is so attractive today.

In light of these reasons, the pilgrimage, without rejecting *a priori* what is good in liturgical reform, is attached to the traditional liturgy which is part of its historical DNA. We do not deny that we can sanctify ourselves through the new liturgy (this year, Blessed Carlo Acutis will accompany our Monday walk!) and that there are holy souls who are nourished there. We do not want to judge anyone, but in the face of the perfectible aspects of the new missal, we attach ourselves to the traditional liturgy, as to a luminous beacon, given by the Church. A lighthouse in the storm, because we must be aware that we are going through a crisis in the Church, which is deeper than the liturgical crisis: it is a crisis of doctrine, of catechism, the effects of which can be seen more and more: a crisis on the doctrine of the priesthood, of the Mass, but also of the Last Things, of the Sacraments, of the doctrine on the unity of Salvation which only comes from Christ, on the place of other religions, etc. In the midst of the doctrinal confusion which runs through the Church today, we choose, in conscience, to cling to this luminous beacon which is the traditional liturgy, and all the solid, certain teaching of the catechism which accompanied it. In doing so, we use a right given to us by the Catholic Church: the right to celebrate a centuries-old rite, never abrogated, a beautiful expression of the Church's faith.

We make this choice in full communion with the Catholic Church, without which no one can be saved: relying with confidence on the promise of the Church made in 1988 to the ex-Ecclesia Dei traditional communities, who accompany our pilgrimage, the promise that their traditional identity would be preserved in the Church: "All measures will be taken to guarantee their identity in the full communion of the Catholic Church."

So it is up to you, dear pilgrims, who may have had this experience, to be witnesses to the spiritual fruitfulness of the traditional Mass, not by maintaining sterile divisions and fuelling resentment, but by joyfully - and with confidence - demonstrating your love for the Church, Tradition, and for Christ.