

“SOURCE AND SUMMIT”: THE MASS AND CATHOLIC UNITY

“You can catch more flies with honey than vinegar.” I recall hearing this proverb bantered around my family’s home. My initial response was, “Why would I want to catch **any** flies?” Actually, flies are **more attracted** to vinegar, even though more easily **caught** with honey! Of course, all this misses the point! In seeking to accomplish something, **sweetness** is more effective than **acidity**, kindness more than harshness. Admittedly an unusual introduction for a column, as it concerns a form of the Mass that represents only a small percentage of all Catholic Masses on any given Sunday— the traditional Mass, celebrated according to the 1962 Roman Missal. I wasn’t even born when that Missal was promulgated, and yet 1962 remains a flashpoint amongst liturgists. Why? Because it was the **last edition** of the venerable Roman Missal (promulgated at the Council of Trent) **before** the liturgical reforms of Vatican II.

The U.S. Latin Mass Directory lists 657 churches/oratories in which the 1962 Missal is offered currently. According to a 2018 Pew Research Survey (my “go-to” survey folks), based on a figure of 17,000 U.S. parishes, approximately 3.8 % of all churches host a Traditional Latin Mass. (henceforth TLM) Since 32,242 priests currently serve in the U.S., thus, on any given Sunday just 2% of priests offer the TLM. The point is clear—by **sheer numbers**, it attracts a tiny percentage of the faithful. This is by no means a criticism. But by all accounts, the movement **is growing** and deserves our pastoral solicitude. A July 2021 survey of 82 parishes offering the TLM revealed on average a **34% increase in attendance** since 2019. Q: How many U.S. parishes could match that growth? A: **Very few!**

In 2007, while serving at Saint Agnes, Pope Benedict XVI issued *Summorum Pontificum*, expanding the availability of TLM. The parish had an established tradition of the Novus Ordo Latin at its principal Sunday Mass. I carefully studied SP and listened to the faithful. After a period of preparation, we began offering *both* forms on alternating Sundays. A pastor from Illinois whose parish offered **both forms** of the Latin Mass (1962 Missal and the “Novus Ordo,”) related a story to me. A first-time **visitor** to his parish was absolutely transfixed by the beauty of the Mass— the Latin Gregorian chant, the *ad orientem* (priest facing in the same direction as the people) position during the Eucharistic Prayer, the precision of the altar servers, etc. He remarked, “Father, that was amazing...I do not think I will ever attend the Novus Ordo again.” The pastor remarked: “I didn’t have the heart to tell him that he just did!” To a novice, there is **little** discernable difference. To others, the **rubrical differences** are much clearer.

The particulars here are not as important as the observation that in its form, the Traditional Latin Mass has largely remained **unchanged for centuries**. Some find that its **silence** facilitates deeper contemplation, and the **sacrificial nature** of the Mass is evident in its gestures and prayers. The TLM has fierce advocates, a few of whom have not been at all **charitable** in their appraisal of the Church today or its leadership. It is a fair criticism that such attitudes are harmful, and Pope Francis named them directly. His accompanying Letter to the bishops referenced “**attitudes of many**” who attend it, noting a “comportment that contradicts communion and nurtures the **divisive tendency**, including a “rejection of the Church and her institutions” among those who frequent it. Many Catholics found these words hurtful— they deeply **love** the Church.

I take the pope’s words quite seriously— as a priest, could I do otherwise? Still, my own experience in celebrating the 1962 Latin Mass—albeit somewhat limited—was **largely positive**. I detected neither divisiveness, nor faulty ecclesiology amongst those who attended. While I experienced a degree of “competition” among relatively few who wanted only one or the other form, it was minimal. I stuck to my guns and continued to offer them on **alternating Sundays**— and

intentionally so. If the two forms were to **mutually enrich** one another, as Pope Benedict XVI envisioned, I concluded that this arrangement **facilitated that goal**. Without sounding trite, the Mass is the Mass. It is the sacramental re-presentation of the sacrifice on Calvary. The Church's Apostolic Faith is unchanged, though the rite differs. I fear that the letter's tone has hindered its reception by the laity.

Most Catholics are unaware that religious orders had **distinctive** liturgical rites throughout history– and still do! Even if rarely used, the **Dominican Rite** originates from the 13th century, and is a liturgical “cousin” if you will, to the Traditional Latin Mass. The pope's purpose in writing the letter was in order “to promote the **concord and unity** of the Church,” a most worthy **goal**. But I struggle– and mightily– to see how the divisions to which he alluded are not more pronounced in any number of parishes that regularly **flaunt** liturgical directives, and whose priests publicly call into question received doctrine and moral teaching from the pulpit. May Catholics attached to the 1962 Missal continue to demonstrate their **fidelity to the Pope**, striving towards that unity signified by the Eucharist, even as they express their heartfelt concerns. (To be continued)

- Pacelli's List? Remember the film *Schindler's List*? It showed how one man did all in his power to save Jews from being killed in the concentration camps. Well, as the **Pope Pius XII** Archives have been opened, researchers perusing no fewer than 2 million documents, have discovered case files for **2,800** Jews who had sought help from the Vatican. **Johan Ickx**, director of the Historical Archives of the Vatican Secretary of State noted that Vatican efforts were aimed at “at saving every individual human being, regardless of color or creed.”
- I am mindful that some parishioners prefer additional **social distancing** and may be uncomfortable receiving Holy Communion from someone who is also distributing to others on the tongue. Respectful of these wishes, the sections with the gold cords are spaced every other pew. Additionally, Holy Communion is offered there **in the hand** only. On the Dayton Ave. side, **only the first** few pews are designated for this, while on Selby Ave., the entire far section is marked.
- “Your baby has 0 % chance of survival.” That's what the doctors told the Somerset, WI parents of newborn **Richard Hutchinson** in June of 2020. Well, he recently celebrated his first birthday, **defying all odds**. You see, the baby was born at **21 weeks of gestation** at the U of M Hospital, weighing just **12 ounces!** This earned him the distinction of being the world's most premature baby to survive. Doctors and nurses at Mpls. Children's Neonatal Intensive Care Units (NICU) were simply amazing. Life is precious!
- Newly ordained to the Priesthood, Fr. Stephen Hilgendorf began his new assignment in Omaha, NE. We wish him all the best– he's already missed! However, I am excited to welcome **Jack Flaherty** to the Cathedral staff, in a new position as **Director of Evangelization and Faith Formation**. He will work primarily with RCIA and young adults. He looks forward to meeting the Cathedral parishioners soon.
- Information regarding Children's Religious Education will be available in the bulletin and online next week. The classes begin Wednesday, September 15th. Registration information will be forthcoming.

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. John L. Ubel,
Rector