

Michael Davies Response to Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger

Your Eminence,

In 1975 Father Louis Bouyer stated: "The Catholic liturgy has been overthrown under the pretext of rendering it more acceptable to the secularised masses."(1) From a liberal standpoint, Father Joseph Gelinmeau wrote in the following year: "This needs to be said without ambiguity: the Roman Rite as we knew it no longer exists (le rite romain tel que nous l'avons connu n'existe plus). It has been destroyed (il est détruit).(2) He also informed us that today: "The liturgy is a permanent workshop (la liturgie est un chantier permanent). Ten years later, in your book *Feast of Faith*, your Eminence made the same observation when you asked: "Is there a Latin Rite anymore? Certainly there is no awareness of it. To most people the liturgy appears to be rather something for the individual congregation to arrange.(3)

Throughout the entire English-speaking world there is no sign of a liturgical renewal, only of what Mgr. Klaus Gamber described as "a liturgical destruction of startling proportions." This is reflected in the Mass attendance figures for all these countries. In the United States 25,000,000 Catholics have ceased assisting at Mass since 1965. In England and Wales an annual increase in Mass attendance prior to 1965 has turned into an annual decline of such catastrophic proportions that if it continues at its present rate the Church will have ceased to exist there within the next thirty years. The rate of decline in countries such as Australia and Scotland is even more serious. An important member of the Curia informed my predecessor, Dr. Eric de Saventem, that the liturgical reform "has been received and applied with fruit by the vast majority of the faithful." How can this be the case when the vast majority of the faithful, seventy-five per cent in western countries, no longer assist at Mass, and in many countries the percentage is far lower?

I have a depressingly large dossier of complaints from *Una Voce* Associations in countries, ranging from the United States to Nepal, of bishops refusing respectful petitions for the celebration of Mass according to the 1962 Missal. These refusals are sometimes expressed in a harsh and sarcastic manner by bishops who permit every form of liturgical abuse in their dioceses. The most frequent reason for refusing permission is the claim that the 1962 Missal would be a cause of division, yet, in the dioceses where it is permitted, this has not happened. This is something to which Mgr Timlin, the Bishop of Scranton, who is here today can testify. Mgr. Timlin has applied the *Motu Proprio* in his diocese exactly as the Holy Father intended, and traditionally

minded Catholics throughout the world owe him a deep debt of gratitude for his splendid example. The use of the 1962 Missal has brought many lapsed Catholics back to the Church, young people in particular. A characteristic of the parishes in which it is used, ranging from Notre Dame des Armees in Versailles to St. John Cantius in Chicago, is the high proportion of young married couples with many children who are present each Sunday, and the fostering of vocations to the priesthood and religious life. In the United States, where seminaries are closing continually, and since 1965 the number of seminarians has declined from 48,000 to less than 4,000, the Fraternity of St. Peter is building a brand new seminary at the cost of \$9,000,000 to cope with the influx of vocations that it is receiving. This is a tremendous act of faith on the part of Father Bisig, for which he deserves our gratitude and our support.

On behalf of the International Una Voce Federation I would beg your Eminence to use your influence in the following respects:

- 1.** To secure the wide and generous implementation of the Moto proprio "Ecclesia Dei" by implementing the third recommendation of the 1986 Commission of Cardinals, that when celebrating Mass in Latin every priest should have the right to choose between the Missals of 1962 and 1970.
- 2.** That the Commission Ecclesia Dei should intervene vigorously on behalf of the faithful whose respectful petitions are denied by their bishops.
- 3.** That whenever possible, where there is a sufficiently large number of the faithful attached to the liturgical books in use in 1962, non-territorial parishes should be established to provide for their legitimate aspirations.
- 4.** That the sacraments should be administered according to the liturgical books in use in 1962 for all the faithful who request this.
- 5.** That a personal prelature such as that granted to Opus Dei should be established to act on behalf of the many traditional priestly societies and religious communities which are now flourishing, and the large number of laity and diocesan clergy who wish to have access to the 1962 liturgical books in full communion with the Holy See.

The granting of these requests would, I am certain, be a great service to the Church and an important factor in halting the present catastrophic decline in Mass attendance throughout the western world.

Notes

(1) Religieux et clercs contre Dieu (Paris, 1975), p. 12.

(2) J. Gelineau, Demain la liturgie (Paris, 1976), pp. 9-10.

(3) J. Ratzinger, Feast of Faith (San Francisco, 1986), p. 84.