

Michael Davies Responds To Msgr. Francis Mannion

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Msgr. Francis Mannion, of the *Society for Catholic Liturgy* in his Question and Answer column for *Our Sunday Visitor*, January 14, 2001, offered the following reply to a question about Una Voce's President, Michael Davies. Mr. Davies' reply follows.

Mass Reform Question:

My sister has been passing on to me books of the reform of the Mass by Michael Davies. These books claim that Pope Paul VI destroyed the Roman rite and was influenced by Protestants; they also say that the new Mass is heretical. What should I think about these books? *Ellen A. T., Montreal*

Answer:

I never tell readers what they should think. My task is to help people be well-informed so that they can make reasonable and educated judgements. Michael Davies belongs to a small category of Catholic writers whose aim is to promote the restoration of the Tridentine Mass both as a good in itself and as a means of setting aside the Missal of Paul VI, which they consider flawed. This position is, obviously, contrary to the Second Vatican Council, is out of joint with the thinking of the Holy See and of the Catholic episcopate world-wide. Since 1984, the Church has allowed the Tridentine Mass to be celebrated under certain circumstances. Most of the people I know who attend Tridentine Masses do not reject the 1969 missal and are perfectly loyal Catholics. Davies' books are not known for factual accuracy. They are not balanced in their analysis and are prone to conspiracy theories. (Protestant observers were present during the process that produced the new missal, but I am not aware of any reliable source that they had improper influence.) The works of Davies do not deserve to be taken seriously, as well-intentioned and sincere as I know they are.

Michael Davies responds ...

Sir,

I was somewhat surprised to read a critique of my books by Msgr. Mannion in your *Pastoral Answers* Column. He responded to a question from Ellen A.T. of Montreal who says that I claim that the New Mass is heretical. I have written fourteen books and have made no such claim in any of them. I have, in fact, written one entitled *I am with you always* (Neumann Press) in which I defend the New Mass from accusations of heresy and invalidity on the grounds that the doctrine of the indefectibility of the Church precludes such deficiencies. My book has been

recommended by the Pontifical Ecclesia Dei Commission in Rome to those who have been troubled by such accusations. It is evident that Monsignor Mannion has not read any of my books. Here in Great Britain it is our custom to read books before criticizing them. I would have hoped that this was also the case in the United States. Msgr. Mannion alleges that my books are “not known for factual accuracy. They are not balanced in their analysis and are prone to conspiracy theories.” The many highly favourable reviews which have appeared throughout the English-speaking world praise them for precisely the qualities which Monsignor Mannion claims they lack. Where my book *Pope Paul’s New Mass* is concerned, the highly respected columnist Paul Hallett wrote in the *National Catholic Register*:

“This monumental work should be read by all serious students of the contemporary malaise of the Church.” Larry Henderson in the *Canadian Catholic Register* described it as “a masterpiece”. Father Paul Crane, S.J., in *Christian Order*, considers it: “A balanced, cool appraisal based not on conjecture but on fact...I recommend it without reserve.” In a review of my critique of the Vatican II Declaration on Religious Liberty in the *Homiletic and Pastoral Review*, Father Kenneth Baker, S.J., writes:

“I like clarity. Mr. Davies also obviously likes it and strives to respect it. He defines his terms so you always know exactly what he is talking about. His logic is clear and compelling. In the midst of this he remains respectful of his adversaries and tries to respect their views as accurately as he can before he offers his rebuttal.”

My critique of the post-Vatican II reform is certainly severe, but, to the best of my knowledge, factually accurate. If Msgr. Mannion can point out any factual inaccuracy in anything that I have written I will acknowledge this without hesitation. It is no more severe than that of Cardinal Ratzinger who has written that: “the crisis in the Church that we are experiencing today is to a large extent due to the disintegration of the liturgy”. He explains that the finalized (1570) Roman Missal was, in the words of J.A. Jungmann, one of the truly great liturgists of our time, “a liturgy which is the fruit of development...What happened after the Council,” writes the Cardinal, “was something else entirely: in the place of the liturgy as the fruit of development came fabricated liturgy. We abandoned the organic, living process of growth and development over centuries, and replaced it, as in a manufacturing process, with a fabrication, a banal on-the-spot product.” Would Msgr. Mannion assert that works of Cardinal Ratzinger “do not deserve to be taken seriously”?

Msgr. Mannion takes particular exception to what I have written concerning the influence of Protestant Observers on the liturgical reform. If he had read the appendix on this topic, in *Pope Paul’s New Mass*, he would have seen that my information is based upon correspondence with one of the observers. He is kind enough to remark that I am “well-intentioned and sincere”. How he can state this without ever having

met me I am at a loss to understand. Well intentioned and sincere people take pains to ensure that what they write is accurate. In the interests of accuracy, I would point out to Monsignor Mannion that he cannot possibly know anyone who does not reject the 1969 Missal as no Missal was published in that year, simply an Ordo Missae. The complete Missal of Pope Paul VI was not published until 1970.

Yours faithfully,
Michael Davies