

## **The English Indult — “An Object of Fraternal Envy”**

By Dr. Eric de Savanthen

Mr. Chairman, Reverend members of the clergy and the religious orders, and all other members and friends of The Latin Mass Society.

This morning, when you were attending the Solemn High Mass in Westminster Cathedral, offering thanks to God for the return, on this day, of the Tridentine rite to the cathedral's main altar, an invisible but world-wide congregation of millions of Catholics joined their fervent prayers to yours.

With you they felt that something vitally important for the future of our beloved Church was happening. With you they knew that what we were witnessing need not be — as some would fear — the first stage of the Tridentine rite's lingering death, in which it would survive but briefly and as a mere nostalgic curiosity. With you they prayed that, instead, this Mass be the first public act heralding the eventual restoration of the venerable Roman Rite to universal honour and esteem. And with you they sensed that the importance of this public act far transcends the immediate objectives of those who on this special occasion of your Annual General Meeting asked for a Solemn Tridentine High Mass, and also of those who offered the Cathedral for its celebration. An object of fraternal envy.

Indeed, this morning's High Mass has an ecclesiological significance of which we — living in less favoured parts of the world — are perhaps more keenly aware than you yourselves. For us, the so-called "English Indult" is an object of fraternal envy. We see it, first of all, as an act of elementary justice. Justice done by your Bishops to those who cannot, in conscience, attribute to the post-conciliar liturgical reform the motives which, alone, in the words of Pope Pius XII, would justify such far-reaching changes in the forms of the Church's worship - those in fact who cannot, in conscience, regard these changes as being necessarily required "for the greater honour of Jesus Christ and the Blessed Trinity, or for the better instruction and more fervent devotion of the faithful." (Mediator Dei, No. 53).

## **More partisan than pastoral.**

In many parts of the Catholic world those who hold such views are today simply disenfranchised. Not so in England and Wales where, as the Indult proves, their basic rights as "spiritual ratepayers" are finding belated recognition. Secondly, the Indult appears to us, abroad, to be a gesture of reconciliation. Even as it stands - with its restriction to England and Wales, and to "special occasions", and with the sometimes arbitrary way in which it is being applied — the Indult amends your Bishops' earlier decree under which the old rite stood banned as from Lent 1970. Thus, we see in the Indult a tacit acknowledgement of the fact that the reform of the Mass has at some point become divorced from the true needs of the faithful, that its orientation has progressively become more partisan than pastoral, and that amends have now got to be made.

And finally, on a higher plane, we see the Indult as a first act of reparation. Reparation for the dishonour daily inflicted on Our Lord in His Sacramental eucharistic Presence by those who, under the cloak of reform, would pervert the essence of Catholic liturgy and destroy the faith of the people. Thus we, abroad, are profoundly grateful to those who promoted the intellectuals' famous letter to The Times, and to your Chairman, for their unrelenting efforts to persuade the Bishops of the need for a more equitable, a more conciliatory, and in the last resort, a more salutary approach. And we do not think that by exploiting the faculties granted under the Indult your Society is giving anything away. On the contrary, in gaining even limited restoration of the Tridentine rite to the honour of public celebration in your churches, The Latin Mass Society has, in our view, scored a vitally important point.

## **No justification to suppress the old rite.**

It is, as you know, our common conviction that the Tridentine rite cannot be outlawed. But we cannot deny the principle of papal prerogative to reform a rite — even one as hallowed by tradition and by the blood of so many martyrs as the rite codified by St. Pius V. Now: the reformers contend that the new "Ordo Missae" does not constitute a break with the Church's liturgical tradition — that it is not, in fact, a "new rite", but merely an up-to-date version of the

more than millenary Order of the Mass of the Latin Church. However: the credibility of just such an assertion is inseparably bound up with the hierarchy's attitude to this older Ordo — and I think that the Indult represents the first tacit recognition that this is so. In other words: that by any act of hostility to the old rite the reformers themselves throw doubt on the orthodoxy of the new one. Because: if the new rite embodies exactly the same concept of Holy Mass as that professed by the Council of Trent, then there is neither the need nor justification to suppress the older rite which was "ex decreto Sacrosancti Concilii Tridentini restitutum". It would be both sufficient and proper to offer the Church the new rite as a lawful alternative, and to ensure — as did St. Pius V — that those who use it would remain as free from episcopal censure as those who remain faithful to the old rite.

Such peaceful co-existence of different lawful rites has always been an integral part of the Church's organic liturgical life. And it has been re-affirmed as recently as this year, when the Holy See rejected proposals to suppress the Ambrosian Rite in Italy and the Rite of Braga in Portugal. Both rites were, instead, formally re-confirmed as lawful for the priests belonging to the two respective dioceses. At the same time, the use of the new Roman Missal as an alternative was generally authorised. Attempts to suppress the Tridentine rite cannot, therefore, be justified with the spurious argument that general co-existence of the two different rites in the Latin Church would carry the germ of division into the parishes. In our days of delirious liturgical pluralism, this line of talk is simply an insult to the native intelligence of the faithful.

### **Part of an overall design?**

So we are left with a deeply disturbing question: are those who would enforce the exclusive use of the new rite perhaps doing so because to them this new rite embodies a concept of Holy Mass which is essentially different from that which Catholic Theology has evolved over the centuries and to which both the Council of Trent and Vatican II have given solemn assent and authority? Worse still: where the suppression of the old rite is enacted and maintained in spite of our rightful protestations, are we not in duty bound to suspect that the enforcement of the new rite is, in the last resort, part of an overall design to do away with the Church's traditional and authentic eucharistic doctrine?

Those who have studied the Holy Father's most recent allocution — of 1st March May 31st of this year — on eucharistic piety and adoration can be in no doubt that on this vital point the authentic teaching of the Church has not changed. But as long as the Tridentine rite remains subject to repression, even repeated re-affirmation of the traditional eucharistic doctrine by the Pope himself cannot suffice to heal the wound of doubt which has been inflicted on the body catholic. That is why the Indult gained for England and Wales appears to have such far-reaching importance. It seems to us to recognise that verbal re-affirmations of the traditional doctrine of the Mass cannot carry real conviction unless they are coupled with the restoration of the traditional rite of the Mass. True — the Indult as it stands is but a first and, indeed, a halting step. But until the contrary is proved we should all hope — and pray — that it be a step in the right direction.

And since your Society has with greatest emphasis maintained its position on the inalienable right of every priest to remain loyal to the Tridentine Order of the Mass, the use which is now being made of the Indult does not compromise this basic stand. We, abroad, would regard it as a clear disservice to our common cause if your Society did not under the terms of the Indult attempt to have as many Tridentine Masses as possible celebrated publicly in your churches. We also know that, at the same time, your Society will not cease to work for a gradual relaxation of the restrictive terms in which the Indult is couched. To obtain this, your representatives must engage in what is today idiotically called "dialogue" with the English Hierarchy. We would find it infinitely saddening if this dialogue was rendered barren on account of certain positions being adopted within your Society which the Bishops, out of sheer basic self-respect, simply could not countenance.

### **Mutual charity and sincere respect.**

We have therefore noted with compassion your Chairman's proposal that those who hold the new rite to be intrinsically invalid should be excluded from the corporate direction of your Society. I use the word compassion advisedly, because we are only too familiar ourselves with the suffering which such profound differences concerning the most sacred act of the Church's life must inevitably cause. In other countries, those who feel in conscience bound to

reject the new rite of the Mass have left the larger groups to which they belonged, and have created their own organisations. In some cases, this division has been unhappily accompanied by reciprocal acrimony. We therefore hope and pray that if such an exodus of part of your members should become necessary, your innate sense of fair-play will help you to carry this operation through in mutual charity and in sincere respect for each other's deeply held convictions.

I would like to end with a personal suggestion. I shall be submitting in writing to all the federated UNA VOCE associations, but it is most fitting that it should be mentioned for the first time here in England, the country of the Forty Martyrs who laid down their lives for the Holy sacrifice of the Mass.

Let us all daily pray the Oration of the Feast of St. Pius V. And let us — if possible in Latin — learn this prayer by heart so that we can say it often during the day, and thus in world-wide unison incessantly implore the Almighty "to overthrow the enemies of His Church and to restore the beauty of His worship through the intercession of this holy Pope.