

## Bishop de Castro Mayer's letter to Pope Paul VI with respect to the publication of the *Novus Ordo Missae*

Given at Campos, Brazil on September 12, 1969

These two documents, the letter to Paul VI, and the attached explanatory comments were translated from *Tradition: Doctrine-Actualite* published by the SSPX's General House, pp. 23-29.

Most Holy Father,

After a close examination of the *Novus Ordo Missae*, which will enter into use on November 30 next, and after having prayed and reflected a great deal, I consider that it is my duty, as a Catholic priest and bishop, to lay before Your Holiness my anguish of conscience, and to formulate, with the piety and confidence that a son owes to the Vicar of Christ, the following request.

The *Novus Ordo Missae* shows, by its omissions, and by the changes that it has brought to the Ordinary of the Mass, as well as by a good number of the general rules that describe the understanding and nature of the new missal in its essential points, that it does not express, as it ought to do the theology of the Holy Sacrifice as established by the Holy Council of Trent in its XXII session. The teaching of the simple catechism cannot overcome this fact. I attach below the reasons that, in my opinion, justify this conclusion.

The pastoral reasons that could, perhaps, be invoked, initially, in favor of the new structure of the Mass, cannot make us forget the doctrinal arguments that point in the opposite direction. Furthermore, they do not seem to be reasonable. The changes that prepared the *Novus Ordo* have not helped to bring about an increase in the Faith and the piety of the faithful. To the contrary, they remain very disturbed, with a confusion that the *Novus Ordo* has increased, for it has encouraged the idea that nothing is unchangeable in the Holy Church, not even the Most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Moreover, as I indicate in the attached reasons, the *Novus Ordo* not only fails to inspire fervor, but to the contrary, diminishes the Faith in central truths of the Catholic life, such as the Real Presence of Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament, the reality of the propitiatory Sacrifice, the hierarchical priesthood.

I hereby accomplish an imperious duty in conscience by demanding, humbly and respectfully, that Your Holiness might deign, by a positive act that eliminates every doubt, to authorize us to continue using the *Ordo Missae* of St. Pius V, whose effectiveness in bringing about the spread of Holy Church and an increase in the fervor of priests and faithful has been proven, as Your Holiness reminded us with so much unctio.

I am convinced that Your Holiness's fatherly kindness will bring to an end the perplexities that have risen in my heart of a priest and bishop.

Prostrate at Your Holiness' feet, in humble obedience and filial piety, I implore your Apostolic Benediction.

+ Antonio de Castro Mayer  
Bishop of Campos, Brazil

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## Comments on the *Novus Ordo Missae*

The *Novus Ordo Missae* consists in general norms for the text of the Ordinary of the Mass. Both the text and the norms propose a new Mass that does not consider sufficiently the definitions of the Council of Trent concerning this matter, and constitutes, for this reason, a grave danger for the integrity and purity of the Catholic Faith. We have only examined here a few points, that, we believe, establish that which I have affirmed.

### I. Definition of the Mass

In its no. 7 the new *Ordo* gives the follow as a definition of the Mass:

Cena dominica seu Missa est sacra synaxis seu congregatio populi Dei in unum convenientis, sacerdote praeside, ad memoriale Domini celebrandum. Quare de sanctae ecclesiae locali congregatione eminenter valet promissio Christi: '*Ubi sunt duo vel tres congregati in nomine meo, ibi sum in medio eorum*.'" (Mt. 18:10)[1]

In this definition:

- There is insistence on the Mass understood as a meal. Moreover, this way of seeing the Mass can be found frequently, all along the general norms (*cf.* v.g. nos. 8, 48, 55d, 56 etc.). It seems even that the intention of the new *Ordo Missae* is to inculcate this aspect of the Mass, to the detriment of the other, which is essential, namely that the Mass is a sacrifice.
- In fact, in the quasi-definition of the Mass given in article 7, the character of the sacrifice of the Mass is not signified.
- Likewise, it attenuates the sacramental character of the priest, that distinguishes him from the faithful.
- Furthermore, nothing is said of the intrinsic value of the Mass, independently of the presence of the assembly. Much to the contrary, it is supposed that there is no Mass without the "*congregatio populi*", for it is the "*congregatio*" that defines the Mass.
- Finally, the text allows a confusion to exist between the Real Presence and the spiritual presence, for it applies to the Mass the text from St. Matthew which only concerns the spiritual presence.

The confusion between the Real Presence and the spiritual presence, already seen in article 7, is confirmed in article 8, which divides the Mass into a "*table of the word*" and a "*table of the Lord's body*". But it also hides the aspect of sacrifice in the Mass, which is the principal of all, since the aspect of a meal is only a consequence, as can be deduced from Canon 31 of the XXII session of the Council of Trent.

We observe that the two texts from Vatican II, quoted in the notes, do not justify the concept of the Mass proposed in the text. We also note that the few expressions, that are more or less passing references, in which are found expressions such as this, at the altar: "*sacrificium crucis sub signis sacramentalibus praesens efficitur*" (no. 259) are not sufficient to undo the ambiguous concept, already inculcated in the definition of the Mass (no. 7), and in many other passages in the general norms.

### II. The Purpose of the Mass

The Mass is a sacrifice of praise to the Most Holy Trinity. Such a purpose does not appear explicitly in the new *Ordo*. To the contrary, that which, in the Mass of St. Pius V, shows clearly this sacrificial end is suppressed in the new *Ordo*. Examples include the prayers "*Suscipe, Sancta Trinitas*" from the Offertory and the final prayer "*Placeat, tibi, Sancta Trinitas*". Likewise the Preface of the Most Holy Trinity has ceased to be the Preface for Sunday, the Lord's Day.

As well as being the "*sacrificium laudis Sanctissimae Trinitatis*"[2], the Mass is a propitiatory sacrifice. The Council of Trent insists greatly on this aspect, against the errors of the Protestants (Chapter 1 & Canon 3). Such a purpose does not appear explicitly in the new *Ordo*. Here and there can be found a reminder of one

or other expression that could be understood as implying this concept. But it never appears without the shadow of a doubt. Also, it is absent when the norms declare the purpose of the Mass (no. 54). In fact, it is insufficient to express the theology of the Mass established by the Council of Trent to simply affirm that it brings about "*sanctification*". It is not clear that this concept necessarily implies that of propitiation. Moreover the propitiatory intention, so clearly visible in the Mass of St. Pius V, disappears in the New Mass. In fact the Offertory prayers *Suscipe Sancte Pater* and *Offerimus tibi* and that for the blessing of the water *Deus qui humanae substantiae... reformasti* have been replaced by other that make no reference to propitiation at all. It is rather the sense of a spiritual banquet that they impress.

### III. The Essence of the Sacrifice

The essence of the Sacrifice of the Mass lies in repeating what Jesus did at the Last Supper, and this not as a simple recitation, but accompanied by the gestures. Thus, as the moral theologians have said, it is not enough to simply say again historically what Jesus did. The words of consecration must be pronounced with the intention of repeating what Jesus accomplished, for when the priest celebrates, he represents Jesus Christ, and acts "*in persona Christi*".[3] In the *Novus Ordo* there is no such precise statement, although it is essential. To the contrary, in the passage that speaks of the narrative part, nothing is said of the properly sacrificial part. Thus, when it explains the Eucharistic Prayer, it speaks of the "*narratio institutionis*"[4] (no. 54 d.) in such a way that the expressions: "*Ecclesia memoriam ipsius Christi agit*"[5] and another at the end of the consecration: "*Hoc facite in meam commemorationem*"[6] have the meaning indicated by the explanation given in the preceding general norms (no. 54 d.). We remark that the final phrase of the (traditional) consecration "*Haec quotiescumque feceritis, in mei memoriam facietis*"[7] were much more expressive of the reality that in the Mass, it is the action of Jesus Christ which is repeated. Furthermore, placing other expressions in the midst of the essential words of consecration, namely "*Accipite et manducate omnes*"[8] and "*Accipite et bibite ex eo omnes*"[9], introduce the narrative part into the same sacrificial act. Whereas, in the Tridentine Mass the text and movements guide the priest naturally to accomplish the propitiatory sacrificial action and almost impose this intention on the priest who celebrates. In this way the "*lex supplicandi*"[10] is perfectly in conformity with the "*lex credendi*"[11]. We cannot say this for the *Novus Ordo Missae*. However, the *Novus Ordo Missae* ought to make it easier for the celebrant to have the intention necessary to accomplish validly and worthily the act of the Holy Sacrifice, especially given the importance of this action, not mentioning the instability of modern times, nor even the psychological conditions of the younger generations.

### IV. The Real Presence

The sacrifice of the Mass is bound to the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. The Real Presence is a consequence of the sacrifice. By transubstantiation the change of the substance of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of the Savior is accomplished, and thus the sacrifice takes place. As a consequence the perpetual Victim is present on the altar. The Blessed Sacrament is nothing other than the Victim of the Sacrifice, who remains once the sacrificial act has been accomplished. As a consequence of the new definition of the Mass (no. 7) the new *Ordo* allows ambiguity to exist concerning the Real Presence, which is more or less confused with the simply spiritual presence, indicated by the phrase "*where two or three are gathered in my name*".

Moreover, the suppression of nearly all the genuflexions, traditional expression of adoration in the Latin church, the thanksgiving seated, the possibility of celebrating without an altar stone, on a simple table, the equating of the Eucharistic Banquet with a spiritual meal, all lead to the obscuring of the Faith in the Real Presence.

The equating of the Eucharistic Banquet to a spiritual meal leaves open the idea that Jesus' presence in the Blessed Sacrament is bound to its use, as his presence in the word of God. From this it is not difficult to

conclude with the Lutheran error, especially in a society that is little prepared to think on a higher plane. The same conclusion is favored by the function of the altar: it is only a table, on which there is not normally place for the tabernacle, in which the Victim of the sacrifice is customarily kept. The same can be said for the custom for the faithful to communicate with the same host as the celebrant. By itself, this gives the idea that once the sacrifice is completed, there is no longer any place for reserving the Blessed Sacrament. Thus none of the changes in the new *Ordo Missae* lead to greater fervor in the Faith towards the Real Presence, but they rather diminish it.

## V. The hierarchical priesthood

The Council of Trent defined that Jesus instituted his apostles priests, in order that they, and the other priests, their successors, might offer His Body and Blood (Session xxii, Canon 2). In this manner, the accomplishment of the Sacrifice of the Mass is an act that requires priestly consecration. On the other hand, the same Council of Trent condemned the Protestant thesis, according to which all Christians would be priests of the New Testament. Hence it is that, according to the Faith, the hierarchical priest is alone capable of accomplishing the sacrifice of the New Law. This truth is diluted in the new *Ordo Missae*.

In this missal, the Mass belongs more to the people than to the priest. It belongs also the priest, but as a part of the assembly. He no longer appears as the mediator "*ex hominibus assumptus in iis quae sunt ad Deum*"[12] inferior to Jesus Christ and superior to the faithful, as St. Robert Bellarmine says. He is not the judge who absolves. He is simply the brother who presides.

We could make other observations to confirm what we have said above. However, we feel that the points that we have raised suffice to show that the new *Ordo Missae* is not faithful to the theology of the Mass, as established definitively by the Council of Trent, and that consequently it constitutes a serious danger for the purity of the Faith.

+ Antonio, Bishop of Campos

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## Footnotes

1. Translation of article 7: The Lord's Supper or Mass is the sacred assembly or meeting of the people of God, met together with a priest presiding, to celebrate the memorial of the Lord. For this reason the promise of Christ is particularly true of a local congregation of the Church: "*Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in their midst*" (Mt. 18:20).
2. *i.e.*, Sacrifice of praise of the Most Holy Trinity.
3. *i.e.*, in the person of Christ.
4. *i.e.*, the narration of the institution.
5. *i.e.*, the Church commemorates the memory of Christ himself.
6. *i.e.*, Do this in memory of me.
7. *i.e.*, As often as you do this, do it in memory of me.
8. *i.e.*, Take and eat all of you.
9. *i.e.*, Take and drink from it all of you.
10. *i.e.*, the manner of praying.
11. *i.e.*, the rule of our Faith.
12. *i.e.*, taken from among men for those things which are of God.

## Addendum

Bishop Antonio de Castro Mayer made reference to the above letter to the pope, along with his "Considerations on the *Novus Ordo Missae*" in the presentation that he made to his clergy of the ["A Short](#)

Critical Study of the New Order of Mass" (otherwise known as the "Ottaviani Intervention"). This critical study had been sent to Pope Paul VI by Cardinals Ottaviani and Bacci during this same year of 1969. Bishop De Castro Mayer received it, had it translated into Portuguese and sent it to his priests with this commentary:

Several priests of the diocese have asked me for some explanation of the *Novus Ordo Missae*. As the reading of it made me perplex on several issues, I had written to the Holy Father, explaining them, and asking for the authorization to continue with the old Ordo. Since I received no response, I continued, in accordance with the legislation that is in vigor, with the Tridentine Mass. However, I believe that the booklet of Cardinals Ottaviani and Bacci is very useful for the study by the Reverend Fathers. It is with this in mind that I am sending a translation to my dear collaborators. The priests will understand that the subject is not to be publicly debated."