

Liturgical Shipwreck: 25 Years of the New Mass 1969-1994

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"The real destruction of the traditional Mass, of the traditional Roman Rite, with a history of more than one thousand years, is the wholesale destruction of the faith on which it was based, a faith that had been the source of our piety and of our courage to bear witness to Christ and His Church, the inspiration of countless Catholics over many centuries."

-----Msgr. Klaus Gamber, *The Reform of the Roman Liturgy*, p. 102

Part 1

ON THE third of April this year, the year of Our Lord 1994, there occurred an anniversary, an unhappy anniversary, perhaps the unhappiest anniversary in the history of the Catholic Church. On that date, twenty-five years ago, Pope Paul VI announced in his Apostolic Constitution *Missale Romanum* that the Missal promulgated in 1570 by his illustrious predecessor, St. Pius V, was to be replaced by one promulgated on his own authority. In obedience to the Council of Trent and as a rebuttal of the Protestant heresy, St. Pius V had codified the rite of Mass celebrated in Rome at that time, a rite of Mass that had developed gradually and naturally over almost a millennium and a half. St. Pius V stated specifically that he wished the order of Mass found in the traditional Catholic Missal to remain unchanged in perpetuity, and rightly so, for by 1570 it had come as near to absolute perfection as anything upon this earth can ever do. It was with good reason that Father Frederick Faber described the traditional Mass as "the most beautiful thing this side of Heaven." ¹ It was with good reason that Cardinal Newman, who possessed perhaps the greatest intellect of any Catholic in the history of the English-speaking world, said that he could attend it forever and not be tired. ²

In issuing a new Mass, Pope Paul VI apparently believed that he could improve upon the Traditional Mass of the Roman Rite, and he indulged in an effort to make the Mass more understandable for our time. But in the process he broke with the unbroken tradition of all his predecessors and did something hitherto unknown in the history of the Church----in the East or the West: He appointed a committee to concoct a new order of Mass, a *Novus Ordo Missae*, an action that the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council did not so much as envisage, let alone mandate. The only precedent for a radical reform of the liturgy is found among the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformers. I have mentioned elsewhere that a principal objective of the Missal of St. Pius V was to act as a rebuttal of Protestantism----by showing that in the public manifestation of its Eucharistic belief the Catholic Church would not make the least concession to the Protestant heresy. On the contrary, the intention of Pope Paul VI in compiling his *new* missal appears to have been to *conciliate* Protestants. In a gesture that it is still almost impossible to believe actually took place, Pope Paul asked six Protestant theologians to advise him on the composition of a new rite for that very Sacrifice of the Mass, the repudiation of which is a fundamental axiom of the Protestant heresy. ³ The extent of the willingness of this unhappy pope to sacrifice even the most sacred traditions of our faith to placate heretics was revealed to its full extent for the first time in an interview broadcast over French radio on December 19, 1993 by Jean Guittou, one of the closest friends of Pope Paul VI. Guittou made public the fact that the Pope had confided to him that his purpose in reforming the liturgy was not simply that it would correspond as closely as possible to Protestant forms of worship, but with that of the Calvinist sect, one of the most extreme manifestations of the Protestant heresy. Guittou's revelation shows how perceptive was the comment by Monsignor Klaus Gamber that the drastic

curtailment of solemnity in the liturgy means that Catholics "are now breathing the thin air of Calvinistic sterility." ⁴ I must make it clear at this point that I do not believe that Pope Paul VI was in any way unorthodox in his personal belief in the Eucharist; no one who reads his *Credo of the People of God* or his encyclical *Mysterium Fidei* could allege this. His motivation seems to have been the same misguided zeal for ecumenism that prompted him, while Secretary of State for the Vatican, to engage in clandestine discussions with Anglican clergy that he knew to be contrary to the policy of Pope Pius XII. ⁵

Rather, I intend to prove that, as already mentioned, *the very composition* of a New Order of the Mass is a break with tradition, that the changes made in the Traditional Mass of the Roman Rite since Vatican Council II go far beyond what that Council authorized and, in some cases, actually contradict what it mandated. I propose to show that we have been the witnesses of a *revolution*, rather than a reform, and that the revolution of Pope Paul VI has produced no good fruits to compensate for its destruction of our almost 2,000-year-old liturgical inheritance.

Before discussing this revolution, it is necessary to be clear as to what is meant by a rite of Mass. A rite of Mass consists of the words and ceremonies surrounding the essential elements that were instituted by Our Lord. These essential elements are 1) the matter: bread and wine; 2) the form: "This is My Body" and "This is the Chalice of My Blood . . ."; and 3) a validly ordained priest who 4) intends to do what the Church does in confecting this Sacrament. There are many rites of Mass [basically 9; but as high as 23, if derivatives are counted] in the East and West recognized as valid by the Catholic Church, including all those used by the schismatic Orthodox Churches. The same Sacrifice of Calvary is made present in all these rites, and the same Sacramental grace is obtained through them. Christ Himself is received in Holy Communion. He cannot be received any more or any less perfectly in any particular rite, and the grace received in Holy Communion is greater or lesser according to the devotion and dispositions of the communicant.

Before discussing the liturgical revolution, it is necessary to say a few words about whether a loyal Catholic can, in fact, criticize any teaching or legislation emanating from the Holy See and still claim to be loyal. At the time of *Humanae Vitae* [the encyclical condemning birth control], Modernist theologians coined the term "loyal dissent." They claimed that it was possible to dissent from papal teaching on faith and morals and to remain a loyal Catholic. Such a claim is nonsensical. There can never be a right to dissent from the teaching of the Magisterium on a matter of faith or morals. The Modernist concept of "loyal dissent" in respect to doctrine can in no way be compared with the right of a faithful Catholic to express disagreement with a strictly "prudential" decision of the Pope. This distinction can be made clear by quoting one of the most loyal and most erudite Catholics of this century, Professor Dietrich von Hildebrand, who was described by Pope Pius XII as *the twentieth-century Doctor of the Church* and who was honored by Pope Paul VI for his fidelity

to the Holy See. In a book whose title expresses perfectly the state of the Church in the West since Vatican II, *The Devastated Vineyard*, a book which every Catholic who loves the Church should own, Professor von Hildebrand reminds us that, although we must accept everything promulgated *ex cathedra* by the Pope as absolutely true.

In the case of practical, as distinguished from theoretical authority, which refers, of course, to the ordinances of the Pope, the protection of the Holy Spirit is not promised in the same way. Ordinances can be unfortunate, ill conceived, even disastrous, and there have been many such in the history of the Church. Here *Roma locuta [est], causa finita [est]* does not hold. The faithful are not obliged to regard all ordinances as good and desirable. They can regret them and pray that they be taken back; indeed, they can work, with all due respect for the pope, for their elimination. ⁶

Part 2

It is thus evident that a loyal Catholic has the right to express sincerely held reservations concerning certain aspects of the New Missal. Even the most cursory reading of the conciliar *Constitution On the Sacred Liturgy* makes it clear that the reform which it authorized was to be based on pastoral considerations. In his Apostolic Letter *Vicesimus Quintus Annus* of December 4, 1988, commemorating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Liturgy Constitution, Pope John Paul II explained, quoting the Liturgy Constitution itself, that these pastoral considerations were: "To impart an ever increasing vigor to the Christian life of the faithful; to adapt more suitably to the needs of our own times those institutions which are subject to change; to foster whatever can promote union among all who believe in Christ; to strengthen whatever can help to call the whole of humanity into the household of the Church." The reform was intended to clarify the nature of the Mass for the faithful and to enhance the quality of their participation.

If members of the faithful are convinced in all sincerity that the New Rite obscures rather than clarifies the sacrificial ethos of the Mass and makes their participation each Sunday an act of heroic obedience, rather than joyful participation, they are entitled to express their misgivings to the universal Father in Rome and to beg him to give them "bread" rather than stones. It might well be objected that the laity do not possess the knowledge or competence to justify their criticizing a Sacramental rite approved by the Pope. There would be some weight to this argument if it transpired that the only critics of the New Mass were laymen. But it has been denounced in the most radical manner possible by an ecclesiastic whose authority in matters of doctrine was second only to that of the Pope himself. I refer, of course, to the former Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Cardinal Ottaviani. In September 1969, [*A Critical Study of the New Order of Mass*](#), prepared by a group of Roman Theologians, was presented to Pope Paul VI. The *Study* itself is of less significance than the letter which accompanied it, which had been written by Cardinal Ottaviani, and was signed by him and by Cardinal Bacci. At least a dozen other cardinals had agreed to sign, but experienced a last minute failure of nerve.⁷ These two cardinals, both of exemplary orthodoxy, explained that they believed it to be their duty in the sight of God and towards the Pope to make their misgivings known. They reminded the Pope that: "The subjects for whose benefit a law is passed have always had----more than the right----the duty, if it should instead prove harmful, of asking the legislator with filial trust for its abrogation." This is precisely the point made by Dietrich von Hildebrand which was quoted above: "The faithful are not obliged to regard all ordinances as good and desirable. They can regret them and pray that they be taken back; indeed, they can work, with all due respect for the Pope, for their elimination." The historic judgment of the Cardinals was that:

The *Novus Ordo Missae*-----considering the new elements susceptible of widely differing evaluations, which appear to be implied or taken for granted-----represents,

as a whole and in detail, a striking departure from the Catholic theology of the Mass which was formulated by Session XXII of the Council of Trent, which by fixing definitively the "canons" of the rite, erected an insurmountable barrier against any heresy which might attack the integrity of the Mystery. [8](#)

1994 also marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of this courageous declaration, which was dated September 3, 1969, the Feast of St. Pius X. The very Catholic motto of Cardinal Ottaviani was *Semper Idem*----"Always the same." The Conciliar Church is possessed by a frenzied desire for change, and any change, it would seem, is perceived as a change for the better.

One of the greatest liturgists of the second half of this century, perhaps the greatest, is the late Msgr. Klaus Gamber. He was among the founders of the Liturgical Institute of Ratisbonne in 1957 and was its director until his death on June 2, 1989 at the age of seventy. His book, *The Reform of the Roman Liturgy*, was published in English in 1993. However many books and pamphlets on the Mass that one may possess, he should buy this one. Msgr. Gamber's exemplary scholarship prompted the Holy See to name him an Honorary Member of the Pontifical Academy of the Liturgy; in 1965 he was appointed a Chaplain to the Holy Father, and in 1966 a Private Chamberlain to the Holy Father. Cardinal Oddi wrote a preface to the book, in which he described its publication as "an event of the highest importance," and it also includes tributes to Msgr. Gamber by Cardinal Stickler and Cardinal Ratzinger. Shortly before the death of Msgr. Gamber, Cardinal Ratzinger remarked that he was "the one scholar who, among the army of pseudo-liturgists, truly represents the liturgical thinking of the center of the Church." [9](#) Just as nothing in this essay will go beyond the criticism of the New Mass made by Cardinals Ottaviani and Bacci, nothing in it will go beyond that of Msgr. Gamber, a few examples of which follow:

In the end, we will all have to recognize that the new liturgical forms, well intentioned as they may have been at the beginning, did not provide the people with bread, but with stones. [10](#)

Much more radical than any liturgical changes introduced by Luther, at least as far as the rite was concerned, was the reorganization of our own liturgy----above all, the fundamental changes that were made in the liturgy of the Mass. It also demonstrated much less understanding for the emotional ties the faithful had to the traditional rite. [11](#)

Was all this really done because of a pastoral concern about the souls of the faithful, or did it not rather represent a radical breach with the traditional rite, to prevent the further use of traditional liturgical texts and thus make the celebration of the "Tridentine Mass" impossible----because it no longer reflected the new spirit moving through the Church? [12](#)

Part 3

WHAT IS THE NEW MASS?

The first point that I wish to make concerning the liturgical experiment of Pope Paul VI is that the very compilation of a "New Mass," a *Novus Ordo Missae*, constitutes a break with historic liturgical evolution. In *The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass*, his great classic study of the Mass, Father Adrian Fortescue explained that The Protestant Reformers naturally played havoc with the old liturgy. It was throughout the expression of the very ideas [the Real Presence, Eucharistic Sacrifice, and so on] they rejected. So they substituted for it new communion services that expressed their principles, but of course broke away utterly from all historic liturgical evolution. [13](#)

How precisely did the Protestant Reformers "break away utterly from all historic liturgical evolution"? They did so firstly by the very fact of composing new sacramental rites and substituting them for those which had been in use from time immemorial. This would have involved a breach with historic liturgical evolution, even if their new rites had been totally orthodox. The different rites of Mass had evolved gradually and naturally over the centuries. One of Britain's greatest living historians, Professor Owen Chadwick, who is a Protestant, noted in his book, *The Reformation*, that: "Liturgies are not made, they grow in the devotion of centuries." [14](#) A consistent pattern can be discerned in the development of every ancient liturgy in both East and West, a pattern explained very clearly by Canon G. G. Smith in his celebrated exposition of Catholic belief, *The Teaching of the Catholic Church*:

Throughout the history of the development of the Sacramental liturgy, the tendency has been towards growth----additions and accretions, the effort to obtain a fuller more perfect, more significant symbolism. [15](#)

In 1896 Pope Leo XIII pronounced finally and irrevocably, in his encyclical *Apostolicae Curae*, that Anglican Orders are invalid. The Anglican bishops attempted to answer the encyclical with their *Responsio*, published in 1897, an attempt which was refuted by the Catholic bishops in a vindication of the Pope's encyclical and which they published later in 1897. A key point in the Catholic bishops' argumentation was the following:

That in earlier times local Churches were permitted to add new prayers and ceremonies is acknowledged . . . But that they were also permitted to subtract prayers and ceremonies in previous use, and even to remodel the existing rites in the most drastic manner, is a proposition for which we know of no historical foundation, and which appears to us absolutely incredible. [16](#)

It is incontestable that the *Consilium*, the Commission which composed the New Mass, subtracted many of the prayers and ceremonies in previous use and remodeled the existing rite in a most drastic manner, thus breaking away utterly from all historic liturgical evolution. Please note that I am not claiming that the New Mass is unorthodox or that Pope Paul VI did not have the strict legal right to approve some

changes in the Mass. All that I am claiming is that, in doing what he did, he broke away utterly from all historic liturgical evolution. Incredible as it may seem, there are those who, in their eagerness to defend the New Mass, put reason aside and actually claim that no drastic remodeling of the Tridentine Mass took place! A typical instance of this failure to accept reality occurred in an article by Father Peter Stravinskias in the February, 1992 issue of *Catholic News and World Report*. Father Stravinskias claimed that, "Having studied the old rite of the Mass and the present rite with great care, I fail to see any significant difference between the two." This reminds me of a comment made by the Duke of Wellington to a gentleman who approached him and said: "Mr. Smith, I believe." "If you believe that," said the Iron Duke, "you'll believe anything!" To claim that there is no significant difference between the two rites is not simply unreasonable, but incredible. Rather than quote from a traditionalist writer to refute Father Stravinskias, I will cite one whose credentials for commenting upon the New Mass could hardly be more authoritative. I refer to Father Joseph Gelineau, S.J. Father Gelineau was one of the most influential members of Archbishop Bugnini's *Consilium*, which actually composed the New Mass, and who was described by Archbishop Bugnini as one of the "great masters of the international liturgical world." [17](#) It would be more than euphemistic to state that Father Gelineau does not share the opinion of Father Stravinskias that there is no significant difference between the Tridentine Mass and the New Mass. In his book, *Demain la Liturgie* [The Liturgy Tomorrow], Father Gelineau commented with commendable honesty, and not the least sign of regret: Let those who like myself have known and sung a Latin-Gregorian High Mass remember it if they can. Let them compare it with the Mass that we now have. Not only the words, the melodies, and some of the gestures are different. To tell the truth it is a different liturgy of the Mass. 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*]. [18](#)

Part 4

Father Gelineau tells us that the traditional rite of Mass has been destroyed and replaced by one that is different. Father Stravinskis assures us that there is no significant difference between the two rites. An impartial examination of the reform in which Fr. Gelineau played so active a part will prove beyond any possible doubt that his assessment, and not that of Father Stravinskis, is correct. But before examining the actual reform, it is necessary to be clear as to precisely what the Liturgy Constitution of the Second Vatican Council mandated. It is indisputable that the Second Vatican Council was followed by a reform far more radical than that envisaged by the Council Fathers or authorized by the Liturgy Constitution. *By no possible stretch of the imagination can Vatican Council II be interpreted as mandating or sanctioning the destruction of the Roman Rite!* It contained stipulations which appeared to make any drastic remodeling of the Traditional Mass impossible. The Latin language was to be preserved in the Latin rite [Article 36], and steps were to be taken to ensure that the faithful could sing or say together in Latin those parts of the Mass that pertain to them [Article 54]. All lawfully acknowledged rites were held to be of equal authority and dignity and were to be preserved in the future and fostered in every way [Article 4]. The treasury of sacred music was to be preserved and fostered with great care [Article 114], and Gregorian Chant was to be given pride of place in liturgical services [Article 116]. There were to be no innovations unless the good of the Church genuinely and certainly required them, and care was to be taken that any new forms adopted should grow in some way organically from forms already existing [Article 23].

These explicit commands of Vatican II have been, as Hamlet expressed it, "More honour'd in the breach than the observance." The Latin language has virtually vanished from our churches, and not the least effort is being made in 99.9 % of parishes to ensure that the faithful can sing or say together in Latin those parts of the Mass that pertain to them. Far from preserving and fostering the Roman Rite, that rite has been destroyed, and the treasury of sacred music, Gregorian Chant in particular, has been all but forgotten in the majority of parishes. A long list of innovations can be cited which the good of the Church did not genuinely and certainly require and, in almost every instance, these innovations modified the Traditional Mass in a manner that made it more acceptable to Protestants. Examine the prayers that the sixteenth-century Protestants removed from the traditional missals in their own countries and you will find that the very same prayers have been removed from the Tridentine Mass, so that the Mass of Pope Paul VI could and did win Protestant approval. ¹⁹ The one exception is the Roman Canon, which was removed from the Mass by all the Protestant Reformers and by Archbishop Bugnini, but which was restored, *Deo gratias*, thanks to a direct command of Pope Paul VI. ²⁰ It is true that the Roman Canon is not often used in the New Mass today, but its presence in the New Missal guarantees that, although the reformed liturgy contains many parallels with Protestant worship, because of the presence of the Roman Canon, which was

anathema to every Protestant Reformer, the New Mass cannot be described as a Protestant liturgy. God would never allow a pope to approve any Sacramental rite that does not contain what is essential for the validity of the Sacrament or that contains anything specifically heretical. Contrary to what is often alleged, Archbishop Lefebvre acknowledged that the New Mass is valid and contains no heresy. [21](#)

When the Council Fathers voted for the Liturgy Constitution, they did not imagine for one moment that their actions would ever be interpreted in a manner that contradicted their explicit intentions. But this very thing occurred because the *periti* [experts] who drafted the text had inserted ambiguous passages into it which they intended to use *after the Council* to implement a liturgical revolution which they knew would not have been sanctioned by the Council Fathers if it had been spelled out explicitly in the Constitution itself. Lest it be thought that this is no more than a wild allegation by a layman addicted to conspiracy theories, the testimony of Cardinal John Heenan of Westminster England will be cited. Cardinal Heenan was one of the most active of the Council Fathers, and in his book, *A Crown of Thorns*, he wrote, concerning the first session of the Council in 1962:

The subject most fully debated was liturgical reform. It might be more accurate to say that the bishops were under the impression that the liturgy had been fully discussed. In retrospect it is clear that they were given the opportunity of discussing only general principles. *Subsequent changes were more radical than those intended by Pope John and the bishops who passed the decree on the liturgy. His sermon at the end of the first session shows that Pope John did not suspect what was being planned by the liturgical experts.* [Emphasis added by the author] [22](#)

What could be more clear than this? Cardinal Heenan states explicitly that experts who drafted the Liturgy Constitution intended to use it after the Council in a manner that the Pope and the Council Fathers did not suspect. Most of the Council Fathers would have dismissed such a possibility as incredible, even if it had been explained to them. Commenting in 1973, with the benefit of hindsight, Archbishop R. J. Dwyer of Portland, Oregon remarked sadly:

Who dreamed on that day that within a few years, far less than a decade, the Latin past of the Church would be all but expunged, that it would be reduced to a memory fading into the middle distance? The thought of it would have horrified us, but it seemed so far beyond the realm of the possible as to be ridiculous. So we laughed it off. [23](#)

Part 5

Father Louis Bouyer, an outstanding figure in the pre-conciliar liturgical movement and one of the most orthodox *periti* at the Council, was able to see the direction the reform was taking, even before the promulgation of the New Mass. He stated in 1968 that "We must speak plainly: there is practically no liturgy worthy of the name today in the Catholic Church." ²⁴ And that "Perhaps in no other area is there a greater distance [and even formal opposition] between what the Council worked out and what we actually have." ²⁵ Msgr. Gamber made the same point when he wrote:

One statement we can make with certainty is that the new *Ordo* of the Mass that has now emerged would not have been endorsed by the majority of the Council Fathers. ²⁶

In 1964 Father Bouyer wrote an enthusiastic appreciation of the Liturgy Constitution entitled *The Liturgy Revived*, which predicted the flowering of a great liturgical renewal. He had become totally disillusioned by 1968 and wrote a scathing denunciation of the manner in which the reform was developing in practice, entitled *The Decomposition of Catholicism*, in which he states that not only is there formal opposition between what the Council required and what we actually have, but that, in practice, the reform constitutes a repudiation of the papally approved liturgical movement to which he had contributed. ²⁷

It is perfectly legitimate to describe what has taken place in the Roman Rite since Vatican II as a "revolution" rather than a reform. The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines "revolution" as a "complete change, turning upside down, great reversal of conditions, fundamental reconstruction." *Is this not precisely what has taken place in the Roman Rite since the Second Vatican Council?* The revolutionary nature of the changes in the Roman Liturgy since Vatican II have been apparent even to non-Catholics. At the Harvard Club in New York on May 11, 1978, Peter L. Berger, a Lutheran professor of Sociology, commented on the post-conciliar changes within the Catholic Church from the dispassionate standpoint of a professional sociologist and insisted that the changes were a mistake, even from a sociological standpoint: "If a thoroughly malicious sociologist, bent on injuring the Catholic Church as much as possible, had been an adviser to the Church, he could hardly have done a better job." ²⁸ Professor Dietrich von Hildebrand echoed these sentiments when he wrote, "Truly, if one of the devils in C. S. Lewis's *The Screwtape Letters* had been entrusted with the ruin of the liturgy, he could not have done it better." ²⁹

The testimony of Father Joseph Gelineau to the fact that the liturgical revolution which followed the Council went far beyond what the Council Fathers intended must surely be conclusive:

It would be false to identify this liturgical renewal with the reform of rites decided on by Vatican II. This reform goes back much further and goes forward far

beyond the conciliar prescriptions [*elle va bien au-delà*]. The liturgy is a permanent workshop [*La liturgie est un chantier permanent*]. [30](#)

So there we have it. In place of the moderate reform sanctioned by the Liturgy Constitution of Vatican Council II, the Mass of the Roman Rite, surely the Church's greatest treasure, apart from the Scriptures themselves, has been reduced on a practical level to "a permanent workshop," something done by the people, rather than an action of Christ, an *actio Christi*. This is a fact accepted by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, who commented:

Today we might ask: 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. [31](#)

In a forthright editorial in the February, 1979 issue of *Homiletic and Pastoral Review*, Fr. Kenneth Baker, S.J., the editor, addressed an appeal to the American hierarchy. He complained of the hundreds of changes imposed on the people, which they hardly had time to digest, and begged for a halt to be called to the liturgical revolution. "We have been overwhelmed with changes in the Church at all levels, but it is the liturgical revolution which touches all of us intimately and immediately." There appears, alas, to be no hope at all of a halt being brought to the liturgical changes or of effective steps being taken to remove any of the abuses which had become so widespread by 1980 that Pope John Paul II felt obliged to make a public apology to the faithful in his Apostolic Letter [*Dominicae Cenerae*](#):

I would like to ask forgiveness in my own name and in the name of all of you, venerable and dear brothers in the episcopate, for everything which, for whatever reason, through whatever human weakness, impatience or negligence, and also through the at times partial, one-sided and erroneous applications of the directives of the Second Vatican Council, may have caused scandal and disturbance concerning the interpretation of the doctrine and the veneration due to this great Sacrament.

Has ever a pope needed to speak such words in the entire history of the Roman Church, the Church that is the mother and mistress of all other churches? And have matters improved since this astonishing apology? No, they have worsened with every year that has passed! The liturgical revolution has indeed, as Father Baker observed, touched the faithful intimately and immediately and in a manner which has disturbing parallels with the way that Thomas Cranmer, the apostate Archbishop of Canterbury, destroyed the faith of English Catholics----not by indoctrination with Protestant teaching----but by forcing them to worship each Sunday with a Protestantized liturgy. He used a liturgical revolution to implement a doctrinal revolution! This is explained clearly by Msgr. Philip Hughes in his history of the English Reformation:

This prayer book of 1549 was as clear a sign as a man might desire that a doctrinal revolution was intended and that it was, indeed, already in progress. Once these new Sacramental rites, for example, had become the habit of the English people, the substance of the doctrinal reformation, victorious now in northern Europe would have transformed England also. All but insensibly, as the years went by, the beliefs enshrined in the old, and how disused, rites, and kept alive by these rites in men's minds and affections, would disappear----without the need of any systematic missionary effort to preach them down. [32](#)

Does this seem familiar to you? It is an illustration of a principle long enshrined in Catholic theology, *Lex orandi, lex credendi*, which can be translated roughly as meaning that the manner in which we pray reflects what we believe, and that, therefore, if the way we pray is changed, what we believe will change also. Is this happening today? Has not the change in our liturgical rites been followed by a dramatic change for the worse in the beliefs and the behavior of our Catholic people? In the editorial to the November 1991 issue of *Homiletic and Pastoral Review*, Father Kenneth Baker wrote,

With each year it seems that we get closer to an "American Church," separate from Rome. For millions of Catholics it already exists in fact, though not yet officially [*de facto* but not *de iure*]. Even though the entrenched bureaucracy will not admit it, the Church here is in bad shape. There has been a loss of morale and *élan*. But what should one expect when most Catholic children do not know the basics of the faith, when heresy is openly taught and defended in "Catholic" universities, when seminarians have declined from 48,000 to about 5,000, and when [only] 14 million out of 55 million Catholics [i.e., 25%] go to Church regularly on Sunday? It is not an exaggeration to say that the Church here is in a crisis.

Part 7

This crisis is not, of course, confined to the United States, but exists with precisely the same manifestations throughout the Western World. In countries such as Holland, it seems reasonable to ask whether anything substantial exists now that can be described realistically as Catholicism. Far from filling our churches with renewed, revitalized Catholics----many of them previously lapsed, but brought back to the Faith by an inspiring new liturgy that they can easily understand----we have instead witnessed a catastrophic decline in Mass attendance in every Western country. We are, Father Louis Bouyer assures us, witnessing not the renewal, but the accelerating decomposition of Catholicism. ³³ Hundreds of millions . . . I repeat . . . hundreds of millions of Catholics who went to Mass in the "bad old days," when the liturgy was supposed to have alienated them from the Church, have ceased assisting at Mass at all, and yet, according to those in authority, the liturgical reform has been a tremendous pastoral success, and we are all deliriously happy with it. Archbishop Bugnini, the great architect of the liturgical revolution, commented, in all seriousness it would appear, that "The renewed Mass was received with joy, with enthusiasm, and in a short time entered into the practice of the Christian people with obvious advantages to the community." ³⁴ Well, if I may quote the Duke of Wellington again: "If you believe that, you'll believe anything!"

It is only to be expected that Archbishop Bugnini would claim that the reform behind which he was the moving spirit had been a success. One might have hoped that the Pope, the Universal Shepherd, would take a more objective view. One might have hoped that when faced with the clear evidence that his flock had been led into a liturgical wilderness, that its numbers were declining at a catastrophic rate and that those who remained were being starved of true spiritual nourishment, he would lead them back once more to the sound pastures of tradition that had nourished their faith for so many centuries. But, alas, in his Apostolic Letter commemorating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Liturgy Constitution, he appeared to have forgotten his apology to the faithful made in *Dominicae Cena*e eight years previously and echoed the optimistic and totally unrealistic assessment of Archbishop Bugnini, while accepting that "the application of the liturgical reform has met with difficulties," including, he claimed, the fact that "the transition from simply being present, very often in a rather passive and silent way, to a fuller and more active participation has been for some people too demanding." It would seem, then, that the lack of success of the liturgical reforms lies not in the nature of the changes, but in the inability or unwillingness of the faithful to understand how beneficial the changes really were for them. One cannot help recalling the censure passed upon those Russian peasants who----after the 1917 Revolution----were unwilling or unable to accept the fact that the collectivization of their land was really beneficial to them. But despite the difficulties to which he referred, the Pope insisted in his Apostolic Letter that:

The vast majority of the pastors and the Christian people have accepted the liturgical reform in a spirit of obedience and indeed joyful fervor. For this we should give thanks to God for that movement of the Holy Spirit in the Church which the liturgical renewal represents; and for the fact that the table of the word of God is now abundantly furnished for all; for the immense effort undertaken throughout the world to provide the Christian people with translations of the Bible, the Missal and other liturgical books; for the increased participation of the faithful by prayer and song, gesture and silence, in the Eucharist and the other Sacraments; for the ministries exercised by lay people and the responsibilities that they have assumed in virtue of the common priesthood into which they have been initiated through Baptism and Confirmation; for the radiant vitality of so many Christian communities, a vitality drawn from the well-spring of the Liturgy. These are all reasons for holding fast to the teaching of the Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and to the reforms which it has made possible: "The liturgical reform is the most visible fruit of the whole work of the Council." For many people the message of the Second Vatican Council has been experienced principally through the liturgical reform. [35](#)

Part 8

The respect that we all owe to the Vicar of Christ cannot obscure the fact that the renewal he is describing here is a fantasy. When the Pope comments on a matter of fact, his words either correspond to reality or they do not, and in this case they most certainly do not. Far from the vast majority of Catholics welcoming the reform with "joyful fervor," the vast majority of the faithful throughout the West no longer assist at Mass at all. Those who were not assisting at Mass before the Council have not been brought back, and in country after country many, sometimes most, of those who were assisting before the Council no longer do so. In countries such as France and Holland, the percentage of Catholics at Mass each Sunday has declined to a single figure. In the U.S.A. attendance has declined from 71 % in 1963 to 25 % in 1993, a decline of 65 %. ³⁶ If we consider this decline in terms of souls rather than bare statistics, it means that twenty-four million fewer Catholics in the U.S. attend Mass now than was the case before the Council. During that period there has been a huge increase in the Catholic population of the United States, and so the picture is far worse than appears to be the case from these bare statistics. The March, 1994 issue of the excellent Australian Catholic journal, *A.D. 2000*, examines the manner in which a detailed survey of Mass attendance in the diocese of Townsville reflects the overall picture of a collapse of Catholic practice on that continent. The official survey examined in the article was actually entitled "Where have all the people gone." It reveals a figure of only 12% in 1993, which is likely to decline to about 6 % by the year 2000. Commenting on the survey, the *A.D. 2000* columnist remarked:

Nowhere in the document is there any hint that the "reforming" policies pursued over the past 20 years in liturgy, religious education, seminary and religious life, biblical studies and moral teaching might be contributors to the disaster represented by the Mass attendance statistics . . . Just how much further Mass attendances must decline in Townsville and elsewhere before botched reforms are halted and admissions of failure [are] forthcoming is not yet clear, but we should not hold our breath.

Is the Holy Father correct in suggesting that we should indeed give thanks to God for what he terms a movement of the Holy Spirit, but which *A.D. 2000* correctly terms a disaster? *Facts cannot be loyal or disloyal, and the facts concerning the collapse in Mass attendance are, alas, only too true!* The reform was supposed to be of particular benefit to the young, but in Britain nine out of ten young high school Catholics who have been nourished by the so-called liturgical renewal have lapsed from the Faith before leaving school, and I am sure that the same dismal story is true of other countries. This is hardly an indication of radiant vitality. It would be interesting to learn precisely where these radiantly vital communities are located----certainly not in the Pope's own diocese of Rome, *where less than eight percent of the faithful set foot in church on Sunday!* Far from "the whole of humanity being called into the household of the Church;" as the Liturgy Constitution expected, millions of Catholics

are leaving the household of the Church for heretical sects. In Brazil, for example, the country with the world's largest Catholic population, there are now more Protestants worshipping in their chapels each Sunday than there are Catholics assisting at the allegedly radiantly vital new liturgy, which hardly indicates joyful fervor on the part of the Catholic faithful in Brazil, who are leaving the Church for Protestant sects by the millions.

The only factually accurate statement in the Holy Father's praise of the reform is his quotation from the final report of the 1985 Synod of Bishops that "the liturgical reform is the most visible fruit of the whole work of the Council." The liturgical *revolution*, not "reform," has indeed been the most visible fruit of the Council, *and it has been a bad fruit, an effort that has failed disastrously----a liturgical shipwreck----to the detriment of many millions of souls!*

"By their fruits you shall know them"----*Afructibus eorum cognoscetis eos*. "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, and the evil tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can an evil tree bring forth good fruit." [Matt. 7: 16-18]. The assessment of the liturgical reform made by Msgr. Klaus Gamber is radically incompatible with that of the Holy Father, but does not the experience of each of us in the past twenty- five disastrous years make it impossible to deny that Msgr. Gamber is right and the Pope is wrong? It is a perverted concept of loyalty, to which no Catholic is compelled to adhere, that would make us deny that we see what we see, hear what we hear and suffer what we suffer. Msgr. Gamber insists, and correctly so, that what we have experienced is not a renewal but a debacle----one that worsens with each passing year. He writes,

The liturgical reform, welcomed with so much idealism and hope by so many priests and lay people alike, has turned out to be a liturgical destruction of startling proportions----a debacle worsening with each passing year. Instead of the hoped-for renewal of the Church and of Catholic life, we are now witnessing a dismantling of the traditional values and piety on which our faith rests. Instead of the fruitful renewal of the liturgy, what we see is a destruction of the forms of the Mass which had developed organically during the course of many centuries. [37](#)

Part 9

Mention was made earlier of the astonishing apology made to the faithful by our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, in 1980. An even more astonishing admission was made in 1992 by the highest liturgical authority, apart from the Pope himself, that is to say, the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments. In its official journal, *Notitiae*, for October 1992, it admitted that abuses have become institutionalized. An editorial to this issue laments the fact that

Thirty years are too many for an incorrect praxis, which in and of itself tends to be already fixed in place. The malformations born in the first years of the application still endure, and gradually, as new generations follow one another, could almost become a rule.

It is not difficult to find examples of the many abuses that have been institutionalized. Communion in the hand is not so much as mentioned in any document of the Council. It began soon after the Council as an aping of Protestant practice in Holland. Communion had been given in the hand in the early Church, but as the German liturgist Father Joseph Jungmann has explained, as the centuries passed, reverence for the Blessed Sacrament deepened, and the tradition developed that only what was consecrated could touch the Host, and this awesome privilege was confined to the consecrated hands of a priest, which had been anointed for this purpose at his Ordination. Pope John Paul II has observed correctly that to touch the Host is a privilege of the ordained, but he did not, alas, consider it feasible to take the logical step and forbid the practice of Communion in the hand. This practice had been resurrected during the Protestant Reformation as an external manifestation of their belief that the bread received in Communion is ordinary bread and that the man who distributes it is an ordinary man. In our time, this practice in the Catholic Church soon spread from Holland to neighboring countries, and Pope Paul VI polled the bishops of the world as to whether the practice was acceptable. The overwhelming majority replied that it was not, and the Instruction *Memoriale Domini*, published in 1969, gave a superb exposition of the reasons for the traditional practice and the threat to reverence posed by the abuse of Communion in the hand. Pope Paul made a direct appeal to the bishops of the world: The Supreme Pontiff judged that the long' received manner of ministering Holy Communion to the faithful should not be changed. The Apostolic See therefore strongly urges bishops, priests and people to observe zealously this law, valid and again confirmed, according to the judgment of the majority of the Catholic, episcopate, in the form which the present rite ;, of the sacred liturgy employs, and out of concern for the common good of the Church. [38](#)

Part 10

Fine words indeed, but words that were ignored by the liberal priests who were breaking the law, words that were ignored by the very bishops who had voted to uphold the traditional practice. In country after country, the hierarchy surrendered abjectly to the liturgical rebels, and in every case the Holy See surrendered in an equally abject manner and gave legal sanction to the rebellion. The message of this capitulation was clear, defy the Pope and the Pope will surrender, and surrender he did on the practice of Communion under both kinds on Sundays----which was specifically prohibited, and then later legalized. In 1994, with cruel irony and within a few days of the precise anniversary of the imposition of the New Mass, the Pope surrendered on altar girls, the one instance on which many conservative Catholics were confident that he would not back down. There could hardly have been a more appropriate commemoration of a quarter of a century of liturgical anarchy than this humiliating capitulation by the Holy See to the strident harridans of the feminist movement.

While on the subject of institutionalized abuses, one might add that almost every occasion that a woman reads a lesson in Church constitutes an abuse, as this is permitted only if male lectors cannot be found; and almost every use of an extraordinary minister of Communion constitutes an abuse, as the strict conditions for their use are rarely if ever met in the Western World. The sight of an extraordinary minister in a Catholic sanctuary should be a truly extraordinary event, but it is now extraordinary to find a sanctuary that is *not* infested by them. The official liturgical norm has become the abnormal, and the abnormal has become the norm.

Part 11

The ICEL translation of the New Mass----to which the small minority of Catholics who still assist at Mass in the Western World are subjected each Sunday---- constitutes an abuse of the most outrageous nature, with its 400 mistranslations into English, including the mistranslation of *pro multis* as "for all" during the sacred words of Consecration. ³⁹ Clowns, dancing girls, balloons and banjos . . . the list of abuses is endless, and what can the faithful concerned with reverence and adherence to the liturgical law of the Church do about them? The answer is that, as is the case with heterodox catechetical instruction or immoral sex education, they can do nothing. They can appeal to their priests, their bishops, the Apostolic Delegate and the Pope himself, and the final result will always be the same, the abuse will either be tolerated or legalized. We are living in what Canon Law describes as a state of emergency. But if we are to be realistic, we in the West have hardly begun to realize what an abuse is. If you wish to see real abuses, go to India as I have done, and you will witness what appear to be, and probably are, pagan ceremonies replacing the Mass. The broken-hearted faithful compiled meticulous documentation of the paganization of Indian Catholicism under the guise of inculturation, and even at the cost of great financial sacrifice took it to Rome and handed it in to the Congregation for Divine Worship to ensure that it was received safely. And the response of the Congregation to these fervently devout Catholics----who did no more than beg the Congregation to uphold its own guidelines----was a contemptuous silence.

Not only does the Congregation's editorial, which has just been cited [*cf.* pp. 30-31], accept the fact that abuses have become institutionalized and are accepted as the rule by the present generation, which has known nothing else, but it included another admission, the importance of which it would be impossible to exaggerate: It acknowledges that "the credibility of the liturgical reform is being put in jeopardy" [*La credibilita della riforma liturgica vengia posta in pericolo*]. I would differ from the assessment of the Congregation and insist that the credibility of the liturgical reform has long passed the situation of being in danger. Any credibility that it ever possessed has long been totally and irrecoverably lost.

Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre once observed that, in the midst of the present crisis, the future of Catholicism lies in its past. This is certainly the case where the future of the Roman liturgy is concerned. The imposition of an artificially concocted, ecumenically tainted rite of Mass in place of the Mass of all ages must be considered as an historical aberration which can only be corrected by restoring that liturgy which developed and endured for more than nineteen centuries as the liturgy that will form the basis of the Church's worship also in the twenty-first century.

Is this an illusion or just wishful thinking? *Far from it!* It now seems likely that at the turn of the century, in France at least, the majority of the faithful who still assist

at Mass on Sunday will be assisting at a Tridentine Mass. Where the Eldest Daughter of the Church leads, may not other countries follow? It would be less than honest to pass over the fact that the majority of French Catholics who assist at the Traditional Mass on Sundays do so in chapels of the Society of St. Pius X and that this will be even more the case in the future if the number of priests ordained from its seminaries increases. Despite the "excommunications" of 1988, the Society is flourishing more now than ever before and as of 1994 has six thriving seminaries. The judgment of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in declaring null and void the Honolulu "excommunication" of six Catholics for "schismatic activities" which included supporting "the Pius X schismatic movement" and procuring the services of an "excommunicated Lefebvre bishop" to perform Confirmations ⁴⁰ has proved what those with a modicum of theological or canonical literacy have always known, that in the present state of ecclesiastical anarchy, the faithful can by no means be termed schismatic if they resort to the Society of St. Pius X chapels, because they know of no other means of obtaining access to the Traditional Mass, to which they have a right---or, for that matter, no other means of taking part in *any* other form of reverent Catholic worship. During a state of emergency in the Church----and there can be no doubt that such a state prevails throughout most of the Western World today---- Catholics are entitled to act outside the normal structures of the Church when they are convinced that this is necessary in order for them to keep their faith, and such action cannot in the furthest stretch of imagination be considered schismatic, providing that they recognize the authority of the Pope and do not intend to separate themselves from the Church. This applies not only to the Society of St. Pius X, but to the many so-called "independent priests" of exemplary orthodoxy. Yet at the same time we must pray earnestly that it will be made possible for the Society and these independent priests to work within the official structures of the Church at the earliest possibility. In this regard, a great deal will depend upon the next pontificate.

Part 12

It would also be dishonest to pretend that traditional Catholics do not have good reason to be disillusioned with the effectiveness of the *Ecclesia Dei* Commission established in 1988 to safeguard their interests. It would be euphemistic to state that the Commission has been reduced to the status of a lame duck. But nonetheless we must rejoice in the positive results derived from its establishment. The number of so-called indult Masses now authorized is pitifully small when compared to the total number of parishes in the U.S.A., but is nonetheless a tremendous improvement on the situation before 1988. The large congregations and the resurgence of faith generated in some of the indult parishes must be seen in order to be believed; among such parishes are those of St. Agnes in New York, St. John Cantius in Chicago, St. Joseph's in Richmond, Virginia and St. Mary's in Washington, D.C. We must also rejoice in the growth and effectiveness of the Society of St. Peter in the U.S.A., particularly in the fact that it now has an American seminary. In France we can rejoice in the spectacular, almost miraculous resurgence of traditional Benedictine monasticism in the Monasteries of Fontgombault and Le Barroux, which I visited this year, as well as that of Randol.

In 1994, the unhappy anniversary of a quarter of a century of catastrophic liturgical experimentation, I had the privilege of participating in an event which convinced me that the Tridentine Mass is indeed the Mass that will not die. You would also have been convinced of this----and convinced too that the future of the Roman Rite lies in resurrecting its past----if you could have been in the world's most beautiful cathedral, that of Chartres, France, on Pentecost Monday and seen it packed to the doors with young Catholics for a Solemn High Tridentine Mass, which they sang with one voice, *cum una voce*, and with tremendous enthusiasm, after having marched there in pilgrimage almost seventy miles from Paris in three days, camping out at night, and if you had seen the thousands who could not find a place inside the cathedral and who sang the Mass outside. *There were at least fifteen thousand present in all*, with an average age of twenty! This was not an illusion, but a reality. Let anyone who doubts this report simply join the pilgrimage next year, or in succeeding years. It has been held now since 1983.

The critique of the New Mass which I have presented to you here has been, I hope, a legitimate exercise of the right accorded to every Catholic by Canon 212 of the New Code of Canon Law [1983] to manifest to the sacred pastors his opinion on matters which pertain to the good of the Church and to make his opinion known to the other Christian faithful. I am absolutely certain that I am manifesting my love for and loyalty to the Church by suggesting, with the utmost respect for the Holy Father, that----to paraphrase Cardinals Ottaviani and Bacci writing in 1969 [[The Ottaviani Intervention](#)]----as the reform has proved harmful for the subjects for whom it was promulgated, we have the right and the duty to ask him to abrogate it. The New Mass

is something which----as Dietrich von Hildebrand expressed it----the common Father of all Christians, the Holy Father, should regret and take back, so that, as Cardinals Ottaviani and Bacci requested, we can be given "the possibility of continuing to have recourse to the fruitful integrity of that *Missale Romanum* of St. Pius V," which is as certain to be the Mass of our children as it was the Mass of our fathers in the Faith.

Let me conclude by quoting the words of Msgr. Klaus Gamber, whose book *The Reform of the Roman Liturgy* contains written endorsements by three cardinals, and who was, it is worth repeating, considered by Cardinal Ratzinger to be "the one scholar who, among the army of pseudo-liturgists, truly represents the liturgical thinking of the center of the Church." With his unrivaled knowledge of the liturgy and with the pastoral concern of a true good shepherd, this was the message that he left for the Church that he had loved so well and served so faithfully:

In the final analysis, this means that in the future the traditional rite of Mass must be retained in the Roman Catholic Church. ..as the primary liturgical form for the celebration of Mass. It must become once more the norm of our faith and the symbol of Catholic unity throughout the world, a rock of stability in a period of upheaval and never-ending change. [41](#)