

+  
JMJ

**The Ottaviani Intervention:  
A Brief Critical Study of the New Order  
of Mass**

+  
JMJ

## Letter from Cardinal Ottaviani to Paul VI

Rome  
September 25, 1969

Most Holy Father,

Having carefully examined, and presented for the scrutiny of others, the *Novus Ordo Missae* prepared by the experts of the *Consilium ad exequendam Constitutionem de Sacra Liturgia*, and after lengthy prayer and reflection, we feel it to be our bounden duty in the sight of God and towards Your Holiness, to put before you the following considerations:

1. The accompanying critical study of the *Novus Ordo Missae*, the work of a group of theologians, liturgists and pastors of souls, shows quite clearly in spite of its brevity that if we consider the innovations implied or taken for granted, which may of course be evaluated in different ways, the *Novus Ordo* represents, both as a whole and in its details, a striking departure from the Catholic theology of the Mass as it was formulated in Session XXII of the Council of Trent. The “canons” of the rite definitively fixed at that time provided an insurmountable barrier to any heresy directed against the integrity of the Mystery.
2. The pastoral reasons adduced to support such a grave break with tradition, even if such reasons could be regarded as holding good in the face of doctrinal considerations, do not seem to us sufficient. The innovations in the *Novus Ordo* and the fact that all that is of perennial value finds only a minor place, if it subsists at all, could well turn into a certainty the suspicion, already prevalent, alas, in many circles, that truths which have always been believed by the Christian people, can be changed or ignored without infidelity to that sacred deposit of doctrine to which the Catholic faith is bound for ever. Recent reforms have amply demonstrated that fresh changes in the liturgy could lead to nothing but complete bewilderment on the part of the faithful who are already showing signs of restiveness and of an indubitable lessening of faith. Amongst the best of the clergy the practical result is an agonizing crisis of conscience of which innumerable instances come to our notice daily.
3. We are certain that these considerations, which can only reach Your Holiness by the living voice of both shepherds and flock, cannot but find an echo in Your paternal heart, always so profoundly solicitous for the spiritual needs of the children of the Church. It has always been the case that when a law meant for the good of subjects proves to be on the contrary harmful, those subjects have the right, nay the duty of asking with filial trust for the abrogation of that law. Therefore we most earnestly beseech Your Holiness, at a time of such painful divisions and ever-increasing perils for the purity of the Faith and the unity of the Church, lamented by You our common Father, not to deprive us of the possibility of continuing to have recourse to the fruitful integrity of that *Missale Romanum* of St. Pius V, so highly praised by Your Holiness and so deeply loved and venerated by the whole Catholic World.

*A. Card. Ottaviani*  
*A. Card. Bacci*  
*Feast of St. Pius X*

**A Brief Critical Study of the Novus Ordo Missae  
by a group of Roman Theologians  
I**

In October 1967, the Episcopal Synod called in Rome was requested to pass a judgment on the experimental celebration of a so-called “normative Mass,” devised by the Consilium for implementing the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. This Mass aroused the most serious misgivings. The voting showed considerable opposition (43 *non placet*), very many substantial reservations (62 *juxta modum*), and 4 abstentions out of 187 voters. The international press spoke of a “refusal” on the proposed “normative Mass” on the part of the Synod. Progressively-inclined papers made no mention of this.

In the *Novus Ordo Missae* lately promulgated by the Apostolic Constitution *Missale Romanum*, we once again find this “normative Mass,” identical in substance, nor does it appear that in the intervening period, the Episcopal Conferences, at least as such, were ever asked to give their views about it.

In the Apostolic Constitution, it is stated that the ancient Missal promulgated by St. Pius V, July 13, 1570, but going back in great part to St. Gregory the Great and to still remoter antiquity,<sup>1</sup> was for four centuries the norm for the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice for priests of the Latin rite, and that, taken to every part of the world, “*it has moreover been an abundant source of spiritual nourishment to many holy people in their devotion to God.*”

Yet, the present reform, putting it definitely out of use, was claimed to be necessary since “*from that time the study of the Sacred Liturgy has become more widespread and intensive amongst Christians.*”

This assertion seems to us to embody a serious equivocation. For the desire of the people was expressed, if at all, when—thanks to St. Pius X—they began to discover the true and everlasting treasures of the liturgy. The people never on any account asked for the liturgy to be changed or mutilated so as to understand it better. They asked for a better understanding of a changeless liturgy, and one which they would never have wanted changed.

The Roman Missal of St. Pius V was religiously venerated and most dear to Catholics, both priests and laity. One fails to see how its use, together with suitable catechesis, should have hindered a fuller participation in, and greater knowledge of, the Sacred Liturgy, nor why, when its many outstanding virtues are recognized, this should not have been considered worthy to continue to foster the liturgical piety of Christians.

---

<sup>1</sup> “*The Prayers of our Canon are found in the treatise De Sacramentis (4th-5th centuries) ... Our Mass goes back, without essential change, to the epoch in which it developed for the first time from the most ancient common liturgy. It still preserves the fragrance of that primitive liturgy, in times when Caesar governed the world and hoped to extinguish the Christian faith: times when our forefathers would gather together before dawn to sing a hymn to Christ as to their God... (cf. Pl. jr., Ep. 96) ... There is not, in all Christendom, a rite so venerable as that of the Roman Missal.*” (Rev. A. Fortescue; *The Mass: A Study of the Roman Liturgy*) “*The Roman Canon, such as it is today, goes back to St. Gregory the Great. Neither in the East nor West is there any Eucharistic prayer remaining in use today that can boast such antiquity. For the Roman Church to throw it overboard would be tantamount, in the eyes not only of the Orthodox, but also Anglicans and even Protestants having still to some extent a sense of tradition, to a denial of all claim any more to be the true Catholic Church.*” (Rev. Louis Bouyer).

Since the “normative Mass,” now reintroduced and imposed as the *Novus Ordo Missae*, was in substance rejected by the Synod of Bishops, was never submitted to the collegial judgment of the Episcopal Conference, nor have the people—least of all in mission lands— ever asked for any reform of Holy Mass whatsoever, one fails to comprehend the motives behind the new legislation which overthrows a tradition unchanged in the Church since the fourth and fifth centuries, as the Apostolic Constitution itself acknowledges. As no popular demand exists to support this reform, it appears devoid of any logical grounds to justify it and make it acceptable to the Catholic people.

The Vatican Council did indeed express a desire (para. 50, Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium*) for the various parts of the Mass to be reordered “*so that the distinctive character of each single part and its relationship to the other part may appear more clearly.*” We shall now see how the Ordo recently promulgated corresponds with this original intention.

An attentive examination of the *Novus Ordo* reveals changes of such magnitude as to justify in themselves the judgment already made with regard to the “normative Mass.” Both have in many points every possibility of satisfying the most modernistic of Protestants.

## II

Let us begin with the definition of the Mass given in n. 7 of the *Institutio Generalis* at the beginning of the second chapter of the *Novus Ordo: De structura Missae*:

The Lord’s Supper or Mass is a sacred meeting or assembly of the People of God, met together under the presidency of the priest, to celebrate *the memorial of the Lord.*<sup>2</sup> Thus the promise of Christ, “*where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them,*” is eminently true of the local community in the Church (Mt. XVIII, 20).

The definition of the Mass is thus limited to that of a “supper,” and this term is found constantly repeated (nos. 8, 48, 55d, 56). This “supper” is further characterized as an assembly presided over by the priest and held as a memorial of the Lord, recalling what He did on the first Maundy Thursday. None of this in the very least implies either the *Real Presence*, or the *reality of the sacrifice*, or the *Sacramental function* of the consecrating priest, or the intrinsic value of

---

<sup>2</sup> For such a definition, the *Novus Ordo* refers one in a note to two texts of Vatican II. But rereading these texts *one finds nothing to justify the definition.*

The first text referred to (Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, no. 51 runs as follows: “*...through the ministry of the Bishop, God consecrates priests so that they can share by a special title in the priesthood of Christ. Thus, in performing sacred functions they can act as ministers of Him who in the liturgy continually exercises His priestly office on behalf by the action of His Spirit... And especially by the celebration of Mass, men offer sacramentally the sacrifice of Christ.*” (Documents of Vatican II, Ed. Walter M. Abbot, S.J.)

The second text runs thus, and is from the Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 33: “*...in the liturgy God speaks to His people and Christ is still proclaiming His Gospel. And the people reply to God both by song and by prayer.*”

“*Moreover, the prayers addressed to God by the priest presiding over the assembly in the person of Christ are said in the name of the entire holy people as well as of all present.*” (Ibid.—our emphasis)

One is at a loss to explain how, from such texts as these, the above definition could have been drawn.

We note, too, the radical alteration, in this definition of the Mass, of that laid down by Vatican II (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 1254): “*The Eucharist is therefore **the very heart of the Christian Community.***” The centrum having been spirited away, in the *Novus Ordo* the *congregatio* itself has usurped its place.

the Eucharistic Sacrifice independently of the people's presence.<sup>3</sup> It does not, in a word, imply *any* of the essential dogmatic values of the Mass which together provide its true definition. Here the deliberate omission of these dogmatic values amounts to their having been superseded and therefore, at least in practice, to their denial.<sup>4</sup>

In the second part of this paragraph 7 it is asserted, aggravating the already serious equivocation, that there holds good, “*eminenter*,” for this assembly Christ's promise that “*Ubi sunt duo vel tres congregati in nomine meo; ibi sum in medio eorum*” (Mt. XVIII, 20). This promise, which refers only to the spiritual presence of Christ with His grace, is thus put on the same qualitative plane, save for the greater intensity, as the *substantial* and *physical* reality of the *Sacramental Eucharistic Presence*.

In no. 8 a subdivision of the Mass into “*liturgy of the word*” and Eucharistic liturgy immediately follows, with the affirmation that in the Mass is made ready “*the table of God's word*” as of “*the Body of Christ*,” so that the faithful “*may be built up and refreshed*”—an altogether improper assimilation of the two parts of the liturgy, as though between two points of equal symbolic value. More will be said about this point later.

The Mass is designated by a great many different expressions, all acceptable relatively, all unacceptable if employed, as they are, separately and in an absolute sense. We cite a few:

- the Action of Christ and of the People of God;
- the Lord's Supper or Mass;
- the Paschal Banquet;

---

<sup>3</sup> The Council of Trent reaffirms the Real Presence in the following words: “*Principio docet Sancta Synodus et aperte et simpliciter profitetur in almo Sanctae Eucharistiae sacramento post panis et vini, consecrationem Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum verum Deum atque hominem vere, realiter ac substantialiter (can. I) sub specie illarum rerum sensibilibus contineri.*” (DB, no. 874) In session XXII, which interests us directly (*De sanctissimo Missae Sacrificio*), the approved doctrine (DB, nos. 937a-956) is clearly synthesized in *nine* canons:

1. The Mass is a true and visible Sacrifice—not a symbolic representation—“*quo cruentum illud semel in cruce peragendum repraesentaretur atque illius salutaris virtus in remissionem eorum, quae a nobis quotidie committuntur peccatorum applicaretur.*” (DB, no. 938)
2. Jesus Christ Our Lord “*sacerdotem secundum ordinem Melchisedech ac in aeternum (Ps. 109, 4) constitutum declarans, corpus et sanguinem suum sub speciebus panis et vini Deo Patri obtulit ac sub earundem rerum symbolis Apostolis (quos tunc Novi Testamenti sacerdotes constituebat), ut sumerent tradidit, et eisdem eorumque in sacerdotio successoribus, ut offerret, praecaeperit per haec verba: ‘Hoc facite in meam commemorationem’ (Lk. XXII, 19; I Cor. XI, 24) ut semper catholica Ecclesia intellexit et docuit.*” (DB, *ibid.*). The celebrant, the offerer, the sacrificer is the priest consecrated for this, not the people of God, the assembly. “*Si quis dixerit, illis verbis: ‘Hoc facite’ etc. Christum non instituisse Apostolos sacerdotes, aut non ordinasse, ut ipsi aliquae sacerdotes offerent corpus et sanguinem suum: anathema sit.*” (Can. 2, DB, 949)
3. The Sacrifice of the Mass is a true **propitiatory** Sacrifice and NOT a “**bare commemoration of the sacrifice accomplished on the Cross.**” “*Si quis dixerit: Missae sacrificium tantum esse laudis et gratiarum actiones aut nudam commemorativam sacrificii in cruce peracti, non autem propitiatorum; vel soli prodesse sumenti, neque pro vivis et defunctis, pro peccatis, poenis, satisfactionibus et aliis necessitatibus offeri debere, anathema sit.*” (Can. 3: DB, 95) Can. 6 will also be recalled: “*Si quis dixerit Canon Missae errores continere ideoque abrogandum esse, anathema sit.*” (DB, 953); and Can. 8: “*Si quis dixerit Missae, in quibus solus sacerdos sacramentaliter communicat, illicitas esse, ideoque abrogandas, anathema sit.*” (DB, 955)

<sup>4</sup> It is superfluous to assert that, if a single defined dogma were denied, all dogma would *ipso facto* fall, insofar as the very principle of infallibility of the supreme hierarchical Magisterium, whether papal or conciliar, would thereby be destroyed.

- the Common participation in the Lord's Table;
- the memorial of the Lord;
- the Eucharistic Prayer;
- the Liturgy of the Word and the Eucharistic Liturgy;
- etc.

As is only too evident, the emphasis is obsessively placed upon the supper and the memorial instead of upon the unbloody renewal of the Sacrifice of Calvary. The formula "*the Memorial of the Passion and Resurrection of the Lord*" is, besides, inexact, the Mass being the memorial or the Sacrifice alone, in itself redemptive whilst the Resurrection is the consequent fruit of it.<sup>5</sup>

We shall later see how, in the same consecratory formula, and throughout the *Novus Ordo* such equivocations are renewed and reiterated.

### III

We come now to the ends of the Mass.

**I. Ultimate end.** This is that of the Sacrifice of praise to the Most Holy Trinity according to the explicit declaration of Christ in the primary purpose of His very Incarnation: "*Coming into the world he saith: sacrifice and oblation thou wouldst not but a body thou has fitted me*" (Ps. XXXIX, 7-9 in Heb. X, 5).

This end has *disappeared* from the Offertory, with the disappearance of the prayer *Suscipe, Sancta Trinitas*; from the end of the Mass with the omission of the *Placet tibi Sancta Trinitas*; and from the Preface, which on Sunday will no longer be that of the Most Holy Trinity, as this Preface will be reserved only to the Feast of the Trinity, and so in future will be heard but once a year.

**2. Ordinary end.** This is the propitiatory Sacrifice. It too has been deviated from; for instead of putting the stress on *the remission of sins* of the living and the dead it lays emphasis on the nourishment and sanctification of the present (no. 54). Christ certainly instituted the Sacrament of the Last Supper putting Himself in the state of Victim in order that we might be united to Him in this state but this self-immolation precedes the eating of the Victim, and has an antecedent and full redemptive value (the application of the bloody immolation). This is borne out by the fact that the faithful present are not bound to communicate, sacramentally.<sup>6</sup>

**3. Immanent end.** Whatever the nature of the Sacrifice, it is absolutely necessary that it be pleasing and acceptable to God. After the Fall no sacrifice can claim to be acceptable in its own right other than the Sacrifice of Christ. The *Novus Ordo* changes the nature of the offering, turning it into a sort of exchange of gifts between man and God: man brings the bread, and God turns it into the "*bread of life*"; man brings the wine, and God turns it into a "*spiritual drink*."

Thou art blessed Lord, God of the Universe, because from Thy generosity we have received the bread [or "*wine*"] which we offer Thee the fruit of the earth [or

---

<sup>5</sup> The Ascension should be added if one wished to recall the "*Unde et memores*" which furthermore does not associate but clearly and finely distinguishes: "...*tam beatae Passionis, nec non ab inferis Resurrectionis, sed et in caelum gloriosae Ascensionis.*"

<sup>6</sup> This shift of emphasis is met with also in the surprising elimination, in the new Canons, of the *Memento* of the dead and of any mention of the sufferings of the souls in Purgatory, to whom the propitiatory Sacrifice was applied.

“vine”] and of man’s labor. May it become for us the bread of life [or “*spiritual drink*.”].<sup>7</sup>

There is no need to comment on the utter indeterminateness of the formulae “*panis vitae*” and “*potus spiritualis*,” which might mean anything. The same capital equivocation is repeated here, as in the definition of the Mass: there, Christ is present only spiritually among His own: here, bread and wine are only “spiritually” (not substantially) changed.<sup>8</sup>

In the preparation of the offering, a similar equivocation results from the suppression of two great prayers. The “*Deus qui humanae substantiae dignitatem mirabiliter condidisti et mirabilius reformasti*” was a reference to man’s former condition of innocence and to his present one of being ransomed by the Blood of Christ: a recapitulation of the whole economy of the Sacrifice, from Adam to the present moment. The final propitiatory offering of the chalice, that it might ascend “*cum odore suavitatis*,” into the presence of the divine majesty, Whose clemency was implored, admirably reaffirmed this plan. By suppressing the continual reference to God in the Eucharistic prayers, there is no longer any clear distinction *between divine and human sacrifice*.

Having removed the keystone, the reformers have had to put up scaffolding; suppressing real ends, they have had to substitute fictitious ends of their own: leading to gestures intended to stress the union of priest and faithful, and of the faithful among themselves; *offerings for the poor and for the Church* superimposed upon the offerings of the *Host to be immolated*. There is a danger that the uniqueness of this offering will become blurred, so that participation in the immolation of the Victim comes to resemble a philanthropical meeting, or a charity banquet.

#### IV

---

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *Mysterium Fidei* in which Paul VI condemns the errors of symbolism together with the new theories of “transignification” and “transfinalization”: “...*Nor is it right to be so preoccupied with considering the nature of the sacramental sign that the impression is repeated that the symbolism—and no one denies its existence in the most Holy Eucharist—expresses and exhausts the whole meaning of Christ’s presence in this sacrament. Nor is it right to treat of the mystery of transubstantiation without mentioning the marvelous change of the whole of the bread’s substance into Christ’s body, and the whole of the wine’s substance into His blood, of which the Council of Trent speaks, and thereby make these changes consist of nothing but a ‘transignification’ or a ‘transfinalization,’ to use these terms.*” (C.T.S. trans. *Mysterium Fidei*, art. II)

<sup>8</sup> The introduction of new formulae, or expressions, which, though occurring in texts of the Fathers and Councils, and of the Church’s magisterium, are used in a univocal sense, not subordinated to the substance of doctrine with which they form an inseparable whole (e.g., “*spiritualis alimonia*,” “*cibus spiritualis*,” “*potus spiritualis*,” etc.) is amply denounced and condemned in *Mysterium Fidei*. Paul VI states that: “*When the integrity of faith has been preserved, a suitable manner of expression has to be preserved as well. Otherwise our use of careless language may, though it is to be hoped that it will not, give rise to false opinions on belief in very deep matters,*” and quotes St. Augustine:

There is a claim on us to speak according to a fixed rule so that unchecked words do not give rise also to an impious view of the matters which we express. (He continues) This rule of speech has been introduced by the Church in the long work of centuries with the protection of the Holy Spirit. She has confirmed it with the authority of the Councils. It has become more than once the token and standard of orthodox faith. It must be observed religiously. No one may presume to alter it at will, or on the pretext of new knowledge... it is equally intolerable that anyone on his own initiative should want to modify the formulae with which the Council of Trent has proposed the eucharistic doctrine of belief. (Idem, art. 23).

We now pass on to the essence of the Sacrifice.

The mystery of the Cross is no longer explicitly expressed. It is only there obscurely, veiled, imperceptible for the people.<sup>9</sup> And for these reasons:

1. The sense given in the Novus Ordo to the so-called *prex eucharistica*<sup>10</sup> is: “*that the whole congregation of the faithful may be united to Christ in proclaiming the great wonders of God and in offering sacrifice*” (no. 54, the end).

Which sacrifice is referred to? Who is the offerer? No answer is given to either of these questions. The initial definition of the *prex eucharistica* is as follows: “*The center and culminating point of the whole celebration now has a beginning, namely the Eucharistic Prayer, a prayer of thanksgiving and of sanctification*” (no. 54, pr.). The effects thus replace the causes, of which *not one single word is said*. The explicit mention of the object of the offering, which was found in the *Suscipe*, has not been replaced by *anything*. The change in formulation reveals the change in doctrine.

2. The reason for this non-explicitness concerning the Sacrifice is quite simply that the Real Presence has been removed from the central position which it occupied so resplendently in the former Eucharistic liturgy. There is but a single reference to the Real Presence (a quotation—in a footnote—from the Council of Trent), and again the context is that of “*nourishment*” (no. 241, note 63).

The Real and permanent Presence of Christ, Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity, in the transubstantiated Species is never alluded to. The very word transubstantiation is totally ignored.

The suppression of the invocation to the Third Person of the Most Holy Trinity (*Veni Sanctificator*) that He may descend upon the oblations, as once before into the womb of the Most Blessed Virgin to accomplish the miracle of the divine Presence, is yet one more instance of the systematic and tacit negation of the Real Presence.

Note, too, the eliminations:

- of the genuflections (no more than three remain to the priest, and one, with certain exceptions, to the people, at the Consecration);
- of the purification of the priest’s fingers in the chalice; of the preservation from all profane contact of the priest’s fingers after the Consecration;
- of the purification of the vessels, which need not be immediate, nor made on the corporal;
- of the pall protecting the chalice;
- of the internal gilding of sacred vessels;
- of the consecration of movable altars;
- of the sacred stone and relics in the movable altar or upon the *mensa*—when celebration does not occur in sacred precincts (this distinction leads straight to “eucharistic suppers” in private houses);
- of the three altar cloths, reduced to one only;
- of thanksgiving kneeling (replaced by a thanksgiving, *seated*, on the part of priest and people, a logical enough complement to Communion standing);

---

<sup>9</sup> Contradicting what is prescribed by Vatican II. (*Sacros. Conc.*, no. 48)

<sup>10</sup> “Eucharistic Prayer.” [Ed’s note]



- of all the ancient prescriptions in the case of the consecrated Host falling, which are now reduced to a single, casual direction: “*reverenter accipiatur*” (no. 239);
- all these things only serve to emphasize how outrageously faith in the dogma of the Real Presence is implicitly repudiated.

3. *The function assigned to the altar* (no. 262). The altar is almost always called *mensa*.<sup>11</sup> “*The altar or table of the Lord, which is the center of the whole Eucharistic liturgy*” (no. 49, cf. 262). It is laid down that the altar must be detached from the walls so that it is possible to walk round it and celebration may be facing the people (no. 262); also that the altar must be the center of the assembly of the faithful so that their attention is drawn spontaneously toward it (*ibid*). But a comparison of nos. 262 and 276 would seem to suggest that the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament on this altar is excluded. This will mark an irreparable dichotomy between the presence, in the celebrant, of the eternal High Priest and that same Presence brought about sacramentally. Before, they were *one and the same presence*.<sup>12</sup>

Now it is recommended that the Blessed Sacrament be kept in a place apart for the private devotion of the people (almost as though it were a question of devotion to a relic of some kind) so that, on going into a church, attention will no longer be focused upon the tabernacle but upon a stripped bare table. Once again the contrast is made between *private piety* and *liturgical piety*: altar is set up against altar.

In the insistent recommendation to distribute in Communion the Species consecrated during the same Mass, indeed to consecrate a loaf<sup>13</sup> for the priest to distribute to at least some of the faithful, we find reasserted a disparaging attitude toward the tabernacle, as toward every form of Eucharistic piety outside of the Mass. This constitutes yet another violent blow to faith in the Real Presence as long as the consecrated Species remain.<sup>14</sup>

4. *The formulae of consecration*. The ancient formula of consecration was properly a sacramental, not a narrative one. This was shown above all by three things:

---

<sup>11</sup> The altar’s primary function is recognized once (no. 259): “*the altar on which the sacrifice of the Cross is renewed under the sacramental signs*.” This single reference does not seem to remove to any extent the equivocations of the other repeated designation.

<sup>12</sup> “*To separate the tabernacle from the altar is tantamount to separating two things which of their very nature must remain together*.” (Pius XII, Allocution to the International Liturgy Congress. Assisi-Rome, Sept. 18-23, 1956) Cf. also *Mediator Dei*, I, 5, note 28.

<sup>13</sup> Rarely in the *Novus Ordo* is the word “hostia” used, a traditional one in liturgical books with its precise significance of “victim.” This needless to say is part of the reformers’ plan to emphasize only the aspects “supper,” “food.”

<sup>14</sup> In accordance with the customary habit of the reformers of substituting and exchanging one thing for another, the Real Presence is made equivalent to the Presence *in the word* (no. 7, 54). But this latter presence is really of quite another nature, having no reality except *in usus*: whilst the former is, in a stable manner, objective and independent of the communication that is made of it in the Sacrament. The formulae “*God speaks to His people... By His word Christ is present in the midst of the faithful*” (no. 33, cf. *Sacros. Conc.* no. 33 and 7), are typically Protestant ones, which strictly speaking, have no meaning, as the presence of God in the word is mediated, bound to an act of the spirit, to the spiritual condition of the individual and limited in time. This error has the most serious consequences; the affirmation (or insinuation) that the Real Presence is bound to the *usus*, and ends together with it.

- a) The Scriptural text not taken up word for word: the Pauline insertion “*mysterium fidei*” was an immediate confession of the priest’s faith in the mystery realized by the Church through the hierarchical priesthood.
- b) The punctuation and typographical lettering: the full stop and new paragraph marking the passage from the narrative mode to the *sacramental and affirmative* one, the sacramental words in larger characters at the center of the page and often in a different color, clearly detached from the historical context. All combined to give the formula *a proper and autonomous value*.
- c) The anamnesis (“*Haec quotiescumque feceritis in mei memoriam facietis*”), which in Greek is “*eis tén emèu anàmnēsín*” (directed to my memory). This referred to Christ operating and not to the mere memory of Him, or of the event: an invitation to recall what He did (“*haec... in mei memoriam facietis*”) in the way He did it, not only His Person, or the Supper. The Pauline formula (“*Hoc facite in meam commemorationem*”) which will now take the place of the old—proclaimed as it will be daily in vernacular languages—will irremediably cause the hearers to concentrate on the *memory* of Christ as the *end* of the Eucharistic action, whilst it is really the beginning. The concluding idea of commemoration will certainly once again take the place of the idea of sacramental action.”<sup>15</sup>

The narrative mode is now emphasized by the formula “*narratio institutionis*” (no. 55d) and repeated by the definition of the anamnesis, in which it is said that “*The Church recalls the memory of Christ Himself*” (no. 556).

In short: the theory put forward by the epiclesis, the modification of the words of Consecration and of the anamnesis, have the effect of modifying the *modus significandi* of the words of Consecration. The consecratory formulae are here pronounced by the priest as the constituents of a historical narrative and no longer enunciated as expressing the categorical and affirmative judgment uttered by Him in whose Person the priest acts: “*Hoc est Corpus Meum*” (not, “*Hoc est Corpus Christi*”).<sup>16</sup>

Furthermore the acclamation assigned to the people immediately after the Consecration: (“*we announce Thy death, O Lord, until Thou comest*”) introduces yet again, under cover of eschatology, the same ambiguity concerning the Real Presence. Without interval or distinction, the expectation of Christ’s Second Coming at the end of time is proclaimed just as the moment when He is substantially present on the altar, almost as though the former, and not the latter, were the true Coming.

This is brought out even more strongly in the formula of optional acclamation no. 2 (Appendix): “*As often as we eat of this bread and drink of this chalice we announce Thy death,*

---

<sup>15</sup> The sacramental action of the institution is emphasized as having come about in Our Lord’s giving the Apostles His Body and Blood “to eat” under the species of bread and wine, not in the act of consecration and in the mystical *separation* therein accomplished of the *Body from the Blood*, essence of the Eucharistic Sacrifice. (Cf. the whole of chapter I, part II— “The cult of the Eucharist”—*Mediator Dei*)

<sup>16</sup> The words of Consecration as inserted in the context of the *Novus Ordo* can be valid by virtue of the minister’s intention. They could also not be valid because they are no longer so *ex vi verborum*, or, more precisely, by virtue of the *modus significandi* they had in the Mass up to the present time.

Will priests of the near future who have not received the traditional formation, and who rely on the *Novus Ordo* with the intention of “doing what the Church does” consecrate validly? One may be allowed to doubt it.

*O Lord, until Thou comest,*” where the juxtaposition of the different realities of immolation and eating, of the Real Presence and of Christ’s Second Coming, reaches the height of ambiguity.<sup>17</sup>

## V

We now come to the realization of the Sacrifice, the four elements of which were:

- 1) Christ,
- 2) the priest,
- 3) the Church,
- 4) the faithful present.

In the *Novus Ordo*, the position attributed to the faithful is autonomous (*absoluta*), hence totally false from the opening definition— “*Missa est sacra synaxis seu congregatio populi*”—to the priest’s salutation to the people which is meant to convey to the assembled community the “presence” of the Lord (no. 28). “*Qua salutatione et populi responsione manifestatur ecclesiae congregatae mysterium.*”

A true presence, certainly, of Christ but only spiritual, and a mystery of the Church, but solely as assembly manifesting and soliciting such a presence.

This interpretation is constantly underlined: by the obsessive references to the communal character of the Mass (nos. 74-152); by the unheard of distinction between “*missa cum populo*” and “*missa sine populo*” (nos. 203-231); by the definition of the “*oratio universalis seu fidelium*” (DO. 45), where once more we find stressed the “sacerdotal office” of the people (“*populus sui sacerdotii munus excercens*”) presented in an equivocal way because its subordination to that of the priest is not mentioned, and all the more since the priest, as consecrated mediator, makes himself the interpreter of all the intentions of the people in the *Te igitur* and the two *Memento*.

In *Præx eucharistica III (Vere sanctus, p. 123)* the following words are addressed to the Lord: “*from age to age you gather a people to Thyself, in order that from east to west a perfect offering may be made to the glory of Thy name,*” the *in order that* making it appear that the people, rather than the priest<sup>18</sup> are the *indispensable* element in the celebration; and since not even here is it made clear who the offerer is, the people themselves appear to be invested with *autonomous priestly powers*. From this step it would not be surprising if, before long, the people were authorized to join the priest in pronouncing the consecrating formulae (which actually seems here and there to have already occurred).

The priest’s position is minimized, changed and falsified. Firstly in relation to the people for whom he is, for the most part, a mere president, or brother, instead of the consecrated minister celebrating *in persona Christi*. Secondly in relation to the Church, as a “*quidam de populo.*” In

---

<sup>17</sup> Let it not be said, according to the well-known Protestant critical procedure, that these phrases belong to the same scriptural context. The Church has always avoided their juxtaposition and superimposition precisely in order to avoid any confusion of the *different realities* here expressed.

<sup>18</sup> As against the Lutherans who affirmed that all Christians are priests and hence offerers of the Supper, see A. Tanquerey: *Synopsis theologiae dogmaticae*, vol. III, Desclee, 1930: “*Each and every priest is strictly speaking, a secondary minister of the sacrifice of the Mass. Christ Himself is the principal minister. The faithful offer through the intermediary of the priest but not in the strict sense.*” (Cf. Conc. Trid. XXII, Can. 2)

the definition of the epiclesis (no. 55), the invocations are attributed anonymously to the Church: the part of the priest has vanished.

In the *Confiteor* which has now become collective, he is no longer judge, witness and intercessor with God; so it is logical that he is no longer empowered to give the absolution, which has been suppressed. He is integrated with the *fratres*. Even the server addresses him as much in the *Confiteor* of the “*Missa sine populo*.”

Already, prior to this latest reform, the significant distinction between the Communion of the priest—the moment in which the Eternal High Priest and the one acting in His Person were brought together in closest union—and the Communion of the faithful had been suppressed.

Not a word do we now find as to the priest’s power to sacrifice, or about his act of consecration, the bringing about through him of the Eucharistic Presence. He now appears as nothing more than a Protestant minister.

The disappearance, or optional use, of many sacred vestments (in certain cases the alb and stole are sufficient—n. 298) obliterates even more the original conformity with Christ: the priest is no more clothed with all His virtues, becoming merely a “graduate” whom one or two signs may distinguish from the mass of people:<sup>19</sup> “*a little more a man than the rest*” to quote the involuntarily humorous definition by a Dominican preacher.<sup>20</sup> Again, as with the “table” and the altar, there is separated what God has united: the sole Priesthood of the Word of God.

Finally, there is the Church’s position in relation to Christ. In one case, namely the “*missa sine populo*” is the Mass acknowledged to be “*Actio Christi et Ecclesiae*” (no. 4, *cf. Presb. Ord.* no. 13), whereas in the case of the “*missa cum populo*” this is not referred to except for the purpose of “*remembering Christ*” and sanctifying those present. The words used are: “*In offering the sacrifice **through Christ in the Holy Ghost** to God the Father, the priest associates the people with himself.*” (no. 60), instead of words which would associate the people *with Christ* Who offers *Himself* “*per Spiritum Sanctum Deo Patri...*”

In this context the following are to be noted:

- 1) the very serious omission of the phrase “*Per Christum Dominum Nostrum*,” the guarantee of being heard given to the Church in every age (John XIV, 13-14; 15; 16; 23; 24);
- 2) the all-pervading “paschalism,” almost as though there were no other, quite different and equally important aspects of the communication of grace;
- 3) the very strange and dubious eschatologism whereby the communication of supernatural grace, a reality which is permanent and eternal, is brought down to the dimensions of time: we hear of a people on the march, a pilgrim Church—no longer militant against the *Potestas tenebrarum*—looking toward a future which having lost its link with eternity is conceived in purely temporal terms.

The Church—One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic—is diminished as such in the formula that, in the *Prex Eucharistica IV*, has taken the place of the prayer of the Roman Canon “*on behalf of all*

---

<sup>19</sup> We note in passing an incredible innovation which is sure to have the most serious psychological effects: the Good Friday liturgy in red vestments instead of black (no. 308b)—the commemoration, that is of any martyr, instead of the mourning of the whole Church for her Founder. (*Cf. Mediator Dei*, I, 5, note 28)

<sup>20</sup> Fr. Roquet, O.P., to the Dominicans of Bethany, at Plesschenet.

*orthodox believers of the Catholic and apostolic faith.*” Now they are no more nor less than: “*all who seek you with a sincere heart.*”

Again, in the Memento of the dead, these have no longer passed on “*with the sign of faith and sleep the sleep of peace,*” but only “*who have died in the peace of Thy Christ,*” and to them are added, with further obvious detriment to the concept of visible unity, the host of all the dead “*whose faith is known to Thee alone.*”

Furthermore, in none of the three new Eucharistic Prayers is there any reference, as has already been said, to the state of suffering of those who have died, in none the possibility of a particular *Memento*: all of this, again, must *undermine faith in the propitiatory and redemptive nature of the Sacrifice.*<sup>21</sup>

Desacralizing omissions everywhere debase the mystery of the Church. She is not presented above all as a sacred hierarchy: angels and saints are reduced to anonymity in the second part of the collective Confiteor: they have disappeared, as witnesses and judges, in the person of St. Michael, from the first.<sup>22</sup> The various hierarchies of angels have also disappeared (and this is without precedent) from the new *Preface of Prex II*. In the *Communicantes* the reminder of the Pontiffs and holy martyrs on whom the Church of Rome is founded and who were, without doubt, the transmitters of the apostolic traditions, destined to be completed in what became, with St. Gregory, the Roman Mass, has been suppressed. In the *Libera nos* the Blessed Virgin, the Apostles and all the Saints are no longer mentioned: her and their intercession is thus no longer asked, even in time of peril.

The unity of the Church is gravely compromised by the wholly intolerable omission from the entire *Ordo*, including the three new Eucharistic Prayers, of the names of the Apostles Peter and Paul, Founders of the Church of Rome, and the names of the other Apostles, foundation and mark of the one and universal Church, the only remaining mention being in the *Communicantes* of the Roman Canon.

A clear attack upon the dogma of the Communion of Saints is the omission, when the priest is celebrating without a server, of all the salutations, and the final blessing, not to speak of the *Ite missa est*<sup>23</sup> now not even said in Masses celebrated with a server.

The double *Confiteor* showed how the priest—in his capacity of Christ’s Minister, bowing down and acknowledging himself unworthy of his sublime mission, of the “*tremendum mysterium*” about to be accomplished by him and of even (in the *Aufer a nobis*) entering into the Holy of Holies—invoked the intercession (in the *Oramus te, Domine*) of the merits of the martyrs whose relics were sealed in the altar. Both these prayers have been suppressed; what has been said previously in respect of the double *Confiteor* and the double Communion is equally relevant here.

---

<sup>21</sup> In some translations of the Roman Canon, the “*locus refrigerii lucis et pacis*” was rendered as a simple state (“*blessedness, light, peace*”). What is to be said then of the disappearance of every explicit reference to the Church suffering?

<sup>22</sup> In all this welter of curtailment a single enrichment only: the mention of omission in the accusation of sins at the *Confiteor*.

<sup>23</sup> At the press conference introducing the *Ordo*, Fr. Lecuyer, in what appears to be, objectively speaking, a profession of purely rationalistic faith, spoke of converting the *salutationes* in the “*Missa sine populo*” into “*Dominus tecum,*” “*Ora, frater,*” etc., “*so that there should be nothing which does not correspond with the truth.*”

The outward setting of the Sacrifice, evidence of its sacred character, has been profaned. See, for example, what is laid down for celebration outside sacred precincts, in which the altar may be replaced by a simple *mensa* without consecrated stone or relic, and with a single cloth (nos. 260, 265). Here too all that has been previously said with regard to the Real Presence applies, the disassociation of the *convivium* and of the sacrifice of the supper from the Real Presence Itself.

The process of desacralization is completed thanks to the new procedures for the offering: the reference to ordinary not unleavened bread; altar servers (and lay people at Communion *sub utraque specie*) being allowed to handle sacred vessels (no. 244d); the distracting atmosphere created by the ceaseless coming and going of priest, deacon, subdeacon, psalmist, commentator (the priest becomes a commentator himself from his constantly being required to “explain” what he is about to accomplish)—of readers (men and women), of servers or laymen welcoming people at the door and escorting them to their places whilst other carry and sort offerings. And in the midst of all this prescribed activity, the “*mulier idonea*”<sup>24</sup> (anti-scriptural and anti-Pauline) who for the first time in the tradition of the Church will be authorized to read the lesson and also perform other “*ministeria quae extra presbyterium peraguntur*” (no. 70). Finally, there is the concelebration mania, which will end by destroying Eucharistic piety in the priest, by overshadowing the central figure of Christ, sole Priest and Victim, in a collective presence of concelebrants.<sup>25</sup>

## VI

We have limited ourselves to a summary evaluation of the new Ordo where it deviates most seriously from the theology of the Catholic Mass and our observations touch only those deviations that are typical. A complete evaluation of all the pitfalls, the dangers, the spiritually and psychologically destructive elements contained in the document—whether in text, rubrics or instructions—would be a vast undertaking.

No more than a passing glance has been taken at the three new Canons, since these have already come in for repeated and authoritative criticism, both as to form and substance. The second of them<sup>26</sup> gave immediate scandal to the faithful on account of its brevity. Of Canon II it has been well said, amongst other things, that it could be recited with perfect tranquility of conscience by a priest who no longer believes either in transubstantiation or in the sacrificial character of the Mass—hence even by a Protestant minister.

The new Missal was introduced in Rome as “*a text of ample pastoral matter*” and “*more pastoral than juridical*” which the Episcopal Conferences would be able to utilize according to the varying circumstances and genius of different peoples. In this same Apostolic Constitution we read: “*we have introduced into the new missal legitimate variations and adaptations.*” Besides, Section I of the new Congregation for Divine Worship will be responsible “*for the*

---

<sup>24</sup> Meaning in Latin: “*suitable woman.*” [Ed’s note]

<sup>25</sup> We note in this connection that it seems lawful for priests obliged to celebrate alone either before or after concelebration to communicate again *sub utraque specie* during concelebration.

<sup>26</sup> It has been presented as “The Canon of Hippolytus” but in fact nothing remains of this but a few remembered words.

*publication and constant revision of the liturgical books.*” The last official bulletin of the Liturgical Institutes of Germany, Switzerland and Austria<sup>27</sup> says:

The Latin texts will now have to be translated into the languages of the various peoples: the ‘Roman’ style will have to be adopted to the individuality of the local Churches: that which was conceived beyond time must be transposed into the changing context of concrete situations in the constant flux of the Universal Church and of its myriad congregations.

The Apostolic Constitution itself gives the *coup de grace* to the Church’s universal language (contrary to the express will of Vatican Council II) with the bland affirmation that “*in such a variety of tongues one (?) and the same prayer of all ...may ascend more fragrant than any incense.*”

The demise of Latin may therefore be taken for granted; that of Gregorian chant—which even the Council recognized as “*liturgiae romanae proprium*” (*Sacros. Conc.*, no. 116), ordering that “*principem locum obtineat*” (*ibid.*)—will logically follow, with the freedom of choice, amongst other things, of the texts of Introit and Gradual.

From the outset therefore the new rite is launched as *pluralistic and experimental*, bound to time and place. Unity of worship, thus swept away for good and all, what will now become of the unity of faith that went with it, and which, we were always told, was to be defended without compromise?

It is evident that the *Novus Ordo* has no intention of presenting the Faith as taught by the Council of Trent, to which, nonetheless, the Catholic conscience is bound forever. With the promulgation of the *Novus Ordo*, the loyal Catholic is thus faced with a most tragic alternative.

## VII

The Apostolic Constitution makes explicit reference to a wealth of piety and teaching in the *Novus Ordo* borrowed from the Eastern Churches. The result—utterly remote from and even opposed to the inspiration of the oriental Liturgies—can only repel the faithful of the Eastern Rites. What, in truth, do these ecumenical options amount to? Basically to the multiplicity of anaphora (but nothing approaching their beauty and complexity), to the presence of the deacons, to Communion *sub utraque specie*. Against this the *Ordo* would appear to have been deliberately shorn of everything which in the Liturgy of Rome came close to those of the East.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, in

---

<sup>27</sup> “*Gottesdienst*,” no. 9, May 14, 1969.

<sup>28</sup> One has only to think of the Byzantine liturgy, for example, with its reiterated and lengthy penitential prayers; the solemn rites of vesting of the celebrant and deacon: the preparation of the offerings at the *proskomidia*, a complete rite in itself: the continual presence in the prayers, even those of the offerings, of the Blessed Virgin, the Saints and Choirs of Angels (who are actually invoked, at the entrance with the Gospel, as “*invisibly celebrating*,” the choir identifying itself with them in the Cherubicon): the *iconostasis* which divides the sanctuary from the rest of the church, the clergy from the people; the hidden Consecration, symbolizing the divine mystery to which the entire liturgy alludes; the celebrant’s position *versus ad Deum*, never *versus ad populum*; Communion given always and only by the celebrant; the continual marks of profound adoration shown to the Sacred Species; the essentially contemplative attitude of the people. The fact that these liturgies, even in their less solemn forms, last for over an hour, and are constantly defined as “*tremendous and unutterable... celestial, life-giving mysteries...*” need no elaborating. It is finally worth noting how in the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, and in that of St. Basil, the concept of “supper” or “banquet” appears clearly subordinate to that of sacrifice, as it did in the Roman Mass.

abandoning its unmistakable and immemorial Roman character, the *Ordo* lost what was spiritually precious of its own. Its place has been taken by elements which bring it closer only to certain other reformed liturgies (not even to those closest to Catholicism) and which debase it at the same time. The East will be ever more alienated, as it already has been by the preceding liturgical reforms.

By way of compensation the new Liturgy will be the delight of the various groups who, hovering on the verge of apostasy, are wreaking havoc in the Church of God, poisoning her organism and undermining her unity of doctrine, worship, morals and discipline in a spiritual crisis without precedent.

## VIII

St. Pius V had the Roman Missal drawn up (as the present Apostolic Constitution itself recalls) so that it might be an instrument of unity among Catholics. In conformity with the injunctions of the Council of Trent it was to exclude all danger, in liturgical worship of errors against the Faith, then threatened by the Protestant Reformation. The gravity of the situation fully justified, and even rendered prophetic, the saintly Pontiff's solemn warning given at the end of the bull promulgating his missal: "*Should anyone presume to tamper with this, let him know that he shall incur the wrath of God Almighty and of his Blessed Apostles, Peter and Paul*" (*Quo Primum*. July 13, 1570).<sup>29</sup>

When the *Novus Ordo* was presented at the Vatican Press Office, it was asserted with great audacity that the reasons which prompted the Tridentine decrees are no longer valid. Not only do they still apply, but there also exist, as we do not hesitate to affirm, very much more serious ones today. It was precisely in order to ward off the dangers which in every century threaten the purity of the deposit of faith ("*depositum custodi, devitans profanas vocum novitates.*"—I Tim. VI, 20) that the Church has had to erect under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost the defenses of her dogmatic definitions and doctrinal pronouncements. These were immediately reflected in her worship, which became the most complete monument of her faith. To try and bring the Church's worship back at all cost to the ancient practice by refashioning, artificially and with that "*unhealthy archeologism*" so roundly condemned by Pius XII,<sup>30</sup> what in earlier times had the

---

<sup>29</sup> In Session XXIII (decree on the Most Holy Eucharist), the Council of Trent manifested its intention "*ut stirpitibus convelleret zizania execrabilium errorum et schismatum, quae inimicus homo... in doctrina fidei usu et cultu Sacrosanctae Eucharistiae superseminavit*—Mt. 13, 25 et seq.—*quam alioqui Salvator noster in Ecclesia sua tamquam symbolum reliquit eius unitatis et caritatis, qua Christianos omnes inter se coniunctos et copulatos, esse voluit.*" (DB, 873)

<sup>30</sup>

To go back in mind and heart to the sources of the sacred liturgy is wise and praiseworthy. The study of liturgical origins enables us to understand better the significance of festivals and the meanings of liturgical formulas and ceremonies. *But the desire to restore everything indiscriminately to its ancient condition is neither wise nor praiseworthy. It would be wrong, for example, to want the altar restored to its ancient form of table, to want black eliminated from liturgical colors, and pictures and statues excluded from our churches, to require crucifixes that do not represent the bitter suffering of the Divine Redeemer...* This attitude is to attempt to revive the "archeologism" [*i.e.*, the error of "antiquarianism"—Ed's note] to which the pseudo-synod of Pistoia gave rise; it seeks also to reintroduce the many pernicious errors which to that synod and resulted from it and which the Church in her capacity of watchful guardian of the "deposit of



grace of original spontaneity means—as we see today only too clearly—to dismantle all the theological ramparts erected for the protection of the Rite and to take away all the beauty by which it was enriched over the centuries.

And all this at one of the most critical moments—if not the most critical moment—of the Church’s history! Today, division and schism are officially acknowledged to exist not only outside of but within the Church.<sup>31</sup> Her unity is not only threatened but already tragically compromised.<sup>32</sup> Errors against the Faith are not merely insinuated but positively imposed by means of liturgical abuses and aberrations which have been equally acknowledged.<sup>33</sup> To abandon a liturgical tradition which for four centuries was both the sign and the pledge of unity of worship<sup>34</sup> (and to replace it with another which cannot but be a sign of division by virtue of the countless liberties implicitly authorized, and which teems with insinuations or manifest errors against the integrity of the Catholic religion) is, we feel in conscience bound to proclaim, an incalculable error.

---

faith” entrusted to her by her Divine Founder, has rightly condemned. (*Mediator Dei*, C.T.S. trans., arts. 66 and 68)

<sup>31</sup> “A practically schismatic ferment divides, subdivides, splits the Church...” (Paul VI, Homily, *Coena Domini* 1969)

<sup>32</sup> “There are also amongst us those ‘schismata,’ those ‘scissurae’ which St. Paul in I Corinthians sadly denounces.” (Cf. Paul VI, *ibid.*)

<sup>33</sup> It is well-known how Vatican II is today being “contested” by the very men who gloried in being its leaders, those who—whilst the Pope in closing the Council declared that it had changed nothing—came away determined to “explode” the content in the process of actual application. Alas that the Holy See, with a haste that is really unexplainable, should appear to have given approval and even encouragement, through the *Consilium ad exequendam Constitutionem de Sacra Liturgia*, to an ever increasing infidelity to the Council, from such apparently formal aspects as Latin, Gregorian, the suppression of venerable rites and ritual, to the substantial ones now sanctioned by the *Novus Ordo*. To the disastrous consequences, which we have endeavored to set out, must be added those which, with psychologically even greater effect, will make themselves felt in the fields of discipline and of the Church’s teaching authority, by undermining, with the standing of the Holy See, the docility due to its rulings.

<sup>34</sup>

...Do not let us deceive ourselves with the suggestion that the Church, which has become great and majestic for the glory of God, as a magnificent temple of His, must be brought back to its original and smallest proportions, as though they were the only true ones, the only good ones... (Paul VI, *Ecclesiam suam*)