

## Benedict XVI and the Mass

Pope Benedict XVI was a *peritus* at Vatican Council II, that is, a theological and liturgical “expert”. He was part of the *revolution*. In his earlier writings during and immediately after the Council, he was optimistic and could probably be fairly characterized as a liberal reformer. He observed the effects of the Council for 42 (1965-2007) years. After 10 years of anything but the renewal that was hoped for, he began to reconsider his views. Here are a few of his observations over time since the Council (emphasis mine):

Judge for yourself what appears to be happening in the thought of Cardinal Ratzinger / Benedict XVI relative to the Council and to the *Novus Ordo* in the following quotes:

Where does he start?

Where does his focus turn?

What are his conclusions?

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From a statement by Cardinal Ratzinger published in the December 24, 1984 English edition of *L'Osservatore Romano*:

"Certainly the results [of Vatican II] seem cruelly opposed to the expectations of everyone, beginning with those of Pope John XXIII and then of Pope Paul VI: expected was a new Catholic unity and instead we have been exposed to self-destruction. Expected was a new enthusiasm, and many wound up discouraged and bored. Expected was a great step forward; instead we find ourselves faced with a progressive process of decadence which has developed for the most part under the sign of a calling back to the Council, and has therefore contributed to discrediting it for many. The net result therefore seems negative. I am repeating here what I said ten years after the conclusion of the work (Vatican II): it is incontrovertible that this period has definitely been unfavorable for the Catholic Church."

This first quote is twenty years after the Council, but confirms an earlier reservation made only 10 years after the conclusion of the Council.

(*L'Osservatore Romano* is the semi-official newspaper of Vatican City.)

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From *The Ratzinger Report*, 1985:

"Many of the concrete effects, as we see them now, do not correspond to the intentions of the Council Fathers, but we certainly cannot say: 'It would have been better if it had not been.' ... I believe, rather, that the true time of Vatican II has not yet come, that its authentic reception has not yet begun: its documents were quickly buried under a pile of superficial or frankly inexact publications. The reading of the letter of the documents will enable us to discover their true spirit.

If thus rediscovered in their truth, those great texts will make it possible for us to understand just what happened and to react with a new vigor. I repeat: the Catholic who clearly and, consequently, painfully perceives the damage that has been wrought in his Church by the misinterpretations of Vatican II must find the possibility of revival in Vatican II itself. The Council is his, it does not belong to those who want to continue along a road whose results have been catastrophic."

A year later, he says that the intentions of the Council Fathers were not followed. By returning to the documents the Fathers authorized and rereading them, maybe we can get it straight. Remember that the “letter” of the document on the liturgy says Latin is to be preserved, and says the vernacular may be used, especially in the readings.

Just how “catastrophic” have the results been?

From *Index of Leading Catholic Indicators*, by Kenneth Jones (of St. Louis).

In the U.S.:

The number of priests had more than doubled between 1930 and 1965 to a total of 58000. (Over 12 priests for every 10000 Catholics.) By 2002 the number of priests had dropped to 45000. (7 priests for every 10000 Catholics.) And the remaining priests were aging.

The number of ordinations plummeted from 1575 in 1965 to 450 in 2002.

The number of parochial schools dropped from 10503 in 1965 to 6623 in 2002.

The number of Jesuit seminarians in 1965 was 3559. In 2002, there were 389.

(A Fordham University study by Professor James Lothian concluded that where 65 percent of Catholics went to Mass every Sunday in 1965, only 25 percent went every Sunday in 2000.)

There is a logical fallacy called *post hoc, propter hoc* – after this (therefore) on account of this. It is a fair question to ask whether we can attribute these findings to VCI or the changes to the liturgy. There is also a legal saying – *res ipsa loquitur* – the thing speaks for itself.

One thing is certain: This decline was NOT caused by the Traditional Latin Mass – it had been locked away in the refrigerator.

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From Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger's address to the Chilean bishops, July 13, 1988:

"While there are many motives that might have led a great number of people to seek a refuge in the traditional liturgy, the chief one is that they find the dignity of the sacred preserved there.

After the Council there were many priests who deliberately raised 'desacralization' to the level of a program... they put aside the sacred vestments; they have depoliticized the churches as much as they could of that splendor which brings to the sacred; and they have reduced the liturgy to the language and the gestures of ordinary life, by means of greetings, common signs of friendship, and such things...

That which previously was considered most holy -- the form in which the liturgy was handed down -- suddenly appears as the most forbidden of all things, the one thing that can safely be prohibited."

Three years later, he gets specific about the problems in the liturgy. The occasion for this address was ten days after the *Ecclesia Dei motu proprio* of JP2 called for “a generous application” of the Indult for the TLM.

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From Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger's preface to *The Reform of the Roman Liturgy, Its Problems and Background* by Msgr. Klaus Gamber, 1993:

"It is difficult to say briefly what is important in this quarrel of liturgists and what is not. But perhaps the following will be useful. J.A. Jungmann, one of the truly great liturgists of our century, defined the liturgy of his time, such as it could be understood in the light of historical research, as "liturgy which is the fruit of development"; probably in contrast with the Eastern notion which does not see liturgy as developing or growing in history, but only the reflection of the eternal liturgy, whose light, through the sacred celebration, illumines our changing times with its unchanging beauty and grandeur. Both conceptions are legitimate and are not irreconcilable....

What happened after the Council (Vatican II) was something else entirely: in place of liturgy as the fruit of development over centuries came fabricated liturgy. We abandoned the organic process of growth and development over centuries, and replaced it - as in a manufacturing process - with a fabrication, a banal, on-the-spot product."

Five years later, he is writing a preface (to the French edition) of a book that was extremely critical of the reform of the liturgy, written by a renowned liturgist, Msgr Gamber. And he, like Gamber, is very critical of the new liturgy.

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From *Milestones* by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, 1998:

"...the crisis in the Church that we are experiencing today is to a large extent due to the disintegration of the liturgy."

Finally, yet another five years later, we arrive at the focus of his criticism of what happened after Vatican Council II. The liturgy has “disintegrated.”

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From *The Spirit of the Liturgy* by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, 2001:

"Today celebration *versus populum* really does look like the characteristic fruit of Vatican II's liturgical renewal. In fact it is the most conspicuous consequence of a reordering that not only signifies a new external arrangement of the places dedicated to the liturgy, but also brings with it a new idea of the essence of the liturgy – the liturgy as a communal meal

(more...)

Three years later, he writes a book on the liturgy, explaining what is wrong and why it is wrong (The late Msgr. Gamber would, I think, be pleased.)

The orientation of the priest is wrong and based upon a misunderstanding of the structure of St. Peter's Basilica.

If you look at the prayers the priest says, by far the majority of the prayers are addressed to God the Father:

I confess to almighty God....

The Opening Prayer

Glory to God in the highest....

Our Father who art in heaven....

Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation....

Father, all powerful and ever-living God....

Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord God of Hosts....

All the Eucharistic Prayers (Father, you are holy indeed...)

Why should the priest be looking at the congregation rather than everybody facing “liturgical east”?

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From *The Spirit of the Liturgy* by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, 2001:

"...the Eucharist that Christians celebrate really cannot adequately be described by the term "meal". True, the Lord established the new reality of Christian worship within the framework of a Jewish (Passover) meal, but it was precisely this new reality, not the meal as such, that he commanded us to repeat. Very soon the new reality was separated from its ancient context and found its proper and suitable form, a form already predetermined by the fact that the Eucharist refers back to the Cross and thus to the transformation of Temple sacrifice into worship of God...."

The emphasis on meal is misplaced. The Sacrifice of the Cross reenacted on the altar is the “new reality” that is separated from the context of the meal in the early Church.

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From *Voici quel est notre Dieu* (Here is our God), p. 29 - Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, 2001:

"It is necessary to stop the ban of the liturgy that was in force until 1970. Currently, anyone who defends the validity of that liturgy or who practices it, is treated like a leper: all tolerance ceases. The like has never been seen before in the Church's entire history. By adopting this attitude toward them, they despise the Church's entire past."

(And this, thankfully, he did with *Summorum Pontificum*.)

If we go back once more to the Council document *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, we find that its “Introduction” concludes with the following paragraph:

"Finally, in **faithful obedience to tradition**, the sacred Council declares that Holy Mother Church holds all lawfully recognized rites to be of equal right and dignity, that she wishes to preserve them in future and foster them in every way. The Council also desires that, where necessary, the rites be revised carefully in the light of sound tradition, and that they be given new vigor to meet present-day circumstances and needs."

How do you “foster” something by banning it? The rites were not “revised carefully” and only “where necessary” but instead, very hastily and totally. In the case of the Mass, revision turned sacrifice to meal, universal Latin to localized vernacular, and focus from *versus Deum* to *versus populum*. None of this was intended by the majority of the Council fathers nor authorized in *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. In light of what happened after the Council, “faithful obedience to tradition” would be risible were it not so tragic.

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Pope Benedict addressing the Roman Curia, December 5, 2006:

"The last event of this year on which I wish to reflect here is the celebration of the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council 40 years ago.... The question arises: Why has the implementation of the Council, in large parts of the Church, thus far been so difficult? ... Well, it all depends on the correct interpretation of the Council or - as we would say today - on its proper hermeneutics, the correct key to its interpretation and application.... On the one hand, there is an interpretation that would call "a hermeneutic of discontinuity and rupture" ... On the other, there is the "hermeneutic of reform", of renewal in the continuity of the one subject-Church which the Lord has given to us."

This last quote from Joseph Ratzinger, now speaking as Pope Benedict XVI with a Pontiff's view for the entire Church, returns to his concern for the implementation of Vatican Council II. It recalls his remark in 1985 when he said “the reading of the letter of the documents (of VCI) will enable us to discover their true spirit”.

If we reread *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, perhaps we can discover a way to “reform” the “reform” that does not “rupture” the Church into pre-conciliar and post-conciliar pieces.

(The next section identifies a significant textual flaw in the *Novus Ordo / Mass of Paul VI / Ordinary Form*, and explains its consequences.)