

## MORE *NOVUS ORDO MISSAE* SHORTCOMINGS: THE READINGS

### READINGS: Scriptural

Let's start with what should be the most obvious benefit of the *Novus Ordo Missae* (NOM) - the expanded readings. The NOM has three cycles (A,B, & C) of readings for Sunday and two cycles (Year I and Year II) for weekdays, so we have a much greater quantity of sacred scripture from the NOM. So, why is this not a benefit? First there is the problem of saturation vs repetition. There is only so much the average churchgoer can absorb if Sunday Mass is the only time they attend Mass and they have no time for outside Bible study. The majority of this type would benefit more from an annual cycle like the one the Traditional Latin Mass (TLM) provides, where every 52 weeks you hear the same set of readings. Together with Holy Days of Obligation, this amounts to about 60 Masses, give or take, per year. The readings become comfortable, like an old pair of shoes. And different celebrants may provide their own "take" in the homily every year rather than every third year. While the breadth of readings is narrower, the depth of understanding may well be greater. The second and more serious problem is found in what has been eliminated, what we no longer hear. In the TLM on the important feasts of Holy Thursday and Corpus Christi we hear verses from St. Paul's First Letter to Corinthians 11:23-29, as follows:

23. For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread,
24. And giving thanks, broke and said: Take ye and eat: This is my body, which shall be delivered for you. This do for the commemoration of me.
25. In like manner also the chalice, after he had supped, saying: This chalice is the new testament in my blood. This do ye, as often as you shall drink, for the commemoration of me.
26. For as often as you shall eat this bread and drink the chalice, you shall shew the death of the Lord, until he come.
27. Therefore, whosoever shall eat this bread, or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and of the blood of the Lord.
28. But let a man prove himself: and so let him eat of that bread and drink of the chalice.
29. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord.

Seems perfectly appropriate for the feast about the Last Supper and the feast about the Body of Christ. So, what do we get in the NOM? We get one year with all of two verses from the same letter 1 Corinthians 10:16-17, as follows:

The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because the loaf of bread is one, we, though many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.

Another year we get a reading from Hebrews 9:11-15, as follows:

When Christ came as high priest of the good things that have come to be, passing through the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made by hands, that is, not belonging to this creation, he entered once for all into the sanctuary, not with the blood of goats and calves but with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls and the sprinkling of a heifer's ashes can sanctify those who are defiled so that their flesh is cleansed, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from dead works to worship the living God. For this reason he is mediator of a new covenant: since a death has taken place for deliverance from transgressions under the first covenant, those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance.

And finally, in the third year we get close:

I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night he was handed over, took bread, and, after he had given thanks, broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes.

But what happened to those last three verses?

Therefore whosoever shall eat this bread, or drink of the chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the Body and the Blood of the Lord. But let a man prove himself; and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of the chalice. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the Body of the Lord.

Paul's didactic purpose is evident in the "therefore." Without the last three verses, we miss his point in this excerpt from First Corinthians. The deliberate omission of "uncomfortable" biblical texts is commonplace in the NOM. Those last three verses are gone from any and all NOM readings of any Mass, weekday or Sunday. The NOM Catholic is spared having to consider them before receiving the Body and Blood of Christ. This strikes another blow at belief in the Real Presence.

One more example of a total omission from the NOM. The text from Matthew 23:34-39 is deemed sufficiently important that the TLM has it on the day after Christmas, St. Stephen Protomartyr, and for 08/03, The Finding of the Body of St. Stephen:

At that time Jesus said to the scribes and pharisees: Behold I send to you prophets and wise men and scribes, and some of them you will put to death and crucify, and some you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city: that upon you may come all the just blood that hath been shed upon the earth, from the blood of Abel the just even unto the blood of Zacharias the son of Barachias, whom you killed between the temple and the altar. Amen I say to you, all these things shall come upon this generation. Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered together thy children, as the hen doth gather her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldst not? Behold your house shall be left to you desolate.  
For I say to you, you shall not see me henceforth, till you say: Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.

Too harsh for the Christ we imagine today? Anti-semitic? Why completely omitted? (The last line is the source of the *Benedictus* even in the Ordinary of the Ordinary Form. So this reading forms the context for it.)

The first example I attribute to ecumenism vis-a-vis Protestants who do not believe in the Real Presence. The second I also attribute to ecumenism, this time towards the Jews. So, what should be a benefit of the NOM, instead becomes an impoverishment.

## **READINGS: *Orationes***

Not just scriptural readings have been omitted, but also the *Orationes* - what we call the Collects, Secrets, and Postcommunions have been sanitized. The late Father Anthony Cekada, unfortunately a sedevacantist, but nonetheless a fine scholar, notes that: "The traditional Missal contains 1182 orations. About 760 of those were dropped entirely. Of the approximately 36% which remained, the revisers altered over half before introducing them

into the new Missal. Thus, only 17% of the orations from the old Missal made it untouched into the new."<sup>iii</sup> He provides many examples, of which I will quote one for each kind so that the pattern emerges:

The Collect for the 3rd Sunday after Pentecost in the TLM is:

O God, the Protector of those who put their trust in Thee, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy: multiply upon us Thy mercy, that with Thee as our ruler, and guide, we may so pass through things temporal, that we may not lose those which are eternal.

In the NOM we get this conclusion:

we may now so use transient things that we may cling to those things which endure.

No threat of damnation here.

The Secret from the Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost in the TLM is:

Look graciously we beseech Thee, O Lord, upon our service; that what we offer may be a gift acceptable unto Thee, and a support to us in our weakness.

This now ends in the NOM as:

and be to us an increase of charity.

"Weakness" ? Who's weak?

The Postcommunion for the Second Sunday of Advent in the TLM is:

Filled with the food of spiritual nourishment, we humbly entreat Thee, O Lord, that by our partaking of this Mystery, Thou wouldst teach us to despise the things of earth, and to love those of heaven.

In the NOM this becomes:

to consider wisely earthly things and cleave to heavenly things.

We of course have nothing to fear from the world (or the flesh, or the devil). The motivation for these changes? Cekada says: "Contemporary man can no longer bear to hear of the depravity of sin, the wounds sin inflicts, sin as snares of wickedness, sin gravely offending divine majesty, and sin as the way to perdition."<sup>iii</sup> Luther said "Sin boldly, but let your trust in Christ be stronger." An ecumenical reason for sanitizing references to sin?

One final example of *Orationes* gone astray comes again from that already sadly altered Mass of Holy Thursday. When I was looking at the example of the altered Epistle reading from First Corinthians, I noticed that the TLM Collect is as follows:

O God, from whom Judas received the punishment of his guilt, and the thief the reward of his confession,

grant us the effect of Thy clemency;  
that even as in His passion our Lord Jesus Christ  
gave to each a different recompense according to his merits,  
so may He deliver us from our old sins  
and grant us the grace of His Resurrection.

This totally reconstructed Collect becomes in the NOM:

O God, who have called us to participate  
in this most sacred Supper,  
in which your Only Begotten Son,  
when about to hand himself over to death,  
entrusted to the Church a sacrifice new for all eternity,  
the banquet of his love,  
grant, we pray,  
that we may draw from so great a mystery,  
the fullness of charity and of life.

Let's unpack the multiple differences between these two. The old Collect reflects the belief that Judas Iscariot went to Hell and that the thief crucified with Christ went to Heaven, each "according to his merits." And we are to hope that by the grace of God, our faith and good works, we may make the journey of the thief, and not that of Judas. Many Protestants believe that by faith alone we are saved – good works not required. Universalism is the heresy that all are saved, hell is empty. (I am reminded of the "pro multis" translation into English as "for all.") Rather than offend the sensibilities of these "separated brethren" this theme of God's justice balanced with His "clemency" when determining our fate is totally absent from the NOM Collect. If we unpack a little further we see there is no guilty party in the NOM Collect. Christ "hand(ed) himself over to death." St. Paul has it as "on the night when he was betrayed." The purpose or end of this exercise in prayer morphs from "grant us the grace of His Resurrection" to a mundane "fullness of charity and of life."

So, in the revised Mass of Holy Thursday we have:

1. Deliberately eliminated any reference to the sacrilege of unworthy reception of Holy Communion (too much emphasis on the Real Presence and sin)
2. Eliminated any mention of good works or "merits" as part and parcel with faith for attaining salvation (too Catholic)
3. Portrayed Christ as the agent of His own betrayal – no sin involved (do we really want to talk about sin?)
4. Replaced the goal of resurrection with one of a "fullness of charity and of life"

In just one Mass we have displaced the Four Last Things: Death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell – a pretty thorough evisceration.

## **READINGS: Conclusion**

The expanded readings of the *Novus Ordo Missae* must be viewed qualitatively not just quantitatively. This requires us to examine not only what has been added but what has been modified and deleted. When we make this examination we find that the drive for ecumenism has led to the elimination of much of traditional Catholic theology regarding the effects of sin, the justice of God, human frailty, and our need for redemption. More has proven not to be better.

- i Anthony Cekada – *Work of Human Hands* – p. 222
- ii *Ibid.* p. 225