

The Traditional Latin Mass

Dear Parishioners,

As you know, our parish has for some time been offering Holy Mass in two ways: what is called the "Ordinary Form" (aka *novus ordo*) and the "Extraordinary Form" (aka Tridentine or Traditional Latin Mass). I would like to offer some brief remarks concerning this topic.

The very first document of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) was something called "The Constitution on the Liturgy" (*Sacrosanctum concilium*). Therein the Bishops called for a "reform" of the liturgy. Following Vatican II, Pope Paul VI established a special commission, called the *Consilium*, to implement this reform. The result in 1970 was a new Roman Missal containing a new form of Mass which almost every Catholic experiences on a regular basis, often called the *novus ordo* (meaning *new order* of Mass).

The new Mass, as everyone knows, is characteristically offered in the vernacular and with the priest facing the people. Receiving Holy Communion in the hand is also common practice. However, it must be noted that although these things are indeed permitted by Holy Mother Church, they were not mandated by the Vatican II. Rather, they are developments that came afterwards. Thus even the new Mass can be offered in Latin and facing the altar (as I noted in a previous bulletin letter). And individual bishops forbid reception of Holy Communion on the hand altogether, but may never forbid receiving in the traditional manner, i.e., on the tongue. This, however is very rare.

However, as Pope Benedict XVI has said, the older form of Mass [found in the Roman Missal of 1962] was never in fact abrogated, although it did fall out of common usage. Throughout the intervening 42 years there have always been Catholics who have remained attached to or have rediscovered the riches of the Traditional Latin Mass, and this phenomenon has been acknowledged by Rome in significant ways.

For example, during his pontificate Pope John Paul II established a special office called the *Ecclesia Dei Commission* to facilitate the offering of Mass in the older form. He also established a special society called the Fraternity of St Peter, to accommodate priests and laity who prefer the older forms of the sacred liturgy, most particularly the Mass.

Pope Benedict XVI furthered this program when in 2007 he issued an authoritative decree (a "motu proprio") entitled *Summorum Pontificum*. In that decree the Holy Father said of the Traditional Mass: "*On account of its venerable and ancient use let it enjoy due honor.*" He continued: "*In parishes where a group of faithful attached to the previous liturgical tradition exists stably, let the pastor willingly accede to their requests for the celebration of the Holy Mass according to the rite of the Roman Missal published in 1962.*"

We currently offer the Traditional Latin Mass at St Anthony's each Thursday at 9:00 AM, on Sundays at 12:45 PM, on First Fridays at 7:00 PM, and on special feast days. Twice a month the Sunday Mass is a High (or sung) Mass accompanied by a lovely choir.

I would like to invite you, if you have not already, to come and experience the Traditional Latin Mass at our parish. Because this Mass is offered in a different order, in Latin (even the readings) and with the priest facing the altar instead of the people, one can at first feel lost. Additionally, Holy Communion must be received by all at the altar rail (we put our kneelers) and on the tongue only.

But this is the Mass of the Ages, ancient and venerable in its origins and steeped in rich Tradition, history and spirituality. It behooves us to try to approach its mystery with an open heart and mind. I usually suggest to first timers that they not worry too much about following along in the missalettes we provide, and just peacefully observe the grand sweep of the Mass. With a little effort, however, the Mass can be learned and followed easily, as countless generations have done before us.

Finally, there has been some interest expressed by parishioners at St Elizabeth's, and so there could be a Traditional Latin Mass offered on a regular basis in Colonial Beach as well, most probably on a weekday.

My friends, I would welcome your feedback should you have questions or wish to discuss this important aspect of our sacred Catholic worship that we call the Most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass!

Omnnes cum Petro ad Iesum per Mariam,

Father de Rosa