

If variety is the new liturgical paradigm...

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When I came to this country 29 years ago, everything was strange to me except for the Sunday Masses where I felt immediately at home. Today, Australia is my home, and I would not like to live anywhere else, but I am now a stranger at our Sunday Masses because of the constantly improvised and 'politically corrected' liturgy.

- Having grown up in what then was communist Czechoslovakia I have probably a distorted image of what the Parish is for. The local priest — parish priest or not — was seen and judged predominantly on his loyalty to Rome, a loyalty that cost them much more than it costs those loyal to Rome in present-day Australia. Public Church activity, even public communication with the priest, was dangerous for both the layman and the priest. My Catholicism was then, and still is, centered around Rome and its interpretation of the Revelation. This is not to say that I do not find inspiration — intellectual as well as spiritual — from the works of authors like Tillich, Macquarie, Greeley, Küng etc.

- I hope this explains why I am conservative enough to think that **we need priests** — parish priests or just priests — to celebrate Mass, i.e. **to mediate between the Worshipped and the worshippers**, rather than 'organize', a task best left to laymen. Unfortunately, laymen and women are encouraged not so much to help with the secular running of Parish affairs but to interfere with the liturgy of the Mass (e.g. ladies invited to the altar to lace the Host before Communion with whatever cosmetics they wear on their fingers).

- I am aware that with these sentiments I am in the minority, nevertheless pray that more opportunities be given — or perhaps they are, but not sufficiently widely publicized — for us to have Sunday Masses celebrated in the dignified Catholic tradition of our ancestors (not the Tridentine Mass the aesthetic appreciation of which had already been successfully killed in the younger generation). As opposed to the style where the celebrant acts more like a TV evangelist, or even entertainer. A liturgy that often resembles more an Oprah Winfrey Show than a traditional Catholic Mass with its solemn dignity.

- I think the few of us who still care are entitled to this preservation of our cultural heritage the same way as e.g. Aborigines are entitled to theirs. The sermons might be politically to the liking of some and not to the liking of others, but this bias should not affect the liturgy. In the

past one priest might have preferred Santamaria, another Calwell, but they both said the same *Benedicat vos omnipotens...* and their ideological preferences became immediately irrelevant.

- I still believe that the second most important commandment is LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR and not LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD as we seem to be constantly encouraged to from the pulpit. I still place significance to the fact that not only the Last Judgment will judge individuals and not communities, but also Christ's last words were addressed to individuals — His Mother, John and the malefactor, not to a community.

- Make it more explicit that it is the **ordained priest who celebrates the Sunday Mass** and administers sacraments (perhaps in a simplified and as little as possible time-consuming form), rather than the chief community (i.e. Parish) organizer or "pastoral caretaker", that symbolizes locally the Catholic presence. Because of the car the term "locally" is much less restrictive than in the past.

- Since liturgical variety has become a fact, why not openly advertise this and give people a choice to attend a Sunday Mass of their liking. This, of course, should be made without officially preferring one approach to the other. For instance, our Parish has a lavish portfolio of information and exhortations from which it is clear that this is a Christian Parish. However, no explicit mention of it being a Catholic Parish, no reference to Virgin Mary — Catholicism's essential Yin component — the Archbishop or Pope. Some other Parish will have them in their publications, even display openly AD 2000 in their foyer. Some priests are members of e.g. *The Australian Confraternity of Catholic Clergy*, some are not, etc.

- Could there be found a way of making these preferences more public, so that one could choose and sincerely belong to a Parish community, or rather priest, of one's choice rather than geographic predetermination? This was not so important in the past when liturgy — even its formal language — was uniform: Not only Catholic, but also catholic in the true meaning of the word. I am fully aware that one cannot recreate the unity and beauty of our liturgical past, only think that **if variety is the new liturgical paradigm a choice should also be given to us** who have not yet lost our ties with our (Catholic) cultural heritage.

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