



# The Problem of the Liturgical Reform

## Bishop Fellay's address to Pope John Paul II

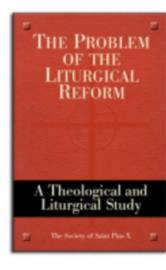
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The *Problem of the Liturgical Reform* was given to Pope John Paul II in February 2000 by Bishop Bernard Fellay, Superior General of the Society of St. Pius X.



The book contains a comprehensive study titled "The Mass of Vatican II and of Paul VI; A Theological and Liturgical Study by the SSPX". It analyses the problems of the Second Vatican Council's liturgical reform and is prefaced with Bishop Fellay's Address to the Holy Father (reproduced below with the book's Foreword).

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### Address to the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II

Holy Father,

More than thirty years ago, under your predecessor, Pope Paul VI, a major reform modified the Latin rite of the Catholic Liturgy, especially the "Order of the Mass."

This reform immediately raised troubles and controversies across the entire world. Some studies which were made, notably the *A Brief Critical Study of the New Order of the Mass* given to Pope Paul VI by Cardinals Ottaviani and Bacci, pointed out the troubling deficiencies and ambiguities affecting this reform.

The Liturgy has certainly evolved over the course of history, as is shown by the reforms made during the past century by St. Pius X, Pius XII and John XXIII. But the post-conciliar liturgical reform, by its extension and brutality, represents a disturbing upheaval, as a radical rupture from the traditional Roman Liturgy. Above all, this reform contains disconcerting elements, ambiguous and dangerous for the Faith.

Before this spiritual danger, the true obedience to the Seat of Peter, the true submission to the Church Mother and Mistress obliges us, along with a great number of Catholics around the world, to remain faithful no matter the cost to this venerable Liturgy which the Roman Church has celebrated for centuries, the Liturgy which you yourself have celebrated in the past. Such is the sacred heritage which the founder of our Priestly Fraternity of St. Pius X, Archbishop Lefebvre, has entrusted to us:

It is clear, it is evident that the entire drama between Ecône and Rome is due to the problem of the Mass. (...) We are convinced that the new rite of Mass expresses a new faith, a faith which is not ours, a faith which is not the Catholic Faith; (...) that this new rite is misleading and, if I may say, supposes another conception of the Catholic Religion. (...) This is why we are attached to this Tradition which is expressed in such an admirable manner, and in a definitive manner, as Pope St. Pius V said so well, in the Sacrifice of the Mass. (June 29, 1976)

After much reflection and prayer, we feel the duty before God to address the Holy Father once again with regard to this problem of the Liturgy. We have asked those pastors of souls who are qualified in theological, Liturgical and Canonical matters, to compose a synthesis of the certain difficulties, including the most important ones, which the Liturgy of the post-Conciliar reform poses to the faith of Catholics.

This work has sought to go back to the doctrinal causes properly so called of the actual crisis, bringing to light the principles which are at the origin of the Liturgical reform and contrasting them with Catholic doctrine.

The reading of this document manifests clearly, we believe, that the *"theology of the paschal mystery,"* to which the door was left open at the occasion of Vatican II, is the soul of the liturgical reform. Because it minimizes the mystery of the Redemption, because it considers the sacrament only in its relation with the *"mystery,"* and because the conception that it makes of the *"memorial"* alters the sacrificial dimension of the Mass, this *"theology of the paschal mystery"* renders the post-Conciliar Liturgy dangerously distant from Catholic doctrine, to which however the Christian conscience remains bound forever.

Holy Father,

The Catholic Faith imposes upon us a grave obligation not to remain silent about the questions which assail our mind.

Are not the deficiencies of this theology and of the liturgy which issues from it one of the principal causes of the crisis affecting the Church for more than thirty years? And does not such a situation demand the doctrinal and liturgical clarifications on the part of the supreme Authority of the Church? Do not the subjects, for whose good a law is made, have the right and duty, if the law manifests itself harmful, with filial confidence to demand from the legislator its modification or its abrogation?

Among the measures which are the most urgent, does it not seem appropriate to make publicly known that every priest possesses the faculty to use the integral and fruitful Roman Missal revised by St. Pius V, a treasure so profoundly rooted in the thousand-year Tradition of the Church, Mother and Mistress?

These doctrinal and liturgical clarifications, joined with the universal renewal of the traditional Roman Liturgy, would not fail to produce immense spiritual fruits: the restoration of the true notion of the priesthood and of sacrifice, and consequently, the renewal of priestly and religious sanctity; the increase of fervor in the faithful; the strengthening of the unity of the Church; the powerful momentum for the evangelization of former Christian nations and of infidel nations.

We strongly beseech Your Holiness, who alone has the power as Successor of Peter and Shepherd of the universal Church, to strengthen his brethren in the Faith and to sanction with his apostolic authority the indispensable clarifications which are demanded by the present tragic situation in the Church.

However, such a necessary restoration cannot be done in the Church without an extraordinary recourse to the Holy Ghost, obtained by the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is, therefore, by prayer, especially by the holy sacrifice of the Mass, that this long desired renewal will be accomplished, and, for our part, it is to this, with the grace of God, that we give ourselves and desire to give ourselves always more.

Deign, Your Holiness, to accept our sentiments of filial respect in Jesus and Mary.

+Bernard Fellay  
Superior General of the Priestly Fraternity of St. Pius X  
Flavigny, France,  
on the feast of the Presentation of the Lord, February 2, 2001

### Foreword to *The Problem of the Liturgical Reform*

While this study goes to very root of the problem with the Liturgical Reforms, the analysis will focus for reasons of clarity on the Missal of Paul VI. The Mass is after all, the very jewel in the crown of the Catholic Liturgy.

The study comprises of three theses, each of which introduces a separate section. Firstly we will show how the publication of the New Mass of 1969 constituted a liturgical rupture. Secondly we will show how that rupture is explained principally by a new theology of Redemption, which we will call the "Theology of the Pascal Mystery". This complex second part forms the very heart of our study. In the third part we will seek to evaluate the new theology in the light of the infallible teachings of the Church, and to establish what attitude one should have towards this *Novus Ordo Missae*. In support of this attitude, an appendix treating the canonical status and rights of the Mass of St. Pius V is attached.

While by no means exhaustive, this work gets to the central issue at stake; the official texts show quite categorically that the "Pascal Mystery" is the key to interpreting the entire Liturgical Reform.

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**Bishop de Castro Mayer's Letter to Pope Paul VI regarding the promulgation of the New Mass**  
Written on September 12, 1969, this letter pre-dates the famous *Brief Critical Study of the New Order of Mass*, and briefly highlights some of the doctrinal problems with the New Mass