

si si no no

"But let your speech be, 'Yes, yes,' 'No, no'; and whatever is beyond these comes from the evil one. (Mt. 5:37)"

March 2001 No. 40

Mediator Dei An Encyclical Condemning Pope Paul VI's Liturgical "Reform"



With the publication of *Missale Romanum* almost thirty-two years ago (April 3, 1969), the very venerable, ancient, and sacred Mass of the Roman Rite was displaced by the *Novus Ordo Missae* of Pope Paul VI. On the Feast of Corpus Christi of that same year, Pope Paul VI was presented with the *Brief Critical Examination of the Novus Ordo Missae* with a cover letter by Cardinals Ottaviani and Bacci which affirmed the principle: "The subjects for whose benefit a law is made have always had the right, nay the duty, to ask the legislator to abrogate the law, should it prove to be harmful" (*The Ottaviani Intervention*, p.28).

The two cardinals did not mince words why the *Novus Ordo* created a duty to request its cancellation. The new rite of the Mass, "represents, both as a whole and in its details, a striking departure from the Catholic theology of the Mass as it was formulated in Session 22 of the Council of Trent."

Such "a striking departure from the Catholic theology of the Mass" had already been noticed and condemned in the liturgical movement which preceded the Second Vatican Council. In *Mediator Dei* (1947) Pope Pius XII had written,

we observe with considerable anxiety ...that...certain enthusiasts, over eager in their search for novelty, are straying beyond the path of sound doctrine and prudence. Not seldom, in fact, they interlard their plans and hopes for a revival of the sacred Liturgy with principles which compromise this holiest of causes in theory or practice, and sometimes even taint it with errors touching Catholic faith and ascetical doctrine (§8).

With this encyclical Pope Pius XII sought to "distance from the Church" "false opinions. . . altogether contrary to sacred and traditional doctrine," "errors touching Catholic faith and ascetical doctrine," "exaggerations and over-statements which are not in agreement with the true teaching of the Church" (§94). A glance through *Mediator Dei* reveals that these condemned aberrations are the very soul of the liturgical "reform" of Pope Paul VI, and of all the various developments which flow from it, whether formally sanctioned or otherwise in conformity with the "Spirit of the Council."

A "Formal and Violent Rupture"

In *Mediator Dei*, Pope Pius XII reiterated a fundamental principle of liturgy, "*Legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi* - let the rule for prayer determine the rule of belief" (§48). "The entire liturgy, therefore, has the Catholic faith for its content, inasmuch as it bears public witness to the faith of the Church" (§47). Consequently, the ceremonies with which the Church surrounds the Sacrifice of Christ conserve the faith and distinguish between true and false Christians, and from heretics.

But within only 18 years Pope Paul VI's so-called liturgical "reform" provides the liturgy with a new fundamental principle. "The prayer of the Church should not generate discomfort to anyone," and therefore the Church must "discard any stone that risks becoming a stumbling block or displease our separated brethren." So writes Fr. Annibal Bugnini, guiding member to the *Consilium* in charge of preparing the *Novus Ordo Missae* and all other liturgical revisions, in the *L'Osservatore Romano* of March 19th, 1965.¹ Thus the rule of prayer will now be based on an "ecumenical" principle, which will inform the new beliefs of the post-Conciliar ecumenical Church. No longer will the liturgy evidence the public faith of the Church, but rather evidence the ecumenical sensitivities of certain churchmen.

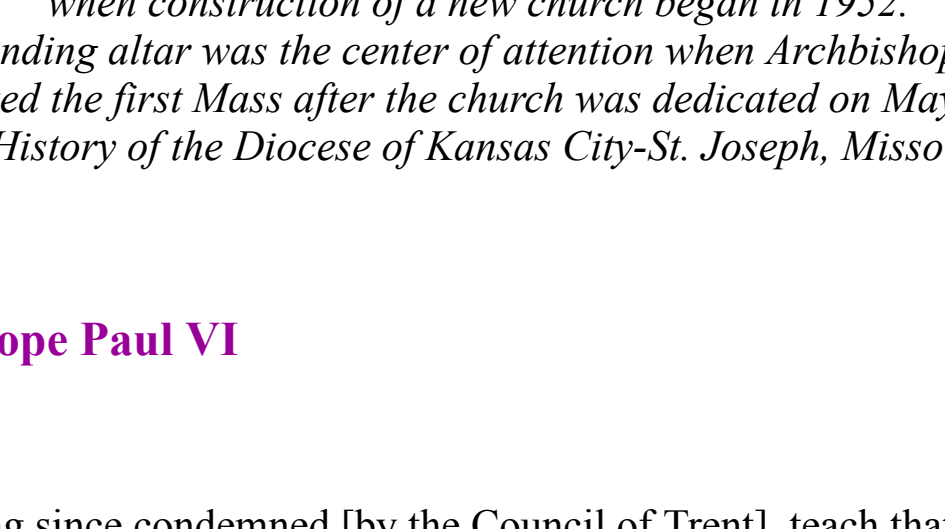
All the essential features of the *Novus Ordo* are contained in that statement and constitute a "formal and violent rupture with all the rules which guided Catholic liturgy up to Vatican II."² Needless to say, the new rites will not "preserve the faith," nor "distinguish true from false Christians."

A "Tragic Choice"

Founded on this ecumenical intention, the new liturgy was scrupulously preserved inviolate, with the assistance of six Protestant observers, from any "discomfort" or stones which might be a "stumbling block" to the "separated brethren." That "entire abomination, the so-called Offertory" (Luther), was eliminated in its entirety. Guido Ceronetti described the result of this "major amputation passed off as a reform" to be, inevitably, a liturgy no longer Catholic, but Protestant (*La Stampa*, July 18, 1990). The new liturgy is "a Mass cut down to Protestant dimensions" according to J. Green, himself a convert from Protestantism ("Ce qu'il faut d'amour à l'homme").

This satisfied the liturgical "reformers," whose goal was "to facilitate spiritual and psychological union."³ "The liturgical reform has made major advances in the ecumenical field, and approaches the liturgical forms of the Lutheran church" reported *L'Osservatore Romano* of Oct. 13, 1967. Cardinals Ottaviani and Bacci note the obverse side of this coin, that the new rite "represents, both as a whole and in its details, a striking departure from the Catholic theology of the Holy Mass..." (quoted above).

In truth, the central problem posed by the *Novus Ordo* to the Catholic conscience is not one of nostalgic attachment to the historic rite, it is a problem of belief. "It is clear that the *Novus Ordo* does not intend to present the faith of Trent. To this faith, the Catholic is in conscience bound unto eternity. With the launching of the *Novus Ordo* a true Catholic is forced into a tragic choice" (*Brief Critical Examination*). The faith of Trent is none other than the "ancient faith founded on the holy Gospel, on the traditions of the apostles, and on the doctrines of the holy Fathers" (Denzinger, *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*, 947), and this alone justifies refusing to accept a *Novus Ordo Missae* which "does not intend to present the faith of Trent" and which "approaches liturgical forms of the Lutheran church."



Christ the King Parish, Kansas City, MO, was far ahead of its time when construction of a new church began in 1952. A freestanding altar was the center of attention when Archbishop O'Hara celebrated the first Mass after the church was dedicated on May 9, 1954 (A History of the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph, Missouri).

Luther's Shadow on the Liturgical "Reform" of Pope Paul VI

In *Mediator Dei*, Pope Pius XII writes:

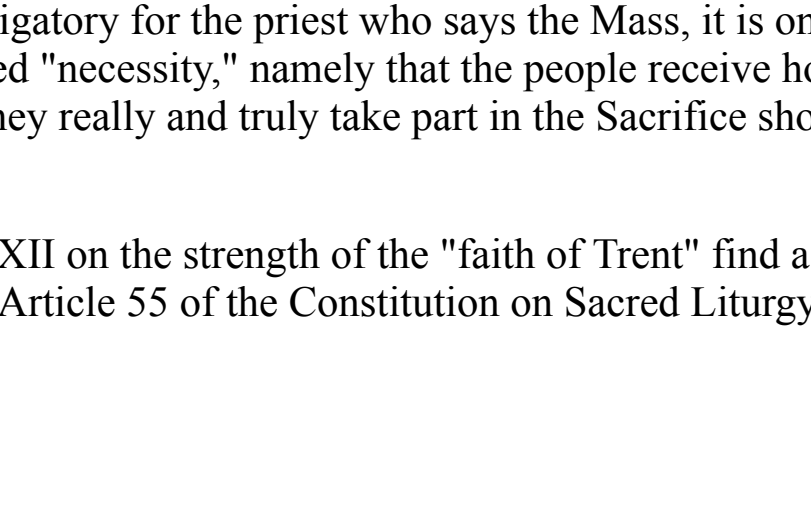
For there are today ...those who, approximating to errors long since condemned [by the Council of Trent], teach that in the New Testament by the word "priesthood" is meant only that priesthood which applies to all who have been baptizedHence they assert that the people are possessed of a true priestly power, while the priest only acts in virtue of an office committed to him by the community. Wherefore they look on the Eucharistic Sacrifice as a "concelebration," in the literal meaning of that term, and consider it more fitting that priests should "concelebrate" with the people present than that they should offer the Sacrifice privately when the people are absent (§83)...Some in fact disapprove altogether of those Masses which are offered privately and without a congregation ...moreover, there are some who assert that different priests cannot offer Mass at different altars at the same time, because by doing so, they separate the community of the faithful and imperil its unity; while some go so far as to hold that the people must confirm and ratify the Sacrifice if it is to have its proper force and value (§95).

Against such errors associated with Luther, Pope Pius XII repeats the Catholic faith, the faith of Trent. "The visible, external priesthood of Jesus Christ is not handed down indiscriminately to all members of the Church in general, but is conferred on designated men, through what may be called the spiritual generation of Holy Orders" (§41), "one of the seven Sacraments" (§42). "Hence he [the priest] goes to the altar as the minister of Christ, inferior to Christ but superior to the people" (§84). When "speaking of the people offering with the priest," the Church means only that the people "unite their hearts in praise, impetration, expiation and thanksgiving, with the prayers and intention of the priest, even of the High Priest Himself..." (§93).

Furthermore, regarding attacks on private Masses, Pope Pius XII repeats the faith of Trent, namely that the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass,

necessarily and of its very nature, has always and everywhere the character of a public and social act, in as much as he who offers it, acts in the name of Christ ...and he offers it to God for the Holy Catholic Church, and for the living and the dead. This is undoubtedly so, whether the faithful are present ...or are not present, since it is in no wise required that the people ratify what the sacred Minister has done (§96).

Clearly the *Novus Ordo Missae* - with its "people of God assembled ...to celebrate the sacred Eucharist," and with the priest reduced to the role of "president of the assembly," (and hence facing the people, §27); with the consecration altered into a simple "narration" or "presidential prayer" (§ 10), and hence said "clearly and out loud" (§ 10-12); and with a people no longer adoring in silence, but ratifying out loud the "mystery of the faith"; with its marked favor for "concelebrated services" which may or may not build community, but certainly reduce the number of private masses - this all certainly "represents ...a striking departure from the Catholic theology of the Holy Mass" (*Brief Critical Examination*), and a major slide into Protestant theory.



An 11 year-old-altar boy reading a missal in the sanctuary of St. Thomas Apostle Roman Catholic Church in Los Angeles (The New York Times, June 1, 1994).

"A Supper of Brotherly Union"

Closely linked with the aberration of the "priest president" and the heresy of the "celebrating people" is the error "holding that it is altogether necessary for the faithful to receive Holy Communion as well as the priest," to which end, writes Pope Pius XII, the innovators "put forward the capitious argument that here there is question not of a Sacrifice merely, but of a Sacrifice and a supper of brotherly union, and consider the general Communion of all present as the culminating point of the entire celebration" (§ 114). This too, warns Pope Pius XII, is another false doctrine which the Council of Trent, "supported by the doctrine which the uninterrupted tradition of the Church has preserved," thus condemns: "If anyone shall say that Masses in which the priest only receives Communion, are unlawful, and therefore should be abolished, let him be anathema" (§ 113). Receiving Holy Communion, in fact, "is obligatory for the priest who says the Mass, it is only something earnestly recommended for the faithful" (§ 115). Neither is *Mediator Dei* deficient in condemning another asserted "necessity," namely that the people receive hosts consecrated during the very same Mass. This proposal has the same heretical roots as the previous, and Pius writes that, "they really and truly take part in the Sacrifice should they receive a Host which has been duly consecrated at a previous Mass" (§ 118).

Even these two asserted "necessities" condemned by Pope Pius XII on the strength of the "faith of Trent" find a home in the liturgical "reform" of Pope Paul VI. The second, regarding hosts consecrated at the same Mass, finds mention in Article 55 of the Constitution on Sacred Liturgy, and was satirized by the Italian author Tito Casini, with the ironic contrast "Fresh Christ" versus "Stale Christ."⁴

Liturgical Activism

From the heresy of the "priest president" and the "celebrating people" is also born the "false opinion" concerning the active participation of the faithful at the Mass. Pope Pius XII praises those seeking to promote greater liturgical participation with chant, dialogue response, and by providing the people with missals. But he cautions that these ways of participating in the Sacrifice "are by no means necessary to constitute it a public act or to give it a social character" (§ 106). Furthermore, and very wisely, he notes that "so varied and diverse are men's talents and characters that it is impossible for all to be moved and be attracted to the same extent by community prayers, hymns, and liturgical services. Moreover, the needs and inclinations of all are not the same, nor are they always constant in the same individual" (§ 108). Thus it is possible to fruitfully participate in "some other method which proves easier for certain people, for instance, they can lovingly meditate on the mysteries of Jesus Christ or perform other exercises of piety or recite prayers which, though they differ from the sacred rites, are still essentially in harmony with them" (§ 108).

Here, too, the liturgical "reform" of Pope Paul VI, in which activism by the faithful is above all an external reality rather than an inner devotion, banishes other forms of participation, especially the Rosary, and is clearly contrary to *Mediator Dei*. It should also be said that in contrast with the pastoral wisdom of Pope Pius XII, the "pastoralism" of Pope Paul VI's liturgical "reform," which regiments the faithful with no regard for personal needs, is revealed for what it really is, a convenient and superficial pretext.

Pan-Liturgism

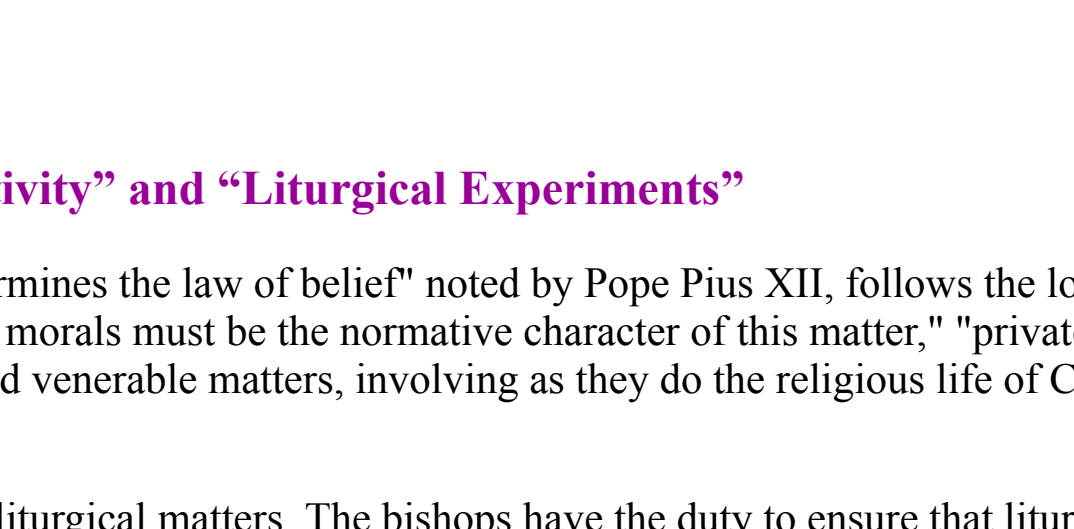
Pope Pius XII's condemnations extend also to "new theories touching a so-called 'objective' piety," which "tend to belittle, or pass over in silence, what they call 'subjective' or 'personal' piety" (§28): "...they feel that all other religious exercises not directly connected with the Sacred Liturgy and performed outside public worship, should be omitted" (§29). On the contrary "the work of Redemption ...requires a serious interior effort on our part if we are to achieve eternal salvation" (§31). "In the spiritual life ...there can be no opposition between the action of God [the 'objective' element] ...and the tireless collaboration of man [the 'subjective' element], who must not render vain the gift of God" (§ 36); furthermore, these exercises of devotion and pious practices "are not only highly praiseworthy, but absolutely indispensable" (§32) because "[they] enable them [the faithful] to participate in the august Sacrifice of the altar with better dispositions. They now receive the Sacraments with more abundant fruit" (§35) which is the point of "active participation" in the liturgy.

Among the many exercises of devotion, Pope Pius XII highlights and recommends meditation, examination of conscience, ritual prayers, visits to the Blessed Sacrament, the Rosary, spiritual exercises and "other practices of piety which although not strictly belonging to the Sacred Liturgy are, nevertheless, of special import and dignity, and may be considered in a certain way to be an addition to the liturgical cult" (§ 182). Among these Pope Pius XII notes "are the prayers usually said during the month of May in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mother of God, or during the month of June to the most Sacred Heart of Jesus; also novenas and tridiums, Stations of the Cross and other similar practices" (§ 182). These excite Christians to frequent the Sacraments and the Sacrifice of the Mass, and "hence he would do something very wrong and dangerous, who would dare to take on himself to reform these exercises of piety and reduce them completely to the methods and norms of liturgical rites" (§ 184).

Also on this point the liturgical "reform" of Pope Paul VI signals the triumph of "new theories" condemned by Pope Pius XII, with the discouragement of "other practices of piety ...not strictly belonging to Sacred Liturgy" and as such merits the anticipated rebuke as "very wrong and dangerous."

Pope Pius XII had already noted an insidious attack on Eucharistic adoration if separated from the Sacrifice of the Mass, such as visits to the tabernacle, Benediction of the Holy Sacrament, solemn civic processions, Forty Hours, etc., which practices have all been discontinued, discouraged, if not eliminated with the liturgical "reform" of Pope Paul VI. But Pope Pius XII also noticed a menace to Marian devotion and to the salutary practice of sacramental Confession. These threats generated his cry of alarm to the Bishops:

Do not allow - as some do, who are deceived under the pretext of restoring the liturgy or who idly claim that only liturgical rites are of any real value and dignity - that churches be closed during the hours not appointed for public functions...where the adoration of the august Sacrament and visits to Our Lord in the tabernacles are neglected: where confession is discouraged; and devotion to the Virgin Mother of God, a sign of "predestination" according to the opinion of holy men, is so neglected...Such conduct most harmful to Christian piety is like poisonous fruit, growing on infected branches of a healthy tree, which must be cut off so that the life-giving sap of the tree may bring forth only the best fruit (§ 176).



The auditorium of the Tenth Street School in Oakmont, PA, was the setting for an ecumenical prayer service Jan. 21, celebrating the annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Auxiliary Bishop David Zubik spoke at the event, which is sponsored by the Oakmont/Verona Ministerial Association and attended by members of various area denominations (Pittsburgh Catholic, Jan 26, 2001).

The cross with a hole in it belongs to the Diocese of Pittsburgh.

Exalting Christ Glorified and Slighting the Suffering Christ

In *Mediator Dei*, Pope Pius XII condemned "the tendency and daring of those who introduce novel liturgical practices" such as "those who make use of the vernacular in the celebration of the august Eucharistic Sacrifice," (§59) [I] Latin is a beautiful sign of unity, 2) as well as an effective antidote for any corruption of doctrinal truth (§60) - *Ed.*], "those who would transfer certain feast days ...to other dates" (§59). Also, one "would be straying from the straight path were he to wish the altar restored to its primitive tableform; were he to want black excluded as a color for the liturgical vestments, were he to forbid the use of sacred images and statues in Churches; were he to order the crucifix so designed that the Divine Redeemer's Body shows no trace of His cruel sufferings." (§62). There is no need for explicit demonstration that these deplorable theories have all been put into place with the liturgical "reform" of Pope Paul VI.

Pope Pius XII returns at length on this last point: the slighting of the Passion of Christ and exaltation of the Resurrection. They "dare to assert" he writes,

that attention should be paid not to the historic Christ but to a "pneumatic" or glorified Christ. They do not hesitate to assert that a change has taken place in the piety of the faithful by dehonoring, as it were, Christ from His position; since they say that the glorified Christ...has been overshadowed and in His place has been substituted that Christ who lived on earth. For this reason, some have gone so far as to want to remove from the Churches images of the Divine Redeemer suffering on the cross (§ 162).

And here the rebuke: "But these false statements are completely opposed to the solid doctrine handed down by tradition....In the sacred Liturgy, the whole Christ is proposed to us in all the circumstances of His life..." (§ 163).

Since His bitter sufferings constitute the principle mystery of our Redemption it is only fitting that the Catholic faith should give them the greatest prominence. This mystery is the very center of divine worship, since the Mass represents and renews it every day, and since all Sacraments are most closely united with the Cross (§ 164).

The Freeing of Liturgy from Authority: "Creativity" and "Liturgical Experiments"

From the fundamental principle "the law for prayer determines the law of belief" noted by Pope Pius XII, follows the logical consequence of the Holy Sec's exclusive authority in liturgical matters. Since "the purity of the faith and of morals must be the normative character of this matter," "private individuals, therefore, even though they be clerics, may not be left to decide for themselves in these holy and venerable matters, involving as they do the religious life of Christian society along with the exercise of the priesthood of Jesus Christ and worship of God" (§58).

"Only the Supreme Pontiff" has the right to legislate on liturgical matters. The bishops have the duty to ensure that liturgical law is strictly obeyed.

The Church has further used her right of control over liturgical observance to protect the purity of divine worship against abuse from dangerously imprudent individuals and particular churches. Thus it came about - during the 16th century, when usages and customs of this sort had become increasingly prevalent and exaggerated, and when private initiative in matters liturgical threatened to compromise the integrity of the faith and devotion, to the great advantage of heretics and the further spread of their errors - that in the year 1588, Our Predecessor Sixtus V of immortal memory established the Sacred Congregation of Rites, charged with the defense of the legitimate rites of the Church and with the prohibition of any spurious innovation (§57).

Thus in his conclusion, Pope Pius XII urges the Church to be vigilant: "Let everything be done with due order and dignity, and let no one, not even a priest, make use of the sacred edifices according to his whim to try out experiments" (§ 109).

Here too, there is no need to cite chapter and verse to prove that the "reform" of Pope Paul VI is firmly set on the deviant path condemned by Pope Pius XII, with the result that in the name of "creativity" the liturgy has been abandoned to arbitrary experiments, not only diocese by diocese, but liturgy by liturgy, and that not only by the clergy but also by the laity!

Thus what Pope Paul VI did not directly accomplish with his "reform," was achieved indirectly in the name of "creativity," with "private initiatives" threatening "to compromise the integrity of the faith and devotion, to the great advantage of heretics and the further spread of their errors," notably a Protestant mindset of "religion without authority," even in liturgical matters.

The Liturgical Movement: Forerunner of Pope Paul VI's Liturgical "Reform"

Mediator Dei anticipates and condemns the "liturgical reform" with such clarity because these "false theories," "exaggerations and betrayals of the truth," "errors touching on the faith and ascetical doctrine," had long been snaking through the liturgical movement, and Pope Pius XII wished to protect the Church from them.

Already in 1943, Msgr. Conrad Gröber, the Archbishop of Freiburg, had raised the alarm in a memorandum to the German episcopate.⁵ The liturgical movement, he writes, creates a wedge within the clergy, and slides towards Protestant errors; despises scholasticism and finds congenial company with false modern philosophies; criticizes, under a pretext of return to origins, every request from centuries past, as though every doctrinal and liturgical development, which had occurred under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, was merely an arbitrary deformation and falsification; contains concealed Protestant influences, notably Karl Barth [the idol of the new theologians]; is open to the sects "in order to rebuild church unity"; thinks of the Church, in the Protestant way, as an invisible organization rather than as a visible hierarchy; favors a false "mysticism" (charismaticism); highlights the "priesthood of the faithful" and slightes the ministerial priesthood of the clergy; considers liturgy a universal panacea; unfetters liturgical celebrations from every authority and obligation, which rules are trashed as so many "rubricisms"; agitates for the Mass in the vernacular; and is a source of heresies.

The threats denounced by the Archbishop of Freiburg are a sad reality today. In fact, during the last Council two movements clashed: the liturgical movement and the Marian movement. The latter was poised to advance a "uniquely Catholic" development against the Protestant trend, and was in line with the counter-reformation of Trent; the former, the liturgical movement, was in alliance with all the "aggiornamento" groups intent on terminating the counter-reformation and intent on opening towards the "separated brethren."⁶ After the Council, a disciple of Karl Rahner confessed that the liturgical movement in Germany was just one of many movements created to break the so-called "Roman system."⁷

The "liturgical reform" which took place thus represents the triumph of such madness within the liturgical movement, so infiltrated with Protestantism, and which had already been condemned first by Msgr. Gröber and then by Pope Pius XII in *Mediator Dei*.

Daughter of Disobedience to the Roman Magisterium

Pope Pius XII closes his encyclical by ordering the promoters of the liturgical movement "to imitate in their thoughts and actions the Christian doctrine which is in harmony with the precepts of the Immaculate Spouse of Jesus Christ, the Mother of saints" (§207).

In fact, the liturgical "reform" of Pope Paul VI, and all subsequent actions, is the daughter of disobedience to the Church and the Pontifical Roman Magisterium. We cannot say, as Pope Paul VI said, that the "Pope of today" has the same authority as the "Popes of yesterday." The contradiction is not between Pacelli and Montini; the contradiction is between the "Faith of yesterday" and the "Faith of today," and neither should differ from the "Faith of all time." The popes have equal authority in matters pertaining to discipline, the effectiveness of which may change with different historic circumstances, although even here, this authority should not be exercised arbitrarily. But as regards the Faith, and all that which touches the Faith, of which liturgy touches more than all else, the popes have equal authority to defend and explain the "deposit of the Faith"; but none has the authority, whether directly or indirectly, to undermine the Faith. "We have no authority to challenge Truth, only to defend Truth."

Marcus

1. See also Bugnini's book, *La riforma liturgica*.

2. A. X. Da Silveira, *La Nouvelle Messe de Paul VI: Qu'en penser?* p.335.

3. *La riforma liturgica*.

4. Tito Casini, *La tunica stracciata*.

5. The major part of the text in *Ami du Clergé* (1950), p.258ff. See also *Una Voce* of Paris 25/69.

6. E. Fouilloux, "Mouvements theologico-spirituels et Concile " in *A la veille de Vatican II*, (Louvain, 1992), pp.188-198; also *SiSiNoNo*, Italian edition, (Sept. 30, 1998) p.5.

7. H. Vorgrimler, *Karl Rahner verstehen* [Understanding Karl Rahner], p.74ff, cited in *SiSiNoNo*, Italian edition, (April 15, 1998) p.3.