

## Catechism on the Liturgy I, 6

C.

### 3. *Sentire cum Ecclesia.*

a. This phrase sums up what the study of theology hopes to accomplish, “To think and feel with the Church.” It’s a kind of supernatural sensitivity by which the faithful feel as if by intuition whether something is in conformity with the Faith and with the tradition of the Church. You see this in children when they have a strong sense about whether something is in keeping with their house. “Our family does not do it that way.” Perhaps they cannot articulate why the subject in question is out of line with the family, but they have a *sense* that it is. And that sense is not to be ignored. When Catherine Vianney, the older sister of St. Jean Vianney, first heard their new parish priest, she was the first in the family to sense that something was wrong. She was twelve years old. Indeed, the priest had sworn allegiance to the republic which was the result of the French Revolution. She could not say why the priest was a traitor to the Faith, she just knew he was.

b. This sense comes especially from the liturgy, more than any other source. “It was the celebration of the divine liturgy that kept the faith of the faithful intact

during the centuries of Muslim persecution.” This was stated by Maximus V, the Malachite Rite patriarch, at a synod of the Malachite bishops (this rite is in union with Rome) in 1977.

The famous Archbishop Bossuet of Paris – probably the greatest preacher of his time in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century – said that the liturgy was “...the main instrument of Tradition.” He thought that the liturgy was “Tradition professed” as opposed to the declarations of councils which represent “Tradition defined.”

c. The popes know very well that most people do not read their encyclicals. When Pius XI wrote *Quas Primas*, his intention was to fight against the pest of secularism. Here is how the pope announced a new feast which had not been celebrated before, and how he would change the missal. “In the task of helping the truths of the faith reach the people and of raising them to the joys of the interior life, the annual solemnities of the liturgical feasts are much more effective than all the documents, even the most serious, of the Church’s magisterium: the latter are usually only read by a small number of the most cul-

tured; the salutary influence of the former reaches the heart and the intelligence, and thus the whole man.” The feast he instituted was of course the Feast of the Sacred Heart.

d. When, after Vatican II a destructive clergy discarded genuflections, sacred rites, Gregorian Chant, reverence for angels and saints, beautiful vestments and architecture, etc., etc., the faith of many was saved by reverence for holy things. I was once involved with a church which having come back to its senses, searched around for the sacred things which were once in it in order to restore them. A long section of the original communion rail was carefully stored in a barn by an old woman who could not give you quotes from documents about the liturgy – as opposed to the priest who had the rails torn out – but I dare say she knew more about the Church than he did.

e. Time after time converts to the Faith attest to this great truth; that the liturgy and the things which properly accompany it (really beautiful altars, vestments, statues, music, etc.), move the soul more than argument. “The young man I was at 18 years old, who was searching amidst a great cloud for a truth which presented itself to him confusedly – a living truth,

made for the soul and not just for the mind – had sanctity revealed to him by Gregorian chant. In its bareness and its simplicity it took me much further than secular music, it allowed me to catch a glimpse of mysteries which I never suspected; it filled me with this ‘plenitude of God’ of which St. Paul speaks; it told me that his plenitude was for me if I wanted it; I was certain that it was God Himself who spoke to me through this chant.” (André Charlier, *Le Chant Gregorien*)

I knew an excellent young man who was a member of an elite choir from his alma mater, the University of Pennsylvania. They made a tour of Europe, and were invited to sing in a number of churches and even cathedrals. About half of the venues were in Catholic churches or cathedrals. He concluded that the faith which built those churches must be the one true faith. He was ordained a priest before I was, and has been faithful to his vows for 26 years so far, rendering great service to the Church in the parish, in the prison, in the hospital, and as a chaplain to the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division.