

Keeping the Mass, VI

of Loyola coined which sums up fidelity? I think the answer lies in the phrase *semper et ubique* – always and everywhere. Here we turn to Tradition. What has the Church consistently and clearly stated since the earliest times; what has she taught always and everywhere? Then things start to become clear. And regarding sacred music, it becomes abundantly clear.

Couple that with fidelity to the Petrine Office, and not the person who occupies the office. Realize that not everyone who occupies the office has attained perfection. And even if they are very holy, this does not exempt them from mistakes. This goes for all the canonized. Cardinal Newman (*Historical Sketches II*) pinpoints a problem in attaining the knowledge of the saints.

I repeat, what I want to trace and study is the real, hidden but human life, or the interior, as it is called, of such glorious creations of God; and this I gain with difficulty from mere biographies. Those biographies are most valuable both as being true and as being edifying; they are true to the letter, as far as they record facts and acts; I know it: but actions are not enough for sanctity; we must have saintly motives; and as to these motives, the actions themselves seldom carry the motives along with them. In consequence, they are often supplied simply by the biographer out of his own head; and with good reason supplied, from the certainty which he feels that, since it is the act of a Saint which he is describing, therefore it must be a saintly act. Properly and naturally supplied, I grant: but I can do that as well as he; and ought to do it for myself, and shall be sure to do it, if I make the Saint my meditation. The biographer in

that case is no longer a mere witness and reporter; he has become a commentator. He gives me no insight into the Saint's interior; he does but tell me to infer that the Saint acted in some transcendent way from the reason of the case, or to hold it on faith because he has been canonized. For instance: When I read in such a life, "The Saint, when asked a question, was silent from humility," or "from compassion for the ignorance of the speaker," or "in order to give him a gentle rebuke,"—I find a motive assigned, whichever of the three is selected, which is the biographer's own, and perhaps has two chances to one against its being the right one. We read of an occasion on which St. Athanasius said nothing, but smiled, when a question was put to him: it was another Saint who asked the question, and who has recorded the smile; but he does not more than doubtfully explain it. Many a biographer would, simply out of piety, have pronounced the reason of that smile. I should not blame him for doing so; but it was more than he could do as a biographer; if he did it, he would do it, not as an historian, but as a spiritual writer.

I end this series with a couple of things to do. If we want to keep the Mass this time, we need to go to it! Stop skipping Sunday Mass for no good reason! Start going to daily Mass. That's the goal anyway of the lay life – frequent Mass and frequent confession.

And pursue the interior life. Stay close to Our Lady! Popes and prelates can let us down. She can't.

As was heard in the sermon today, a key to the authentic Magisterium is clarity. But continuing with the last insert, we have the following:

"The Church acknowledges Gregorian chant as specially suited to the Roman liturgy: therefore, other things being equal, it should be given pride of place in liturgical services." (SC #116)

And Pope St. Paul VI, while criticizing religious superiors (*Sacrificium Laudis*, 1966) wrote "One can also wonder whether men would come in such numbers to your churches in quest of the sacred prayer, if its ancient and native tongue, joined to a chant full of grave beauty, resounded no more within your walls."

He also wrote in *Voluntati Obsequens* (1974), "The liturgical reform does not and indeed cannot deny the past. Rather does it preserve and foster with the greatest care. It cultivates and transmits all that is in it of high religious, cultural and artistic worth, and especially those elements which can express even externally the unity of believers."

This seems clear enough doesn't it? Yet there are other statements which to all intensive purposed contradict these.

"We will lose a great part of that stupendous and incomparable artistic and spiritual thing, the Gregorian chant." (PPVI, 10.26.69) I'm not quite sure what to do with this one; is he lamenting the loss in a kind of fatalism here?

"Any performance of sacred music which takes place during a celebration, should be fully in harmony with that celebration. This often means that musical compositions which date from a period when the active participation of the faithful was not

emphasized as the source of the authentic Christian spirit are no longer to be considered suitable for inclusion within liturgical celebrations." (Concerts in Churches, 1987) This by the way was used as a hammer to dismantle choirs, and destroy the singing of polyphony at Mass.

I could go on, but it's more of the same. Which leaves us with a decision to make. If it is true that Latin and Gregorian chant are powerful, beautiful and profound; if they exemplify unity and foster vocations, then why not have the Mass with these playing a significant role? But if on the other hand participation in the Mass requires an immediate comprehension without any explanation needed (or wanted), and if the Rite of St. Gregory failed in this regard, then the conclusion is inescapable – Latin and Gregorian chant have no place at all in the Mass, and the Rite of St. Gregory has to go.

So what is the solution? Shall we peer into more documents from Vatican II onwards? This seems to me to be a dead end. For there is no single, coherent vision of the sacred liturgy in these documents. Instead, there is a debate, or better, a quarrel. And in the end, they both cannot be right. One side must win, and the other must lose.

So those who accuse traditional Catholics of contradicting authoritative documents and not adhering to the authentic teaching of Vatican II should desist from this criticism. And traditional Catholics who accuse Novus Ordo Catholics (if I can use that term) should stop accusing them of being unfaithful to the Magisterium in regard to things like sacred music. These sorts of quarrels will get us nowhere.

Then what do we turn to in order to gain the *sentire cum ecclesia* (to think and feel with the Church), a phrase that St. Ignatius