

LITURGICAL PRINCIPLES & NOTIONS Concerning the Dialog Mass

Recently, there appeared in this publication¹ a negatively-charged article about the Dialog Mass. Amongst the varied conclusions were accusations that this practice is theologically unsound, a liberal innovation contributing to the liturgical revolution of the *Novus Ordo Missae*, and a distraction to those who desire to observe silence and follow Mass according to their own private manner. That a discussion of the faithful vocally participating (sung or spoken) in the Church's liturgical prayer generates so much controversy amongst traditionally-minded Catholics, shows only too clearly that the struggle which the father of the Liturgical Movement, Dom Gueranger, fought in his time still exists today.

Addressing Misconceptions

In the wake of the Second Vatican Council, the Roman Church was assailed by a liturgical crisis of unprecedented scale, so, it is certainly understandable that certain concepts or practices that seem intrinsically bound up with the *Novus Ordo Missae* elicit a typical reflex reaction from some traditional Catholics. This is certainly true regarding the notion of “active lay participation,” embodied in the interlinking subjects of congregational singing and the Dialog Mass. Though *per se* a proper concept, in the context of the New Mass “active lay participation” has been implemented incorrectly and promoted in a manner to foster an erroneous theological position. This is just another example of the liturgical revolutionaries taking a *good principle* and emphasizing it *incorrectly* to support their modernist agenda.

Unfortunately, this has led some to advocate that the concept and practices of “active lay participation” are not orthodox (or are suspect at least). The arguments though used to support this view have been fraught with liturgical misconceptions. Hence the aim here is to provide a crucial proper perspective and thereby put matters in their correct context and while making some important objective distinctions.

The Importance of Precedents from the Eastern Rites

Most Roman Catholics are familiar only with their namesake rite and have had little exposure to the other Latin rites (*e.g.*, Dominican, Ambrosian, and Mozarabic). This is even truer about the Eastern Rites (*e.g.*, Byzantine, Syrian, Coptic, and Armenian) which also form the Church's rich liturgical and apostolic treasury.² Though all of the liturgical rites are common in their essentials, their accidentals vary quite differently, even to the extent of appearing not only foreign, but even “wrong” to those acquainted with only one form of the Mass. Such an ignorance of the Church's varied liturgical customs can lead to a sort of “liturgical tunnel vision,” resulting in omitting valuable examples of *praxis*, even ones of *universal liturgical tradition*. This is why pertinent examples from the Eastern Rites will be cited to demonstrate how certain practices that some have deemed as theologically unsound are in fact not.

The Public Nature of the Liturgy

St. Paul in Scripture attests that the Natural Law is engraved on the heart of every man (*i.e.*, one's conscience) and one of its seminal truths is that man is a social creature. This

¹ August 31, 2008 issue of *The Remnant* by columnist, Mr. Brian McCall titled “*Mang' e State Zitt*—Eat and be Quite: Could This Italian Expression Be the Answer to the Optional Dialogue Mass?”

² This is why eminent liturgists (*e.g.*, Dom Gueranger and Dr. Adrian Fortescue) and some catechetical sources (*e.g.*, *My Catholic Faith*) have sought to educate Roman Catholics about the liturgical heritage and practices of the Eastern Rites, to inculcate a well-rounded liturgical outlook.

natural truth consequently results in another: man is required to practice not only private acts of religion, but more importantly *communal ones*. Hence, the Church being a perfect society instituted by Our Lord exercises for the members of her Mystical Body *public acts of religion* through her liturgy, a Greek word—*leitourgia*—that means a public service.

As St. Thomas Aquinas demonstrates in his treatise on the moral virtue of religion,³ the logical outcome of these public religious acts is that those in attendance should honor God not only in mind, but also with the entire body—meaning the various liturgical postures and gestures—and in voice. Joined to the witness of universal tradition, the Angelic Doctor’s philosophical and theological arguments are proof that not only is “active lay participation” completely a legitimate goal, but it comprises the Church’s mindset and therefore *the most perfect way to attend the liturgical services*, especially Mass. This notion brings us to the crux of the issue: what is *the ideal and best method* to attend Mass.⁴

The Testimony of Universal Tradition for “Active Lay Participation”

It is an indisputable historical fact⁵ that from the Early Church until approximately the 17th century the faithful in the West customarily participated at sung Masses by alternating with the clerical schola and responding to the sacred ministers. In addition to the numerous liturgical-archeological studies that have been published,⁶ another witness to this fact is seen in the various Divine Liturgies⁷ of the Eastern Rites. There the sense of active participation was never lost, and as a result, even today the very idea of the laity attending the Divine Liturgy as muted spectators is incomprehensible in the Eastern Rites. In the West however, a curious set of historical influences cause this sense to be greatly diminished, if nearly lost.

The Development of Low Mass and its Influence on Lay Participation

Notwithstanding that the overwhelming majority of Masses celebrated today in the Latin Church are according to the Low Mass form, the sung Solemn Mass form⁸ is more ritualistically complete and comprises the liturgical standard for the rite of Mass. Until roughly the seventh century, *all Masses were sung* in the liturgical rites of both the East and the West. In an era when there was an abundance of clerics to fulfill the various liturgical offices and before Gregorian chant was nearly abandoned, Solemn Masses were seen frequently (if not daily⁹) in Europe, especially in cathedrals, major churches and monasteries where the conventual Masses were usually of the solemn form.

By the ninth century, a peculiar spoken adaptation of the sung Solemn Mass had gradually developed in the Latin Rite: the Low Mass. This abbreviated and recited version of the sung form is unique to the Latin Rite and its equal does not exist in the Eastern Rites

³ *Summa Theologica*, IIa IIae, questions 80-100, as cited in the article mentioned below by Fr. Simoulin.

⁴ An excellent resource on this topic is Fr. Michael Simoulin’s article “Attendance at Mass and Participation in the Liturgy,” published in the March 1997 issue of *The Angelus*.

⁵ Even some of the earliest fragments that we possess about the Early Church’s liturgy infer that the laity participated by singing psalms, hymns, alternating with the clergy, and making the solemn acclamation of “*Amen*.” Considering the Hebrews had the same practice in the Temple and synagogue services, it is only logical that the first Christians would have continued in this custom. Other testimonies are the Church Fathers’ writings, replete with admonitions to the faithful about singing during the liturgy. Finally, in recent times, even popes, such as Pius XI in *Divini Cultus*, affirmed this historical fact of congregational singing in the Church’s early centuries.

⁶ The two most well-known English studies are Dr. Adrian Fortescue’s *The Mass: A Study of the Roman Liturgy* (Preserving Christian Publications, 2008) and Fr. J.A. Jungmann’s *The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origins and Development (Missarum Sollemnia)* (Christian Classics, 1986); both cite many other pertinent works. Several pertinent historical proofs are also given in Fr. Gerard Ellard’s seminal work, *The Dialog Mass* (Longmans, Green and Co. 1942), chapter 2, pp 14-33.

⁷ This is the term used in the Eastern Rites for the word “Mass,” which is strictly a Latin Rite term.

⁸ The *Missarum Sollemnia*, often called in America “Solemn High Mass.” This form includes the liturgical offices of the celebrant, deacon, subdeacon, inferior ministers (masters of ceremonies, thurifer, acolytes and torchbearers) and schola.

⁹ This rule still exists and is practiced in some monastic orders (*e.g.*, the various branches of the Benedictine Order).

where the Divine Liturgies continue to be sung.¹⁰ The particular liturgical discipline of the Latin Church, where concelebration was practiced only on special occasions and later ceased altogether,¹¹ was just one contributing factor to the development of Low Mass, especially in religious communities where only a single priest could offer the daily sung conventual Mass.

When first introduced, the Low Mass was intended for use by a priest without the public's attendance; hence its official term *Missa Privatis*.¹² These privately said Masses did not include the ministers or schola as at Solemn Mass. So the celebrant absorbed the readings and propers normally distributed amongst the deacon, subdeacon and schola at Solemn Mass, while the acolyte absorbed the preparatory prayers¹³ the sacred ministers dialoged with the celebrant and the *Kyriale* responses that the schola and laity would make in unison;¹⁴ thus originated the idea that the server represents the faithful.¹⁵ Meanwhile, the sung form continued to be used for the public conventual or parochial Masses. However, an unfortunate side effect of the common use of Low Mass combined with the decline of Catholic culture led to the diminishing of the solemn form's ideal, hence the vocal participation of the laity gradually became a foreign concept in the Western Church.

Once we understand that Solemn Mass was for centuries the usual form for public Masses and remains the normative form, several important interlocking points come into relief. First, *singing during Mass should be the norm*, not the exception. Second, it is the *sung Mass* that demonstrates most perfectly the Roman norm for *reverent silence*, not the Low form. Third, at sung Masses the *proper division of the liturgical offices amongst the various ministers* is clearly denoted. Here some further explanation is needed to expel some predominate misconceptions that many have concerning the position of the acolyte, or altar server.

The liturgical office of acolyte is the highest of the minor orders whose main duty is to minister the cruets, carry the candles in procession and assist the sacred ministers. Though at the spoken Low Mass the acolyte responds to the celebrant, per the rubrics for Solemn Mass neither the acolytes nor the sacred ministers make any of the responses sung by the schola.¹⁶ This office belongs to the schola which leads the congregation in singing the *Kyriale*,¹⁷ whose dialoged parts are directed *to the combined choir and congregation* (e.g., "*Dominus vobiscum*," the Preface, "*Ite, missa est*") which are all conjugated in the *plural form* and not the singular.¹⁸ This same practice also exists in the Eastern Rites.¹⁹ So only with the *later* development of Low Mass did the acolyte, *out of necessity*, assume the responses made by the schola.

¹⁰ The "Low" form that exists in the Eastern Rites is sung and often includes the use of incense. There is an exception amongst the Byzantine Uniates in the United States, who were required by the Irish-Americanist dominated hierarchy to develop a spoken Low form in order to restrict the number of sung Masses.

¹¹ With two notable exceptions still practiced today, the Masses in which a priest is ordained or a bishop is consecrated.

¹² Nonetheless, all Masses are of a social nature as they are offered for the entire Mystical Body, hence, why the Church has always insisted that a server be present, or as allowed in an extraordinary case, a woman to make the responses from the Communion rail (1917 Code of Canon Law, canon 813, §2 and Sacred Congregation of Rites rescripts 2745⁸ and 4015⁶).

¹³ Which originally was a private devotion recited by the celebrant in the sacristy or while processing to the altar. So at one time, the acolyte did not even alternate these prayers with the celebrant.

¹⁴ Or alternated.

¹⁵ As St. Thomas Aquinas says: "*qui gerit personam totius populi Catholici*." ("*...who takes the place of the whole Catholic people, on whose behalf he makes answer in the plural to the priest*"). *Summa Theologica*, III, Q. 83, art. 5 (ad 12).

¹⁶ Cf. J.B. O'Connell's treatment of the ministers at Solemn Mass in *The Celebration of Mass: A Study of the Rubrics of the Roman Missal* (1964—for the 1962 *Missale Romanum*, reprinted by Preserving Christian Publications) and other rubricians. Of course, the rubrics printed in the missal itself imply this.

¹⁷ This includes not only the *Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus* and *Agnus Dei*, but also all of the other responses made such as "*Dominus vobiscum*," during the Preface, etc.

¹⁸ It should not be thought that this plural form is being addressed to two acolytes, since a priest may have only a single server at a private Mass; the use of two servers for a private Mass is a pontifical privilege. A priest may have two servers for parochial Masses though.

¹⁹ In the Eastern Rites, one will also find that the dialog between the celebrant, or more often the deacon (who in the East exercises a more active and vocal role than in the West), is rather frequent (if not continual). Otherwise, the faithful are

The Influence of the Protestant Revolution and Formation of a “Low Mass Mentality”

The Protestant’s doctrinal revolution against the Church had many serious consequences for Catholics in the Western world, causing innumerable social upheavals which tore at the very fabric of Christendom. The Reformation was certainly a leading cause to the dissolution of the daily liturgical life that Roman Catholics customarily observed.²⁰ This occurred through the seizure and closure of countless centers of liturgical life (*i.e.*, parishes, monasteries, etc.) and the infection of the minds of Catholics with the Protestant error of “pietism.”

Having jettisoned the necessity of the Church for salvation—an institution, or perfect society founded by Our Savior for this purpose—many Protestant sects (especially the Calvinists) rejected the fundamental philosophical truth *that man is a social creature*. Consequently, a curious practice was developed amongst certain Protestants called “pietism”²¹ which declared that individualistic piety was superior to communal or social acts of piety. It was the “just me and Jesus” line of today, but more intelligently expressed.

This individualistic Protestant spirit began to gradually seep in amongst the Catholic clergy and laity alike. It contributed to Catholics following private devotions during their attendance at Mass, rather than communally uniting themselves to the liturgical actions. Meanwhile, the age of the printing press was on hand to deliver a prolific number of “Mass prayer books” whose contents were usually devotions far removed from the sacrificial action taking place at the altar.

With the advent of the Renaissance, particularly in the late Baroque era, there came an exaggerated use of musical art of which was of a very worldly nature, often operatic. These lengthy and complicated works were impossible for the average layman to sing; thus the laity stopped singing. The junction of such worldly art and a passive faithful nearly wiped out the Roman Church’s great patrimony and treasure of Gregorian chant. Even good willed artists like the great Palestrina unwittingly helped to nearly destroy chant through misinterpretation.²² This invasion of profane music into churches degraded the sacredness and importance of the liturgy. The consequence was that many Catholics, even the clergy, began to consider the liturgy as simply a sacred concert or another devotion amongst many already practiced.

The need for women for these new soaring operatic melodies begot the choir loft. Previously, the choir was formed only of boys and men who sung from the choir situated *within the sanctuary* as it was a proper liturgical office. When the schola sat with the clergy, it helped to visually and vocally unite the faithful to the sanctuary actions, especially in alternating the *Kyriale* with the schola, and had the added advantage of allowing the schola master to direct both the choir and faithful as necessary.

As women cannot hold a liturgical office, let alone remain in the sanctuary during the liturgical actions,²³ these new mixed choirs were by necessity relegated to the organ loft, which was expanded to accommodate them. With the choir loft customarily placed at the

singing a liturgical hymn that overlaps what the celebrant is praying in secret (similar to our *Sanctus* in relation to the *Te igitur*, etc.).

²⁰ Which attested by historical accounts consisted of regularly attending Mass and the Divine Office.

²¹ This subjectivist way of thinking was a movement amongst Protestants by this name. Cf. “Pietism” in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (Robert Appleton Company, 1913) for further details.

²² Cf. chapter 4; pp 36-46 in *Papal Legislation on Sacred Music: 95 A.D. to 1977* (Roman Catholic Books, reprinted 2005) by Msgr. Robert F. Hayburn.

²³ Some will state that the bride is allowed in the sanctuary during the Nuptial Mass, this is not true however. The spouses are allowed in the sanctuary only when exchanging their vows and receiving the two-part Nuptial Blessing when the Mass is actually *suspended* (as for a sermon). Citing liturgical principles, rubricists (*e.g.*, Fortescue and J.B. O’Connell) are adamantly against the abuse of the nuptial party remaining in the sanctuary during the Mass, and they further point out that not even a consecrated virgin is allowed to remain in the sanctuary after making her vows.

rear of the church, the choir was now isolated visually from the faithful and vocally by the effect of the choir's voices traveling *over the heads of the faithful and from behind*. This new position also contributed to the misconception that only the choir should sing, further discouraging the faithful's rightful participation through congregational singing.

Another Contributing Factor: The American Liturgical Ethos

Without a doubt, a Low Mass mentality permeated the liturgical mindset of most American Catholics for at least a hundred years before the Second Vatican Council. This partially stemmed from the immigrant Irish, who due to centuries of religious persecution at the hands of the English had developed a liturgical prejudice against all "high church" practices that smacked of that "English" and "Protestant" Anglicanism to them. As Thomas Day humorously outlines in *Why Catholics Can't Sing*,²⁴ this resulted in the "Immense Irish Silence" at quickly said Low Masses, which many present-day, traditionally-minded Catholics associate as being "Tradition" and the *liturgical ideal*.

This notion not only poorly represented the Church's universal liturgical traditions, but caused friction amongst the other ethnic groups that emigrated from the Old World fully expecting to continue in their native liturgical traditions, such as sung Masses where the congregation actually sang. Instead, these groups were pressured by the Irish-American dominated hierarchy to conform to their "American Church Liturgical Standard." Though the establishment of "national churches" (*i.e.*, ethnic parishes) allowed these groups to preserve amongst themselves their traditions, this "solution" marginalized any possible beneficial effect they could have borne upon the prevalent American liturgical ethos.²⁵

As the necessity of this article sadly bears witness, despite repeated admonitions of popes and the labors of many American Catholics, the struggle to break free of this ethos was never fully achieved in our country. And efforts to encourage what the popes desired are still often met with accusations of "Protestantism" and even "Modernism."

The Liturgical Movement, St. Pius X's *Motu Proprio* and the Popes on the Dialog Mass

For nearly two hundred years after the Renaissance, the unfortunate liturgical *status quo* remained virtually static despite the enormous efforts of Dom Gueranger and a host of others. Despite more than a few errors from some, all agreed in one completely orthodox thought: the Church's liturgical piety must be restored to the forefront of the daily life of the average Catholic. Debates raged back and forth between the crusading liturgists and the intransigent pietists, with exaggerations made on both sides.

The primary object of the budding Liturgical Movement was to restore the liturgical life as the wellspring and mainstay of Catholic piety, and subsequently the *traditional* active participation of the faithful. So one can imagine the tears of joy wept when in late November 1903, Pope St. Pius X published his *motu proprio*, *Inter Sollicitudines*, on the reform of sacred music in which he desired to restore and encourage congregational singing. Nonetheless, this papal admonition met much resistance, or worse, was simply ignored, a fact later lamented by Pope Pius XI in *Divini Cultus* (1928) and Pope Pius XII in *Mediator Dei* (1947) and *Musicae Sacrae* (1955), along with numerous other allocutions and writings.

²⁴ The full title of the book is: *Why Catholics Can't Sing: The Culture of Catholicism and the Triumph of Bad Taste* (Crossroad Publishing Co., 1990); *cf.* the chapter "The Irish Way." Though Mr. Day is rather smitten by the Second Vatican Council (partially because its liturgical reform restored active participation in a certain sense), the book is a gem of information and anecdotes about the liturgical musical crisis that has long affected this country. The veracity of his statements can be verified in Solange Hertz's *Star Spangled Heresy: Americanism* (Veritas Press, 1992) and the articles by Dr. Justin Walsh published in *The Angelus* magazine between February 1999 and September 2000.

²⁵ In regards to congregational singing, an additional negative effect is the false "male macho" attitude towards singing that unfortunately predominates in the United States.

Having provided the foundation for restoring congregational singing, the *motu proprio* also inspired the logical adaptation of similar participation at Low Mass, but in a vocal manner, called by some “*choral speaking*,”²⁶ and known today as the Dialog Mass (*Missa Recitata*). Having its roots around 1909, this development took only a few years to occur, which should not surprise us, as similar ideas and practices were being advocated as early as the late 17th century.²⁷ Space here does not allow for citing the numerous success stories, promoters and supporters of the Dialog Mass, but suffice to say that the practice swiftly spread throughout the Roman Catholic world.²⁸

As usual, there were those vehemently against the practice, some venturing to falsely declare it Jansenistic,²⁹ or that the Holy See had actually condemned and forbidden the Dialog Mass.³⁰ However, four early papal demonstrations of encouragement for active participation through the Dialog Mass provided clear support from orthodox popes. On September 5, 1921, the aged Pope Benedict XV recited during one of his last public Masses in St. Peter’s Basilica the entire *Credo* and (note well) *Pater Noster* with 25,000 Italian Catholic Youth. Less than a year later at the same altar, the recently-elected Pope Pius XI celebrated a Dialog Mass for the men’s nocturnal adoration session during the XXVI International Eucharistic Congress on the night of May 26-27, 1922. Again, in 1925, Pius XI would offer a Dialog Mass for French Jubilee pilgrims.

Meanwhile in 1922, the Sacred Congregation of Rites publicly confirmed that local bishops could implement the Dialog Mass, reaffirming this permission in 1935.³¹ In November 1947, Pope Pius XII would publish his pivotal encyclical on the liturgy, *Mediator Dei*, which once again cited the Dialog Mass as a legitimate form of active participation:

105. ...They also are to be commended who strive to make the liturgy even in an external way a sacred act in which all who are present may share. This can be done in more than one way, when, for instance, the whole congregation, in accordance with the rules of the liturgy, either answer the priest in an orderly and fitting manner, or sing hymns suitable to the different parts of the Mass, or do both, or finally in high Masses when they answer the prayers of the minister of Jesus Christ and also sing the liturgical chant.

106. These methods of participation in the Mass are to be approved and recommended when they are in complete agreement with the precepts of the Church and the rubrics of the liturgy...

The Dialog Mass in Practice

In September 1958, the Sacred Congregation of Rites published its comprehensive *Instruction on Sacred Music and Sacred Liturgy (De Musica Sacra et Sacra Liturgia)* which

²⁶ Cf. chapter 10, Choral Speaking, in *The Mass in Transition* by Fr. Gerald Ellard, SJ (Bruce, 1956).

²⁷ Cf. p. 64, ff 197 in Dr. Alcuin Reid’s *The Organic Development of the Liturgy* (Ignatius Press, 2005). At least two Latin-English prayer books were published, one in 1676 and another in 1688, that latter of which instructed the faithful to respond during the Preparatory Prayers and the *Suscipiat* and the former something similar. Fr. Gerard Ellard in *The Dialog Mass* (Longmans, Green and Co. 1942) also cites certain evidence that indicates that the faithful would join the acolyte in making the responses during the developmental years of the Low Mass form (circa 600-900 AD), though he is careful to state that this had not yet been conclusively proven. Considering the era’s liturgical mindset though, this is certainly plausible.

²⁸ Cf. *The Dialog Mass* for details.

²⁹ The Jansenists advocated the recitation of all the prayers, even the secret ones of the priest, aloud, which is quite another thing. Cf. *The Progress of the Liturgy* by Dom Olivier Rosseau, OSB (Newman Press, 1951) and again Fr. Ellard’s *The Dialog Mass* for details.

³⁰ A debate in the August and September 1932 issues of the Italian *Messaggero del Sacro Cuore* regarding SRC 4375, which the proponent of this notion was finally obliged to admit that the document in question actually *gave the local bishops permission* to allow the Dialog Mass as they saw fit.

³¹ The first affirmation was published as SRC rescript (decree) 4375, and the second in the Italian issue of *Periodica*, XXV (1936), 43.

reaffirmed the principles and legislation laid down by Pope St. Pius X regarding liturgical music, and gave four methods of how the Dialog Mass could be practiced:

31. A final method of participation, and the most perfect form, is for the congregation to make the liturgical responses to the prayers of the priest, thus holding a sort of dialogue with him, and reciting aloud the parts which properly belong to them.

There are four degrees or stages of this participation:

- a) First, the congregation may make the easier liturgical responses to the prayers of the priest: *Amen; Et cum spiritu tuo; Deo gratias; Gloria tibi Domine; Laus tibi, Christe; Habemus ad Dominum; Dignum et justum est; Sed libera nos a malo;*
- b) Secondly, the congregation may also say prayers, which, according to the rubrics, are said by the server, including the *Confiteor*, and the triple *Domine non sum dignus* before the faithful receive Holy Communion;
- c) Thirdly, the congregation may say aloud with the celebrant parts of the Ordinary of the Mass: *Gloria in excelsis Deo; Credo; Sanctus-Benedictus; Agnus Dei;*
- d) Fourthly, the congregation may also recite with the priest parts of the Proper of the Mass: Introit, Gradual, Offertory, Communion. Only more advanced groups who have been well trained will be able to participate with becoming dignity in this manner.

32. Since the *Pater Noster* is a fitting, and ancient prayer of preparation for Communion, the entire congregation may recite this prayer in unison with the priest in low Masses; the Amen at the end is to be said by all. This is to be done only in Latin, never in the vernacular.

Here we see the application of the same principles as found at sung Masses. It also makes sense that the communicants would join in the prayers that are intended for their preparation. In fact, it was already a long-standing custom in some places for the communicants to recite the *Domine non sum dignus*. As for the fourth degree, bear in mind that historically these *antiphonal* propers were once alternated between the faithful and the choir (and this still occurs in the Eastern Rites), so this is not a revolutionary practice at all. Note also how due care has been made to ensure that only *well-trained groups* attempt such a practice, while the last paragraph (n. 32) reinforces the existing rule of liturgical language.³²

The last paragraph also stipulates that the faithful may recite the *Pater Noster* in unison with the celebrant, a practice that some have claimed is theologically unsound, but this is incorrect for several reasons. First, the *Pater Noster* is not part of the Canon³³ (which is the priest's particular prayer); historically it has served as a preparatory prayer for Communion and to support this there is evidence that the Lord's Prayer was not initially part of the Church's sacrificial liturgy,³⁴ but was actually a later accretion from an aliturgical Communion service.³⁵ Also, just as with the *Gloria* or *Credo* at a Dialog Mass, the celebrant is *leading* the faithful in the Lord's Prayer. Nor can we forget Benedict XV's example in 1921 when he incorporated this practice and finally of Pius XII when he included it during the Solemn Liturgy of Good Friday as part of the reformed rites of Holy Week in 1955.³⁶ There is also the ancient example of a similar practice from the East, where in the various usages of the Byzantine Rite, the *Pater Noster* is sung by the choir and congregation and then concluded by the celebrant with a Trinitarian formula. Another example is in the Coptic Rite, where it is dialogued by the celebrant with the congregation. Last of all, coupled with the fact that the last verse of the *Pater Noster* is concluded by the server at Low Mass and the

³² Even the liberal philosopher Fr. Antonio Rosmini (1797-1855) would have concurred with this legislation, because though he advocated greater active lay participation (as he recognized the intrinsic value of liturgical piety), nonetheless, he was opposed to the use of the modern vernacular in the liturgy.

³³ This is concluded with the *Per ipsum* whose ending is announced aloud to which the schola and faithful respond, "Amen."

³⁴ Cf. chapter II, pp 52-53 of *The Development of Christian Worship: An Outline of Liturgical History* by Dom Benedict Steuart (Longmans, 1953); other studies are also cited to support this view.

³⁵ Dom Steuart (*ibid*) presents evidence on pp 162-164 that Pope St. Gregory the Great actually introduced the *Pater Noster* into the Roman Mass and not merely transferred it from one place in the Mass to another as was previously thought.

³⁶ Which as the historical evidence shows, contrary to what some contend, was widely accepted by the clergy and laity throughout the world, including by those whose orthodoxy is not suspect.

schola and congregation at sung Masses (let alone that it is one of the most recited prayers said by the laity, *e.g.*, during the rosary), these facts show that the *Pater Noster* is not strictly a priestly prayer, even during the liturgy.

To summarize this section, all of these aspects of the Dialog Mass do not bear on doctrine but on *praxis*. This is even true concerning how the celebrant recites the Canon in the Latin Rites, as the celebrant once recited these prayers aloud, which still occurs in the Eastern Rites, even for the Consecration formula. However, the Latin Church adopted the practice of praying the Canon *submissa voce* (*i.e.*, in a subdued or nearly silent voice), with exception to the Masses wherein a priestly ordination or an episcopal consecration takes place when the ordinands concelebrate with the bishop. Consequently, the bishop recites the entire Offertory, Canon and silent Communion prayers *aloud* so the ordinands can hear and say them with him. Hence, saying the words aloud is not a theological divergence as some might be inclined to think; it's simply not the *praxis* of the Latin Rites.

Bear in mind too, that the Council of Trent did not state that these prayers *could not be said aloud*. In fact, Trent makes it clear that the *submissa voce* rule of *praxis* is particular to the Roman Church: *Si quis dixerit Ecclesiae Romanae ritum, quo submissa voce pars Canonis et verba consecrationis proferuntur, damnandum esse, anathema sit*³⁷ (Session xii, *De Sacrificio Missae*, Canon ix). The concluding anathema is directed against those who state that the Canon (or words of Consecration) *could not be said silently and had to be said aloud*. The latter here is not being advocated, in fact, the opposite, because it is the particular Roman practice.

In the final analysis, Fr. Jungmann's words are befitting to end any sort of doctrinal dispute with the Dialog Mass:

In all these changes... not one letter of the *Missale Romanum* was touched, not a word, not a rubric; for in no one case was there any tampering with the priest's performance of the Mass for which the norms of the low Mass continued to serve always as unimpaired principles. All these changes had to do only with the participation of the people, for which there were nowhere any exact regulations.³⁸

Pastoral Considerations about Implementing the Dialog Mass

One of the main objections to the Dialog Mass is how it is sometimes implemented. Too often we have witnessed the responding at Dialog Masses reduced to a cacophony of mumbled and slaughtered Latin phrases, while each person plods or rushes along at their own pace. These negative examples do not resemble the sense of liturgical prayer, nor consist of how the Dialog Mass should be practiced.

From its conception, while the Holy See allowed bishops to implement the Dialog Mass as they saw fit, nonetheless it instructed them in the same breath that the *expediency of its adoption* should be carefully considered in light of the particular situation. Promoters of the Dialog Mass equally stressed that great care should be taken to teach the faithful how to properly make these responses, and gave many examples of how this could be effectively undertaken, especially within schools, sodalities and other parish groups. The imperativeness of this pastoral prudence especially comes into relief when we consider that in many cases, for several generations the faithful have not been accustomed to making these responses, hence many of them do not know how to properly pronounce Latin, when to make the pauses or breaths, and most of all, the appropriate pace, as frequently the responses tend to be rushed and not said in a prayerful manner.³⁹

³⁷ As cited in *The Mass in Transition*, p. 177, from Jungmann's own *Missale Sollemnia*, chapter 1, p. 164.

³⁸ Loosely translated as: "If one says about the Rite of the Roman Church, 'he will be damned who says the Canon and words of consecration silently,' let him be anathema."

³⁹ Cf. the Servers' Mass Response Card offered by Romanitas Press (www.romanitaspress.com). Some daily missals (and altar cards for the sake of the celebrant) also indicate where the pauses should be made.

This scenario is even true for today's clergy, as Pope Benedict XVI rightfully points out in *Summorum Pontificum* when he requires priests who have never before celebrated the traditional Roman Mass to ensure that they have had suitable training before zealously rushing off and making an attempt. This is eminently prudent, reasonable and in conformity with how priests were traditionally trained to offer Mass. As an example, the Society of St. Pius X requires the priests who have entered their Priests Training Program to privately learn the intricacies of celebrating the traditional Roman Mass before being allowed to offer Mass publicly, a training that typically takes several weeks, even months.

Another connected issue is the volume of voice that should be used at a Dialog Mass. Unfortunately, America's ethnic melting pot does not help matters here, because what is considered thunderous and distracting to the English and Irish, is considered appropriate by those with a Latin or German background; so the pastor's objectivity must be used in regulating this aspect.

Here we must also be careful to make the proper distinction (as Pope Pius XII did in *Mediator Dei*), that while it is theologically indisputable that a person may attend Mass other than by singing, responding or following the prayers in a missal, nonetheless, the Church has also made it *abundantly clear* what is the ideal manner of attending Mass: by actively participating.

So it is one thing to say that a person can attend and unite themselves to the Mass actions by praying the rosary, but it is quite another however to advocate that those who are following authentic liturgical practices should subjugate their voices out of courtesy for those observing private devotions. This is tantamount to insisting that one should lower their voice while singing the *Gloria* at High Mass if they find that the person next to them is praying their rosary! Thus if the pastor (or celebrating priest), has designated the Mass being offered to be according to the Dialog form, then the single person who decides to avail himself of making the responses *has every right to do so*, even if the rest of the church is filled with persons making private devotions.

The Ultimate Crux of the Matter: the Church's Ideal

The Church's mind has been continually affirmed by popes and eminent liturgists whose orthodoxy is above suspicion. They are all united in saying the best and ideal way to attend the liturgical functions, particularly the Mass, is by following the prayers and actions as closely as possible with one's mind and body. They also agree that one should join his voice in the various responses accorded to the faithful, whether sung or spoken. Despite these frequent admonitions, some Catholics still remain adamant in following their own desires rather than the Church's will. However, it must be assumed they act in good, but ill-informed faith.

This comes to the ultimate crux of the issue: whatever our personal preferences may be, as Catholics we should wish nothing more but to conform ourselves to the repeated wishes of our Holy Mother the Church. The Liturgy is the Church's means for sanctifying and spiritually nourishing all of her members, clerical or laic. These liturgical lessons intended for our spiritual profit cannot effectively penetrate and beneficially affect those who continually bury themselves in private devotions instead of attending to the actual prayers or sacred actions.

Another point must be seriously considered: what kind of liturgical reform would have occurred in the wake of the Second Vatican Council *if the pre-conciliar popes had been heeded* by the entire Roman Church and liturgical piety was successfully restored *before the council*? Certainly it would have removed some pretexts for liberal liturgists to promote legitimate practices, but in a way that fostered unorthodox agendas.

If pastors had been more alert and not blindsided by the attractive notion of all the laity

finally vocally participating at Mass, the Roman Church could have enjoyed a continuance of authentic liturgical reform instead of a revolution and crisis. Obviously there were other factors that comprised the entire equation of the subsequent liturgical revolution, but assuredly the intransigency of the pietists was a contributing factor.

Conclusion

Many may not prefer the Dialog Mass and that is their prerogative. Nonetheless, one must avoid equating the legitimate practice of the Dialog Mass with the illegitimate child which is the *Novus Ordo Missae*. The illogical *post hoc ergo propter hoc*⁴⁰ must stop in the assertion that the Dialog Mass was the “beginning of the end” for the liturgical revolution imposed in the wake of the Second Vatican Council; both claims are faulty, having liturgical misconceptions or improper context as their basis.

As Mr. McCall rightfully pointed out within the introduction of his own article, the issue of the Dialog Mass is not a matter of doctrine, but rather of *praxis*, or liturgical practice. Nonetheless, just because something is not *de fide* does not mean that the point is not important. He is certainly correct in pointing out how the Dialog Mass has often been carelessly implemented or is sloppily practiced and such situations should be remedied, either by careful pastoral instruction, or even by abolishing the practice if necessary.

Let us hope and pray that such dialogues regarding the Liturgy will continue to inform Catholics and help restore the true spirit of the Church’s Divine worship.

⁴⁰ That is, *after which therefore because of*, which is a logical fallacy.