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Dedicated to Mary, Mother of God

Salus Animarum Suprema Lex Esto (Canon Law 175)

The Salvation of Souls is the Supreme Law in the Church

A Reflection on the Legacy of a Steward

Francis, Ecumenism, and the Divisions within us

All are Welcome, Except All the Children ...

Francis will die — *although we do not wish his death, nor the death of any man*

— but it is, withal, the temporal end of every man, pontiff or layman, commoner or king. Reflecting on this as Francis recently celebrated his 87th birthday, we are moved to observe something very simple about his stewardship over the House that the Lord has entrusted to him.

For 10 years now, Francis has attempted to “renovate” a House that was not his, but only placed in his care as a steward. The majestic facades, the incense-imbued silence within, dimly colored with the stained-glass light of a late afternoon; the

soaring spires that proclaimed the great Triumph of the Cross abroad for all to see — these were not his to depredate: they belonged to God and to His simple servants who raised them to His glory through the coppers they gave and through the rough, calloused, hands that engraved every niche in stone by dint of a devotion every bit as indestructible as the tip of the chisel the stone yielded to.

Some of these Francis and his bishops simply tore down; others they emptied by “consolidating” them with other Catholic parishes who were equally bleeding parishioners and sold them to Muslims whose adherents grew as exponentially as ours diminished. Some were sold to Evangelical Protestants (especially Hispanic), others to developers who gutted them and turned them into trendy condominiums. And others are left simply abandoned and ruined. This was part of the “*growth*” spurred by the innovations of Vatican II that was supposed to bring the Church into the World but brought, instead, *the World into the Church*.

And the faithful fled, seeing little difference between the two.

Renovation

A far more destructive “renovation” is much closer to the heart of Francis, however, than the mere obliteration of what was symbolically holy in the external presentation of the Church. And it concerns the very *heart* of the Church: its *Mass*

and its *Liturgy*. These were the two greatest impediments to the holy grail of Vatican II: *Ecumenism*. And inextricably bound up with them were the *Sacred Deposit of Faith*, and *Sacred Tradition*. They had been quietly but indelibly preserved in Latin despite nearly 70 years of experimentation in the Vernacular Mass that somehow had promised, but could not deliver upon, an “*organic evolution*” of worship into something ecumenically acceptable to all men in all religions.

Perhaps the *New Order of the Mass*, the “*Novus Ordo*” constructed by *Bishop Luca Brandolini and Anabile Bugnini*,¹ could still lend itself as the vehicle to a universal worship of God under the auspices of Ecumenism: each religion to its own god to be worshipped as the one, true god *in Catholicism* — but not in Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, or Hinduism, each of whom keep *their* respective gods without conflating them with any *other* god, especially the Catholic God. To use Francis’s dismissive term for Traditional Catholics, “*indietrists*”² are much too caught up in trifles like logic to enter emotionally into the “spirit” of Ecumenism where, apparently, the *Law of Non-Contradiction*³ is not admissible and contradictory affirmations are compulsory.

All are Welcome ... Except All the Children ...

Certainly, this *New Order* of Mass, the *Novus Ordo* of Paul VI — unlike the Latin Mass — has proven itself to be extremely versatile and spontaneously creative, possessing nothing of that loathsome “ridigity” so detested by Francis in the “Old Latin Mass.” We have witnessed this spontaneity, this tossing off of the shackles of customary ritual in nearly every Mass; so much so, in fact, that we never quite know what to expect at a Mass the next town over if a Catholic Church still remains there. It could be a “Charismatic Mass” that could vie with, or even surpass in excess, any uninhibited Protestant Revival Meeting. It could be a “Healing Mass,” or a “Children’s Mass.” It may not even be in your language. It could even be an “Ecumenical Service” with your local Protestant Minister, Jewish Rabbi, or Muslim Imam. So many Masses we now have! Except Latin Masses.

“All are welcome!” ... except Latin rite *Catholics*. ... the unwelcome step-children of Vatican II ... the only children not allowed to “*walk in accompaniment*” with Francis & Friends; a “privilege” reserved to “other” Catholics, non-Catholics, and atheists alike. Francis's own rigid insistence on the *Novus Ordo* Mass to the exclusion of any Mass preceding Vatican II is, in fact, completely understandable in light of his determination to fulfill the Ecumenical pledge of Vatican II: not just the unification of all Christians in spite of doctrinal, ecclesiological, and

Confessional differences, but more ambitiously, the unification of all believers in some form of transcendental reality. This is a very, very, broad category comprising nearly everything beyond sensibility, and even sensibility is not categorically excluded. So understood, the term becomes so broad as to become almost meaningless. It is much like claiming to achieve an ultimate Hegelian synthesis that claims to reconcile all contradictions but cannot explain how, and so becomes unintelligible and therefore worthless.

This is becoming too dense for the casual reader so I will not pursue it. Nor should the casual reader regret the omission. Really, it is hardly worth it.

For Francis to scornfully dismiss those who are not persuaded that his *ecumenical agenda* is the principal reason behind his effectively abolishing and outlawing the Latin Mass (although he disingenuously — really, quite dishonestly — states that it is to “preserve unity” in the Church) is a failure in charity to acknowledge real and legitimate issues among the faithful concerning the very unity he pretends to seek while actively striking discord within it. For Francis to claim that he is trying to preserve unity through this autocratic move is both shamefully and manifestly untruthful. That the Latin Mass, together with the theology upon which it has been articulated, has been so forcefully repudiated by Francis is an indication of how desperate a measure he is willing to resort to in order to implement, or

better yet, to force, an increasingly brittle ecumenical paradigm on clergy and laity alike. Pieces of that ecumenical puzzle that are not of Bergoglio's making either will not fit, or refuse to fit, however much force he applies to them.

A Happy Failure

It will be a happy failure that Francis could not, for all his intrigue and ill-designs, bring to an end what faithless princes and kings, heretics and apostates through 20 centuries had been unable to achieve: the destruction, and the utter removal from living memory, of the inextinguishable sanctity of the Latin Mass of All Times and All Places. .

It will be a sad epitaph for Francis in many ways, and history will not look kindly upon his persecution of the faithful in the very house given them and entrusted to him to keep them. It is all the more sad, not that he *failed* to keep them, or even that he *refused* to keep them, but that he sought to drive them out. Seeking to please men, he drove out the children. It is a tragedy of great depth. It is also one that calls for deep, even the most profound, prayer; prayer that must extend to the hand that strikes, as well as to the stricken, for none of us is without sin.

Listening to Christ, let us put aside all contention, and remember not so much what has been done to us, but rather what remains for us to do:

Love your enemies: do good to them that hate you: and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you.” (St. Matthew 5.44)

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