The Day the Mass Changed, How it Happened and Why -- Part I

by Susan Benofy

Descriptive Title
The Day the Mass Changed - Part 1

Description
The first of a two-part series by Susan Benofy examining the changes in the Mass which were first introduced on November 29, 1964.

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On November 29, 1964 — a year after the Second Vatican Council’s Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy was enacted — the “New Mass”, as it was then called, was introduced into US parishes. A fairly typical description of what Catholics experienced at Mass on that day, the Sunday after Thanksgiving, is this:

Parishioners sitting in their places that morning knew something was different from the moment the Mass began. The week before, the priest and altar boys had entered in silence; now everyone was expected to sing at least two verses of a processional hymn. The scriptural passages for the day were read aloud in the vernacular…. The priest, standing behind a new altar set up in the middle of the sanctuary, still said some prayers in Latin, but the people were encouraged to recite others along with him, again in their own language…. The distribution of Communion was now different. In the past, the priest had repeated a prayer in Latin as he worked his way along the line of parishioners kneeling at the altar. He now paused in front of each parishioner, in many places standing rather than kneeling, held up the Communion host so they could see it, and said, “Corpus Christi” (“the Body of Christ”), to which the communicant responded, “Amen”. In a few months this, too, would be said in English, and the altar rail itself would be gone.…

The Church discontinued all Latin by 1969.


Forty-five years later, most of the features O’Toole found novel in 1964 are generally considered an integral part of the liturgical reform of Vatican II. Catholics who recall the new practices introduced on November 29, 1964 would likely agree that this was “the day the Mass changed”, even though the revision of the Rite of Mass was almost five years in the future.
Now, at the beginning of 2010, we are awaiting the new English translation of the Missal — the first experience of the “new era of liturgical renewal” envisioned by *Liturgiam authentica* (§7), the Fifth Instruction on implementing the Council’s liturgical reform, issued in 2001.

Critics of the new translation say that it represents a retreat from the reforms of Vatican II. But is it? A brief review of the history of the early reforms may provide some insight.

*Sacrosanctum Concilium* and other early documents
The Constitution on the Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, promulgated by Pope Paul VI on December 4, 1963, certainly provided for use of the vernacular at Mass, but Latin was not to be discontinued:

> SC 36. 1. Particular law remaining in force, the use of the Latin language is to be preserved in the Latin rites.

> 2. But since the use of the mother tongue … frequently may be of great advantage to the people, the limits of its employment may be extended….

> 3. These norms being observed, it is for the competent territorial ecclesiastical authority mentioned in Art. 22, 2, to decide whether, and to what extent, the vernacular language is to be used; their decrees are to be approved, that is, confirmed, by the Apostolic See….

Within a year, other Vatican documents gave more details of the liturgical reform and provided for some of the other practices O’Toole lists. The two earliest documents were *Sacram Liturgiam* and *Inter oecumenici*.

On January 25, 1964, Pope Paul VI issued apostolic letter *Sacram Liturgiam*, which listed norms of SC that could be put into effect without waiting for the issuance of revised liturgical books. Its provisions were to take effect on February 16, 1964. Of the eleven paragraphs of the document, only one dealt directly with the Mass, and that prescribed a homily on Sundays and Holy Days of obligation.

This document also announced that Pope Paul VI was setting up a special commission to revise the rites and publish new liturgical books. This commission, made up of bishops and experts, was known as the Consilium for Implementing the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. The Consilium was officially established by the pope on February 29, 1964. Vincentian Father Annibale Bugnini was the Consilium’s Secretary, and was under-secretary in the Sacred Congregation of Rites (1966-69), when it became the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship.

At a meeting in April 1964, the US bishops, as “the competent territorial ecclesiastical authority”, decided on the extent to which the vernacular would be used at Mass, and agreed on an English translation of those parts. The bishops’ decision was confirmed by the Holy See in May, and the date for first use of the vernacular in the Mass in the United States was set for the First Sunday of Advent that same year.

The First Instruction on the Proper Implementation of the Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy, *Inter oecumenici*, was issued by the Sacred Congregation for Rites on September 26, 1964, to take effect by March 7, 1965, the first Sunday of Lent.

*Inter oecumenici* (§57) specified which parts of the Mass could be in the vernacular as permitted by SC §54, and the provisions corresponded with what the US bishops had decided at their April meeting. In addition a few other changes were listed.

The readings are to be done facing the people (*Inter oecumenici* §49), and they may be read by a layman (§50). The omissions that O’Toole noted — the Gospel passage read at the end of Mass and the prayers after Mass — are specified in §48j. The new formula for distributing Communion, “Corpus Christi” (“The Body of Christ”), is given in §48i.
O’Toole’s recollections include all the changes specified in these two documents (which were often introduced in two stages) but also several other practices: singing hymns, the priest standing behind a “new altar” (that is, facing the people), receiving Communion standing and the removal of the altar rail.

Apart from Mass facing the people, which is mentioned in Inter Oecumenici, none of these practices is mentioned in SC or the first implementing documents. How is it that they were introduced almost everywhere on November 29, 1964?

The reform of the liturgy did not begin with Vatican II. The practices introduced in 1964 had been proposed much earlier.

**The Liturgical Movement**

Since at least the middle of the 19th century there had been an interest in various aspects of the liturgy, its history, ceremonies and music. Benedictines were particularly prominent in this international Liturgical Movement.

In the United States, St. John’s Benedictine Abbey in Collegeville, Minnesota, was well-known as a center of liturgical activity. It was there that an influential liturgical journal, *Orate Fratres* (later renamed *Worship*) was first published in 1926.

The abbey was instrumental in founding the Benedictine Liturgical Conference in 1940 to hold national meetings called Liturgical Weeks. In 1943 this organization became simply the Liturgical Conference, and was no longer sponsored by the Benedictines. The Liturgical Weeks were attended by thousands of priests, religious and laity interested in liturgical reform.

At first the main concern of the Liturgical Movement was that people be educated about the liturgy so they could better understand and participate in it. Later some liturgists decided that the people’s participation would be possible only if changes were made in the rites, and began to advocate such changes. Thus many of the practices associated with the “New Mass” after the Council actually had their beginnings decades earlier.

**Mass facing the people**

Though the priest celebrating Mass facing the people was not mentioned in the Council’s Constitution on the Liturgy (SC), permission was included in the 1964 Instruction *Inter Oecumenici*, in a section on “Designing Churches and Altars to Facilitate the Participation of the People”:

90. In building new churches or restoring and adapting old ones every care is to be taken that they are suited to celebrating liturgical services authentically and that they ensure active participation by the faithful (see SC art. 124).

91. The main altar should preferably be freestanding, to permit walking around it and celebration facing the people. Its location in the place of worship should be truly central so that the attention of the whole congregation naturally focuses there. (Emphasis added.)

Setting up a new, temporary altar in order to be able to celebrate Mass facing the people is never mentioned.

Many Catholics think that Mass facing the people was an innovation of Vatican II. However, liturgists had been arguing for decades that it was permitted by the rubrics of the older Missal.

For example, in 1937 *Orate Fratres* published a question about an earlier article that mentioned a Mass said by a priest facing the congregation, and asked about the justification for this practice. The response said that it was the current custom in St. Peter’s Basilica and other Roman churches for the priest to face the people because of the location of the altar, and that there were specific rubrics for the Mass instructing the priest what to do in such cases. It concluded:
Not only, therefore, does no Church law or rubric forbid the construction of altars at which the celebrant faces the people as of old, but the present rubrics, as quoted above, still make provision for Mass celebrated at such an altar. (Orate Fratres, April 18, 1937, p. 280.)

In 1959, the same journal, by now known as Worship, addressed a variation of the same question (vol. 33, #2, pp. 123-125). In this article the question was whether a temporary altar could be placed in front of the old altar so that the priest could say Mass facing the people.

This question was answered by Father Frederick McManus, who taught canon law at Catholic University and was wellknown as a speaker and writer on liturgical law. In his response, Father McManus said that a temporary altar was perfectly lawful, and suggested that such an altar should be close to the Communion rail. He also said that a permanent altar facing the people may be erected, and cites an article of Father Annibale Bugnini explaining that the desire to have Mass facing the people is a justification for reserving the Blessed Sacrament on an altar other than the main altar. He says that the Holy See is “encouraging” a “revival” of Mass facing the people; but the evidence he cites is less conclusive. He notes that at an international conference on liturgy held in Assisi in 1956, Pope Pius XII had said that experts would study the question of what should be done with the tabernacle on an altar facing the people; and he also cites a 1957 decision from the Congregation for Rites that said that if there is only one altar in a church it cannot be used for Mass facing the people. Father McManus sees this decision as permissive, because it does not forbid the practice as such, but deals only with the case of a church with a single altar — a situation that he considers rare.

Father McManus then says that the desirability of the Mass facing the people is a separate question, and that those who promote it generally have compelling pastoral or theological reasons.

Even from a psychological point of view, the faithful are more conscious of their unity with the celebrating priest when they see his face instead of his back. But much more important, the unity of Christ (in the person of His minister) with His members in the act of worship is said to be better signified or expressed through the Mass ritual versus populum. (p. 125)

In his opinion, the versus populum (facing the people) option at least occasionally is advisable as a way of helping the people to realize that the Mass is the Church’s sacrifice, and that it would be particularly helpful if they could hear the Canon:

Its words directly concern the worshipping community, they express its unity with Christ and the celebrant in the offering of sacrifice, and yet they are unheard and unintelligible to the faithful. Perhaps the celebration of Mass with celebrant facing the people, even if done only on occasion, may help to involve the people in the sacred action and to move them to that inward participation which the words demand. (p. 125)

Some liturgists were especially enthusiastic about Mass facing the people. Among them was Father Hans Ansgar Reinhold (known as H. A. R.), who wrote a regular column in Orate Fratres called “Timely Tracts”. In the April 14, 1940 edition, Father Reinhold’s column “My Dream Mass” was a description of a Mass that the author imagines taking place twenty years in the future, i.e., in 1960. His description includes the following:

… The altar was a stone table with low candlesticks. The priest stood behind it facing his flock, as is done in Rome and many other churches in the old country, especially Belgium and Germany. My priest never turned his back to the people, in spite of the new theory that the priest ought to turn towards the wall in order the better to symbolize that he speaks and sacrifices to God in the name of the congregation. (p. 265)

In 1960, when preparations for the Council were underway, Father Reinhold published a book, Bringing the Mass to the People (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1960), suggesting several changes in the Mass the Council might make. Among his recommendations is an altar facing the people.
The doctrinal, pastoral, and psychological reasons for a return to the older way of facing the congregation even during the Banquet-Sacrifice … are so convincing that I hope that this will be made the normal position for the priest. (p. 44)

This change did not remain a mere theoretical possibility. Some priests, influenced by these opinions, actually said Mass facing the congregation long before the Council.

On February 25, 1945, Father Reinhold’s *Worship* column was called “The soldiers are ahead of us!” It featured a letter from a military chaplain who says that he had wanted to try Mass facing the congregation “ever since H. A. R. suggested it to me when I first became a chaplain” (p. 170). The chaplain summarizes his explanation to the men, which followed the ideas of Fathers Reinhold and McManus. He suggests that this practice promotes greater knowledge of the Mass and so will increase devotion to the Mass and increase Mass attendance.

Father Gerald Ellard, SJ, was a founder and associate editor of *Orate Fratres/Worship* and a prolific writer on liturgy. In his 1948 book *The Mass of the Future* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1948) he claims:

> At the 1947 Liturgical Week in Portland the Masses were all celebrated versus populum with brilliant success…. (p. 271)

In some places bishops explicitly allowed the practice. Father Ellard quotes from two pastoral letters written by French bishops in 1945 and 1946, both making explicit allowance for Mass facing the people. He also describes the altar of a Church in Burlington, Vermont, built so that the priest can celebrate facing in either direction, and comments approvingly:

> Perhaps in this double provision it is the real prototype of the setting of the Sacrifice of the Future.  

(p. 270)

Note that none of the advocates of Mass facing the people mentions the history or the significance of the priest facing East, *ad orientem*. The usual rationale given for the priest facing the people at Mass was that it was a more ancient practice.

**Removal of altar rails, standing to receive Communion**

Introducing the practice of standing to receive Communion and removing altar rails also preceded the Council. One notable example is the Benedictine abbey church at St. John’s in Collegeville, Minnesota.

During the 1950s, Father Godfrey Diekmann, a monk at St. John’s, participated in developing the plans for a new abbey church. Father Diekmann, a prominent liturgist and editor of *Worship*, served as an expert (*peritus*) at the Second Vatican Council (as did Father McManus), and was also a consultant to the Consilium group formed to implement the Council’s liturgical reforms (as was Father McManus).

Some details of the plans for the new church are given in *The Monk’s Tale: A Biography of Godfrey Diekmann, OSB* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1991), by Sister Kathleen Hughes, RSCJ, who taught liturgy at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago and served on the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL). She writes:

> The plans represented a stunning departure from certain “inherited prejudices” about what a church *should* look like….

> The abbey church at St. John’s is remarkable in many respects. Planned in the decade before the Second Vatican Council was announced, and dedicated before the convocation of the first session, the church in nearly all respects anticipated the liturgical reform that it would soon house. (*Monk’s Tale* p. 169, 170. Original emphasis.)

Among other innovations, the new abbey church had no Communion rail. Father Diekmann gave reasons for this in a letter to Dominican Father Pierre Marie Gy, of the Liturgical Institute of Paris, who was also an expert at
Vatican II and consultant to the Consilium.

We have definitely planned to eliminate the Communion rail. We figure that it has come to denote in people’s minds not merely the distinction between sanctuary and nave, that is between priest and people, but actually separation. And we feel this is most undesirable, particularly because Communion itself is the sacrament of union, and for it to be distributed at a symbol of separation seems most inappropriate. We know that it could be of a very slight and unobtrusive character, but de facto it has come to mean separation from the sanctuary and the altar in the minds of the people. We therefore propose to indicate the distinction by three steps, basing ourselves on the paragraph in the Holy Father’s allocution after Assisi in which he says that the Head and the body are not to be considered as two separate entities, but form one unit which together is operative in worship. Instead of the customary communion rail, we plan to have four small “tables”, only about a foot wide and about four feet long, and about three feet high. The celebrant will be standing on one step higher than the people who will receive, and the latter will receive standing. There are several such tables in a neighboring diocese and my own experience with them has been very satisfactory.…. (Monk’s Tale, pp. 171-172.)

Father Frederick McManus was another advocate of standing for Communion. In 1960, Father McManus wrote a commentary on new rubrics for the Mass promulgated by Pope John XXIII (Handbook for the New Rubrics, Baltimore; Helicon press, 1960). These new rubrics made only small changes in the Communion rite, and made it clear that Communion was to be distributed at the proper time during Mass, not begun at the Offertory, as was done in some places.

These new rubrics made no change in the manner of receiving, however. But Father McManus suggested that the practice of distributing Communion outside of the proper time may have been due to large congregations in churches with crowded Mass schedules. Communion could be distributed more expeditiously if people were standing rather than kneeling.

Where conditions are seriously crowded, it may even be advisable to expedite the distribution by directing the communicants to stand rather than kneel; the problem and the inconvenience sometimes encountered seem sufficient to excuse from the ordinary regulation that the laity in the Latin Church communicate while kneeling. (p. 146)

Vernacular hymns

The singing of hymns in the vernacular was also a feature of most people’s experience of the “New Mass”. This, too, was promoted by liturgists before the Council. In some European countries, especially in German-speaking ones, hymns had been sung at Mass for centuries and some ethnic parishes in the US retained the custom. Though it was not the general practice, some liturgists — especially those who worked for more use of the vernacular — began to encourage hymn-singing at Mass.

In 1956 there was a presentation called “Making Active Participation Come to Life” at the Liturgical Week sponsored by the Liturgical Conference. In it Father Eugene Walsh, SS, a professor at Baltimore’s St. Mary Seminary, introduced what he claimed was “the most all round useful means for making active participation come to life, a program that is to be used at low Mass”. (“Making Active Participation Come to Life” People’s Participation and Holy Week: 17th North American Liturgical Week. Elsberry, MO: The Liturgical Conference, 1957, pp. 47-48.)

The program consisted of a “dialogue Mass” at which the people spoke their responses in Latin and also sang hymns in English at the Entrance, Offertory, Communion, and at the end of Mass. Father Walsh clearly thought this method of participation was superior to the singing of the actual Mass texts in Gregorian chant.

During the discussion after Father Walsh’s presentation, two priests in the audience, both from rural parishes, explained how they were able to instruct their parishioners in the basic Gregorian chants so that they could
regularly participate in the sung high Mass. But Father Walsh defended the superiority of his “Low Mass Program”.

I think we must always distinguish between participating, and participating with an insistence on learning…. I come from a large urban area, and I feel that we have to reach all of these people, and I do not think that we can do it just by the sung Mass. This is one of the beginning programs which lends itself to more simplicity and perhaps is catechetically better because it is more in the language of the people….. (p. 48)

In 1958 the Sacred Congregation for Rites issued the “Instruction on Sacred Music and the Sacred Liturgy”, which explicitly allowed such vernacular singing, but did not consider it “direct participation” because it did not involve the actual liturgical texts prescribed for those parts of the Mass.

At low Mass the faithful who participate directly in the liturgical ceremonies with the celebrant by reciting aloud the parts of the Mass which belong to them must, along with the priest and his server, use Latin exclusively.

But if, in addition to this direct participation in the liturgy, the faithful wish to add some prayers or popular hymns, according to local custom, these may be recited or sung in the vernacular. (§14b)

The practices that were introduced on November 29, 1964 — use of the vernacular language, the priest celebrating Mass facing the people, singing vernacular hymns, standing to receive Communion and the removal of altar rails — were almost universally understood to be part of the “New Mass”. As we see, none of these were required by the Second Vatican Council’s Constitution on the Liturgy, but all had a significant “pre-conciliar” history.

How did these sudden changes come about? We will explore this in more detail in Part II.

Part II in the March 2010 issue of the Adoremus Bulletin -- The Day the Mass Changed, How it Happened and Why-- Part II -- by Susan Benofy

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Larger Work

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Introduction to Part II

The first reforms of the liturgy were introduced on November 29, 1964, and more were introduced a few months later. This was just a year after the promulgation of the Second Vatican Council’s Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium (SC) and before the Council itself had ended.

During the period of preparation for introducing the reforms, the bishops would have been in Rome, as the third session of the Second Vatican Council met from September 14 to November 21, 1964. Thus it was the Liturgical Conference who took the initiative of interpreting SC and working out a program of implementation.

Prominent members of the Liturgical Conference included Fathers Frederick McManus, Godfrey Diekmann, OSB, Eugene Walsh and H. A. Reinhold, liturgists who had promoted practices such as standing for Communion, removing altar rails, singing hymns at Mass and Mass facing the people. It should come as no surprise to find that all these practices — which were introduced after the Council but were not found in Sacrosanctum Concilium or other official implementing documents of the time — are recommended in the program they devised.

(Part I of this essay appeared in the February 2010 issue of the Adoremus Bulletin.)

Part II - Conclusion

In 1948, Pope Pius XII set up a commission to study liturgical reform, and several changes resulted, the best known of which is the reform of the Holy Week liturgies promulgated in 1955.

A series of meetings were held in Europe starting in 1951 at which liturgists from several countries came together to discuss reform of the liturgy. Though unofficial, these meetings made a series of proposals for changes in the liturgy, which were sent to Rome in the hope of influencing the reform that was already in progress.
In 1960, Father Frederick McManus, in his introduction to Father H. A. Reinhold’s book *Bringing the Mass to the People* (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1960), mentions these proposals and anticipates their influence.

Recommendations made at a congress have of course an organized character, however private and unofficial. Of equal importance are the studies and proposals of individual scholars and writers. These have been in the background of every liturgical development of the century; they are certain to be the guideposts to future development (p. 14).

Speaking specifically of the proposals in the Reinhold book, Father McManus says:

Much that is proposed in these pages will doubtless be found in future liturgical books, in one form or another, after it has been considered … by the competent authority in the Church (p. 15).

Many individual scholars sought changes such as removing Communion rails or receiving Communion standing, as we have seen. Even when these changes were not formal proposals of an international meeting, liturgists were confidently anticipating their inclusion in a future reformed liturgy well before the Second Vatican Council was announced.

When actual preparations for the Council began some of these same liturgists served as periti (experts) to the committee drafting the Constitution on the Liturgy. Two Americans, Fathers McManus and Diekmann, were on the Preparatory commission before the Council and also both were periti who were official advisors to the Council’s bishops on historical and theological scholarship pertaining to the liturgy.

But the periti did not confine themselves to giving disinterested scholarly evaluations. They in fact saw the Council as an opportunity to continue advocacy for their favored practices. For example, Benedictine Father Diekmann was particularly interested in “inculturation” and the adoption of the vernacular, and at the Council “he had the time and the platform to lobby intensely for their resolution”, as Sister Kathleen Hughes reports in *The Monk’s Tale: A Biography of Godfrey Diekmann, OSB* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991, p. 223).

The periti often gave lectures while they were in Rome for the Council sessions. These lectures gave the bishops who attended the expert’s own interpretation of the Council documents. The influence of these lectures is described in accounts by those who were present in Rome at the time. Bishop Robert Tracy of Baton Rouge, who attended the Council, wrote:

Perceiving the importance of renewal of the Liturgy to the entire work of the Council, the typical non-specialist bishop began to do collateral reading on the subject and to attend some of the lectures which were being given by world-renowned writers and professors almost every afternoon…

Moreover, it was possible, in the course of the morning at St. Peter’s, to arrange to speak, privately or in a small group, to many an expert on the liturgy (*An American Bishop at the Vatican Council*, New York: McGraw-Hill Book company, 1966, p. 56).

Journalist Robert Blair Kaiser, who covered the Council for *Time* magazine, reported:


The periti, for their part, believed that the bishops were in great need of the “education” they provided. Father McManus, in a letter to Father Diekmann, wrote:

The [US] bishops are extremely timid among themselves and I should like to get a little sociological and psychological study done on them…. Hallinan is very good indeed; I only wish it were not a
case of getting him a Berlitz-type education in the liturgy while we operate (Monk’s Tale, p. 206).

The reference is to Archbishop Paul Hallinan of Atlanta, who was a member of the Commission on Liturgy at the Second Vatican Council, a member of the Consilium after the Council, one of the founders of the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL), and was Chairman of the US?Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy from 1966-1968.

The periti also worried about how the liturgical reform would be implemented in their home countries. When Father Diekmann was told that the US bishops had lost interest in the Council and wanted to go home, “the American periti were called to a meeting to plan strategy for the implementation of the Council, lest the bishops return home without much enthusiasm and revert to ‘business as usual’” (Monk’s Tale, p. 258). Back in the US when the Council was not in session various liturgical experts were strongly promoting reform of the liturgy through lectures and workshops. In March 1964, Father Diekmann wrote to fellow liturgist J. B. O’Connell:

Fred [McManus] and I have been very busy lecturing to groups of priests throughout the country ever since returning from Rome. And the list of such engagements stretches through the next months, until September (Monk’s Tale, p. 252).

The lectures continued even beyond that September. In February 1965, McManus addressed a meeting sponsored by the Liturgical Conference. Speaking to 500 architects, artists, clergy and members of diocesan liturgical commissions on “Recent Documents on Church Architecture”, Father McManus told his audience:

To talk about official documents of the Church requires an initial disclaimer. From the very start we must be clear in our minds that the teaching, doctrine, and theory has greater significance than the precise formulation of the norms or regulations…. We must look rather to the commentators and the commentaries in order to understand fully what may be very simply expressed in an official pronouncement, document, or regulation (Church Architecture: The Shape of Reform. Washington, DC: The Liturgical Conference, 1965, p. 86).

Father McManus assured his listeners that such commentaries were already available, and could be found in books and in articles published in periodicals such as Worship. He made specific mention of a just-published article by Father Diekmann in Concilium Volume 2.

An important point is made by this excellent article of Father Godfrey’s; it is principle and doctrine that underlies the formulations in official language and the regulations. Father Godfrey’s article was written before the Instruction which appeared in October and yet it is valid now and will be as valuable in the future. The meaning of norms must be sought in the supporting reasons, for which we must look to the commentators (p. 87).

The idea that principles (as interpreted by commentators) have “greater significance than the precise formulation of the norms” is in essence the approach that puts the “Spirit of Vatican II” in opposition to the actual statements of the Council documents. It suggests, moreover, that it is more important to read articles by commentators than to read the documents themselves. And it leaves it to the commentators to decide what the fundamental principles are.

Some commentators even included “change” among the important principles. In fact, in popular presentations about the liturgical reform around the time of the Council, the word “change” is used more frequently than “reform” or “renewal”. This is especially evident in the book Our Changing Liturgy (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1966) by Jesuit Father Clement McNaspy, a member of the Board of Directors of the Liturgical Conference and editor of the magazine America. Father McNaspy stressed the necessity for change and urged his readers to accept it.

Another reason why change is peculiarly urgent today, in liturgy as in other human elements of the Church’s work, is the unprecedented acceleration of change in the world as a whole. Indeed, change may well be the most characteristic trait of our time.
Since we learn by doing, it was plain that by experiencing change in our everyday life of worship we might all become better prepared to accept the further changes called for in other conciliar decisions…. Liturgical change was to be only the beginning; but it did establish the principle (p. 32, 33).

Such ideas were also spread by the Liturgical Conference through its annual Liturgical Weeks, which increased greatly in popularity immediately before and during the Council. Though a private organization, the Liturgical Conference had a sort of semi-official status.

Father Godfrey Diekmann reported that interest generated by press reports on the liturgy discussions at the Council accounted for the 1963 Liturgical Week in Philadelphia drawing 15,000 people.

Attendance grew to 20,000 for the 1964 meeting in St. Louis, and in 1965 Liturgical Weeks were held in three different cities to accommodate the increased interest (“Liturgical Practice in the United States and Canada”, *Concilium* vol. 12: The Church Worships. Johannes Wagner and Helmut Hucke, Editorial Directors, Paulist Press, 1966, pp. 157-166).

In the same paper Father Diekmann mentions the purposes of the Bishops’ Commission on the Liturgical Apostolate established in 1958.

> It was intended, moreover, to serve as a liaison between the hierarchy and the Liturgical Conference; its secretary reported on the Conference’s work and on the general state of the liturgical renewal each year at the time of the bishops’ annual meetings (p. 158).

When this Commission became the US Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy (BCL) in 1965, Father McManus resigned the presidency of the Liturgical Conference to become head of the BCL secretariat. Father Diekmann and other prominent liturgists served on its Board of Directors and spoke regularly at the Liturgical Weeks.

Education in liturgy was not among the responsibilities of the BCL when it was founded. This role was left to “diocesan commissions and private agencies”, or even to “commercial music publishing firms”, as we read in *The Diocesan Liturgical Commission: Documentation, Proposed Goals, and Present Projects* (Washington, DC: USCCB Publications Office, 1970, pp. 4, 16).

The very rapid introduction of the reforms made it almost impossible for the bishops, who were still spending considerable time in Rome attending Council sessions, to take an active role in planning the implementation of the liturgical reform. So this was left to the “private agencies”, that is, organizations of expert liturgists whom the bishops had come to rely on for interpretation of the Council’s intentions. And the Liturgical Conference was prepared to take on the task.

**The Liturgical Conference and the “Parish Worship Program”**

In the early 1960s, under the presidency of Father Frederick McManus, the Liturgical Conference had established an office in Washington, DC, and hired a full-time executive director. During the Council, when Father McManus was in Rome as a peritus, the president was Father Gerard Sloyan, a priest of the diocese of Trenton, and chairman of the Department of Religious Education at Catholic University of America. Father Sloyan had attended the 1944 Liturgical Week and is quoted as saying that since that time his “involvement with the liturgy has been almost totally coterminous with [his] membership in the Liturgical Conference” (See Gordon E. Truitt, “Gerard Sloyan: Bridge of the Spirit” in *How Firm a Foundation: Leaders of the Liturgical Movement*, compiled and introduced by Robert L. Tuzik. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1990, pp. 292-299, quote on pp. 293-294). Father Sloyan believed that the main change in the liturgy after the Council was to be a change of spirit. Gordon Truitt writes:

> Because of the work involved in communicating that “change of spirit”, the Liturgical Conference immediately undertook a major publishing program, to which Sloyan contributed in several ways. The weeklong planning sessions for a series of books, *the first and for a long time the only aids*
made available to guide the celebration in the new rites, took place during the week in which President John Kennedy was shot in November 1963. The Conference’s national staff and services were expanded as part of a long-range education program to help implement the decrees stemming from Vatican II (Truitt, p. 295. Emphasis added.)

That same fateful week a decisive vote was taken on the Council’s Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. The Liturgical Conference had already decided to produce these books, known as the “Parish Worship Program”, more than a week before the final formal vote and promulgation of Sacrosanctum Concilium.

The “Parish Worship Program” was only part of the Liturgical Conference’s program for liturgical reform. In 1966, Father Diekmann reported of the Liturgical Conference that

presently its busy Washington headquarters are, practically speaking, the spearhead of our pastoral-liturgical movement, with a many-faceted publicational, educative and promotional program (Concilium vol. 12, p. 158).

Father William Leonard, SJ, then- chairman of the theology department of Boston College, described this many-faceted effort of the Liturgical Conference in more detail:

The central office of the [Liturgical] Conference has sponsored and staffed institutes for seminary professors, diocesan liturgical commissions, architects, musicians, and publishers of missals. With the cooperation of the National Council of Catholic Men, films and television programs have been produced…. Soon after the Council had approved the Constitution on the Liturgy, a comprehensive Parish Worship Program was prepared, made up of books and leaflets explaining the liturgical renewal for priests and people, by the end of 1964 more than two million of these items had been sold (“The Liturgical Movement in the United States” in The Liturgy of Vatican II vol. 2, edited by William Baraúna, OFM. Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1966, p. 309).

The diocesan liturgists who were in charge of implementation almost certainly got their information on the meaning of the liturgical reform in one of the Liturgical Conference’s many institutes, and were presented with their ready-made program for instructing the laity. And that program, the “Parish Worship Program”, instructed pastors to implement a whole array of practices not found in any of the documents from the Holy See, including practices that had been advocated by liturgists for decades.

A major part of the “Parish Worship Program” consisted of three books. No author was given for these volumes, but each book had a signed Preface and listed contributors to its composition. Father H.A. Reinhold wrote a preface to one volume, Father McManus wrote the preface to another. Fathers McManus, Clement McNaspy and Eugene Walsh were all listed among the contributors, as were representatives of two commercial music publishers: the Gregorian Institute of America (GIA) and World Library of Sacred Music (now WLP). Father Godfrey Diekmann’s ideas are evident in the program’s recommendations.

One of the books, Priest’s Guide to Parish Worship, has an imprimitur dated May 22, 1964 (Washington, DC: The Liturgical Conference, 1964) — less than five months after the Council’s Constitution on the Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium (SC), was published. Only SC itself and Pope Paul VI’s apostolic letter, Sacram Liturgiam, were published before the Priest’s Guide appeared — and the only practice from SC found in Sacram Liturgiam that would affect the Mass at the ordinary parish was the requirement of a homily on Sundays and Holy Days.

The Priest’s Guide, however, recommends a number of changes, implying that they are implementations of the Council decrees. Father McManus, in the Preface to Priest’s Guide to Parish Worship says:

The point of this book and of the entire Parish Worship Program is the fulfillment, without delay or hesitation, of the great Council’s commitment to a sincere and living worship of the Father in heaven. It attempts to translate into the practical situations of parish life what the Council has said with force and eloquence (p. vi).
In its Introduction, Father Sloyan, president of the Liturgical Conference writes:

The Priest’s Guide “is meant to lead the priest to an accurate and thorough grasp of what the Constitution on the Liturgy means to him, to his people, and to their common worship of God” (p. xii).

And readers are told:

Every element has been prepared in the strictest possible conformity with the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, and with the most responsible opinion of liturgical study and pastoral experience (p. 11).

The Priest’s Guide’s first chapter begins with a review of changes in the liturgy in the previous decades: encouragement of frequent Communion, changes in the Breviary, in Holy Week and in the classification of feasts.

Changes in the liturgy are normal and natural. They are even necessary. All of us have lived through quite a number of them in the past, and we shall undoubtedly see many more in the future (Priest’s Guide, p. 2).

The changes to be introduced by the Conciliar reform, however, are “of a new and different sort from the ones we have all experienced in the recent past” (Priest’s Guide, p. 2).

With all this emphasis on coming changes, it is puzzling to read later in the same book that the recommended program:

will not require any serious modification within the foreseeable future. This program can be used now but it will not be obsolete next year. It is the best possible preparation for what is to come. It is also the best possible use of legislation already in force (Priest’s Guide, p. 60).

The “legislation already in force” in the summer of 1964 included the unmodified rubrics of the 1962 Missal, that is the rubrics for the so-called “Tridentine” Mass. Yet with all the anticipated changes in the liturgy, readers are assured, the “Parish Worship Program”, once introduced, will not require change. A priest reading this might believe that he did not have to read any further documents coming from the Holy See on the subject of liturgy.

Much of the Priest’s Guide is devoted to the details of what is called the “Program for Mass”. It illustrates what happens when commentators put their own interpretation ahead of specific provisions of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy.

**Arrangement of Churches**

The program first considers the arrangement of the church. Encouraging participation is treated as the primary principle here, and participation is certainly a major consideration in the Constitution. However, that same Constitution stressed that “the Church has brought into being a treasury of art that must be carefully preserved” (SC §123). It also says the Church insists that “all things set apart for use in divine worship are truly worthy, becoming, and beautiful, signs and symbols of the supernatural world” (SC §122).

The Priest’s Guide, however, insists that the basic standard for judging an element of the church building is whether it aids “intelligent and meaningful participation”. On this basis it warns that

there will be things of the highest artistic or other merit which will nonetheless be unacceptable in terms of this more basic consideration (p. 62).

It proceeds to consider the altar, which “is primarily a table, and should look like one” (Priest’s Guide, p. 66). Since this is not the case in churches of Gothic or Baroque design it recommends certain modifications.
This dilemma has been solved successfully in many parishes by the installation of an altar facing the people. A very simple temporary altar has been installed semi-permanently on a raised platform just inside the altar rail.

The advantages for effective participation involved in such a bringing of the Mass to the people are obvious.... Also, it is advisable that the gates of the sanctuary railing and even a portion of the railing itself should be removed where possible, thus creating a very important space in front of the altar (Priest's Guide, p. 66).

It further recommends that there be “Communion stations” where priests stand to distribute Communion. (As we have seen, such an arrangement was already in place in some churches.) It describes the procedure for receiving Communion at such stations.

The faithful advance one or, better, two at a time and receive standing, without genuflection before or after. Such a procedure does much to encourage the idea that communion is a meal being shared, rather than the private devotion of individuals who happen to be attending the same Mass (Priest's Guide, p. 66).

The Priest's Guide adds that this method eliminates an “assembly-line” impression created by receiving at a rail, and yet claims that it saves a good deal of time.

Manual for Music

The Priest's Guide also considers music, insisting that the most important single element of the program is getting the entire congregation to join in the singing at Mass. The importance of music in the “Parish Worship Program” is emphasized by the fact that another volume in the series, A Manual for Church Musicians (Washington, DC: The Liturgical Conference, 1964), is entirely devoted to music.

The Manual considers intelligibility a higher priority than the artistic qualities of the music:

Since the didactic aspects of the liturgy have been highlighted, intelligibility has received the greatest attention. Until the principle of an intelligent and instructful worship is restored to the Church, other characteristics of the liturgy must recede temporarily, until a balance between understanding and aesthetic perception is gained. Such an abeyance, should it come about, would be a negligible and necessary sacrifice.... (pp. 20-21).

The exclusive emphasis on intelligibility leads to conflict with the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, which states: “The treasury of sacred music is to be preserved and cultivated with great care.” (SC §114). And it says of Gregorian chant:

The Church acknowledges Gregorian chant as distinctive of the Roman liturgy; therefore, other things being equal, it should be given pride of place in liturgical services (SC §116).

But the Manual says that Gregorian chant is not appropriate for parish liturgies:

Although the plain chant is one of the priceless treasures, it is primarily the domain of the monastery; it has never been the actual treasure of the American parish. Our priests were “exposed” to it during the formative years of the seminary training, and occasionally a hard-working choirmaster has introduced it, but not without hard effort and even some opposition. There is no need to fear that the chant will be lost, for the monastery will preserve it, whereas the parish never really possessed it. For the monk, Latin will not prove a barrier to his understanding of the Church’s ceremonial; for the average parishioner, English will prove an invitation to an understanding of the worship of the Whole Christ that Latin could never give. It is the parish that is the first concern of the bishops, and intelligent participation the motive that underlies their liberal allowance for the use of English (p. 20).
A consultant on both the *Manual* and *Priest’s Guide* was Sulpician Father Eugene Walsh of St. Mary’s Seminary in Baltimore. Father Walsh had introduced a program for singing English hymns at a Low Mass, and considered this superior to trying to teach people to sing the Latin High Mass. This rejection of chant apparently reflects his thinking. His biographer, Timothy Leonard, tells us that:

The major principle guiding Gene in all this work with The Liturgical Conference was that the end of good participation in the liturgy should not be hindered by the overemphasis on the means to attain it. Thus he found the wish to preserve Gregorian Chant to be wrong. He had learned the Solesmes method and developed his own style of doing Gregorian over many years, but when it became possible for people to sing in English at Mass, he knew it had to go… Walsh really thought people who favored the maintenance of Gregorian Chant to be prejudiced (*Geno: a biography of Eugene Walsh*, SS, Washington, DC: Pastoral Press, 1988, p. 80).

The *Priest’s Guide* also seems, implicitly at least, to discourage chant. It says the music at Mass must be good, but it warns:

The priest must be careful nonetheless that perfectly praiseworthy efforts to add dignity and solemnity to special feasts do not become an excuse to take away from the people a vocal participation that is rightfully theirs (*Priest’s Guide*, p. 71).

But which parts of the sung Mass “rightfully” belong to the congregation? Archabbot Rembert Weakland (later Archbishop of Milwaukee) discussed this point in a talk on “Music and the Constitution” given at the National Liturgical Week in August 1964. In particular he asked what was the role of the people in singing the Proper of the Mass. (His address was published in *The Challenge of the Council: Person, Parish, World: Twenty-Fifth North American Liturgical Week*, Washington, DC: The Liturgical Conference, 1964, pp. 204-209.) To find an answer to this question, he said,

It is helpful, however, to try to prophesy concerning the future from the hints the Constitution gives us (p. 207).

Archabbot Weakland admits that the people never sang the Proper as we know it. He does not cite any specific statement of the Constitution that says the people must participate in singing the Proper. Instead he relies on the opinions of certain commentators:

There are many liturgists who imply that the active participation spoken of in the Constitution will not be fulfilled until the people share in the Propers of the Mass as well. Clarification of this point is needed before musicians can proceed. Some guidelines can be provided, however (p. 208).

If the Proper parts of the Mass are to be people’s chants, he says, they will have to change in character, even quite radically:

They must become simple antiphons or hymns. Even if a Gradual of simplified chants is introduced, it will not be a solution for participation of the faithful. They cannot be expected to sing a different Introit, and a different Offertory, and a different Communion each Sunday. Only if such antiphons would vary according to the season, could the congregation be expected to participate in singing them…. It may be found with time that the singing of a hymn with similar sentiments would serve the purpose just as well. In any case, one can say with certainty that the area of the Proper of the Mass is the one most baffling to the musician right now…. Solving in a satisfactory musical manner the problem of the Proper is the musician’s most serious task of the near future, and he cannot do it without directives and clarifications (pp. 208-209).

A year later Archabbot Weakland spoke at the 1965 Liturgical Week on “The Sung Mass and its Problems”. (His address appeared in *Jesus Christ Reforms His church: Twenty-Fifth North American Liturgical Week*, Washington, DC: The Liturgical Conference, 1966, pp. 238-244.) In the intervening year no directives or clarifications had been issued. Yet in his second talk he was even more emphatic that the people must be
included in the singing of the Propers. He insisted that liturgists were “attempting to restore the Proper to its rightful place”, even though he had previously admitted that the people had never sung the Proper. He considers the options open to a composer who “desires to solve the problem of the congregation and the propers”.

As the texts now stand, this is impossible and not desirable. To bring participation of the faithful into the propers of the Mass will demand new musical and textual forms — short antiphons that do not change too frequently and that alternate with cantorial and choir portions. Here both form and function must be rethought for a satisfactory result (p. 240).

Though a year before he said composers could do nothing without clarifications and guidelines, Archabbot Weakland now advises them “to cease talking too much and to get to work” (p. 244).

Less than a year after this 1965 talk, in April 1966, the BCL Music Advisory Board, of which Archabbot Weakland was chairman, issued a statement on the role of the choir, which said that the people were not to be excluded from the Proper of the Mass. This directive, if we follow Weakland’s reasoning, effectively forbids choirs from singing the Propers of the Graduale Romanum. (See Thirty Years of Liturgical Renewal, Edited by Frederick McManus, Washington, DC: Secretariat, Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy, pp. 43-44.)

Note the basic points of the argument here. Some liturgists interpret the participation required by the Constitution to require participation of the congregation in the singing of the Proper. But this interpretation has no explicit basis in the Constitution; furthermore, it is contrary to historical practice, since the Propers were sung by choirs ever since they originated in the 6th or 7th century. These same liturgists contend that it is impossible for congregations to sing the existing Propers, or even anything that could reasonably be called a Proper. That is, congregations cannot learn new texts and music proper to each Sunday and Feast. Paradoxically, then, defense of the alleged “right” of the people to sing the Propers means that the Propers must change radically — effectively eliminated — in order that the people can sing something else at the time the Proper is supposed to be sung.

Though the “Parish Worship Program” does not make the argument for a congregational role in the singing of the Propers that appears in the Weakland talks, the Manual does indicate that the people should have some role in singing the Proper. The Manual admits that these have been the role of the choir in the past, but now:

> The people are encouraged to take part, and to join with the choir, when possible, in singing these chants. What may be done? A certain flexibility seems to provide the answer, together with the creation of a new and authentic tradition (Manual, p. 40).

The Manual often speaks of this “new and authentic tradition”, but who is to decide its authenticity? The Manual does not consider this question.

“Flexibility” was needed because the rubrics in 1964 still made a strict distinction between the Low (spoken) Mass and the High (sung) Mass. In a sung Mass many of the prescribed liturgical texts, including the Propers, had to be sung. It was not possible during a High Mass for the people to sing a text that differed from the prescribed Proper.

The authors of the Manual decided, then, that the necessary “flexibility” was available only at Low Masses. The High Mass, they say, is one in which every participant sings his part, but they claim that it is really the singing of the priest that determines it is a High Mass:

> This being so, only those Masses are technically High Masses in which the people sing their responses to the sung greetings of celebrant or deacon, conclude the priest’s orations with their sung “Amen”, and continue the singing of such prayers as the Gloria and Creed that have been intoned by the president of the assembly (p. 48).

The Manual’s authors take advantage of this technicality to suggest possible ways of “experimentation”:
It has been proposed that the celebrant not sing his parts, or, in other words, that the ceremony not be a High Mass technically speaking. The people and choir would sing their parts, however…. This proposal considers the fact that, since it is not a High Mass in the true sense of the word, the choir will be enabled to experiment with good forms of adaptation and new music (Manual, p. 48, original emphasis).

As was the case with authenticity above, the Manual program gives no means of judging the “goodness” of the music being proposed. Since SC gave the bishops’ conferences authority over some aspects of liturgy in their own countries, it was up to the bishops to determine the suitability of music and adaptations. But they generally abdicated this responsibility.

In Archbishop Weakland’s recent autobiography, Pilgrim in a Pilgrim Church (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), he tells us that there was a discussion in 1965 on how to insure the quality of any new music for the Mass. He proposed that a national service book be developed under the supervision of the bishops. But Cardinal John Dearden of Detroit, then-president of the US bishops’ conference disagreed:

Cardinal Dearden opposed this idea and felt the American way was to leave the matter to the open market and the publishers. I regret now that I had not been more insistent then, for the music that emerged lacked quality and became more and more banal. Being market driven began to mean, through the years, that quality was put aside for what would sell…. I am afraid that most of the music composed for the liturgy over the last decades, unlike the music composed in previous centuries going back as far as the Gregorian chant will be consigned to oblivion (Pilgrim, p. 119).

The Manual’s proposal is based on the “Low Mass Program” that Father Eugene Walsh had proposed at the 1956 Liturgical Week. (See Part I.)

The format would be that of the program for Low Mass now in use throughout various parts of the country.…

This program has placed hymns and/or psalms in those periods of the Mass which are covered by the processional chants, and a brief refrain as a song of meditation after the Scripture lesson (Manual, p. 50).

In addition, the program envisions that parts of the Ordinary of the Mass would also be sung at such a Low Mass.

If one takes into account the views of Archbishop Weakland expressed above, this use of hymns is in some important ways different from that of the late 1950s.

At that time if hymns were sung, the Ordinary of the Mass was spoken, along with the dialogues between the priest and the congregation. The hymns were simply an additional form of participation, considered less direct than participating in the actual Propers, which the priest continued to say.

In the “Parish Worship Program” the hymns are part of a form of Mass that includes a sung Ordinary, although it is still said to be technically a Low Mass. And, more important, the hymns are beginning to be treated as substitutes for the Proper.

In 1964, the priest would still recite the Propers silently, but eventually this recitation was regarded as a “useless repetition” — even if the hymn was completely unrelated to the designated Proper.

The “Parish Worship Program” stresses that all singing is to be in English. The authors reject the use of Latin and imply it will be eliminated, contrary to the provision of SC that Latin is to be maintained in the Latin rite. Instead, the Manual says,
In principle, the English language must be maintained throughout the entire program of participation.... If the revised liturgy is to become the life-giving reality that it is by nature, then such a singleness of approach is demanded.

In practice, during this period of transition, the Latin will remain as an alternate.... It must be remembered that the present time will see a variety of possible solutions, but that these are only makeshifts until the High Mass will be entirely in English (Manual, p. 46).

Despite all the talk of flexibility, experiment and a variety of solutions, the effect of the “Parish Worship Program” was to impose immediately a pattern that has persisted for forty-five years.

The suggestion that the priest not sing his parts has been followed almost universally since the Council, and it is still rare to experience a true sung Mass including the singing of the dialogues between priest and people. Hymns replace the Propers almost everywhere, and only a minuscule fraction of Catholics are even aware that prescribed Propers exist. Few, if any, parishes tried to chant English versions of the Proper texts. Within two years a full High Mass in English was permissible, but still the “makeshifts” of the “Parish Worship Program” persisted — and they continue forty-five years later.

Despite the authors’ stress on the future English High Mass, it was Low Mass with music added on that became the model for Masses after the Council.

This arrangement was the basis of a 1968 document of the Music Advisory Board of the Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy. Known as “The Place of Music in Eucharistic Celebrations”, it was written by Father Eugene Walsh.

A few years later this music document was revised somewhat and became “Music in Catholic Worship” (MCW, 1972-73), which has been the dominant influence on liturgical music in the United States ever since. Its recommendations closely correspond to those of the “Parish Worship Program”. MCW, and its supplement, “Liturgical Music Today” (1982-83), were both replaced by “Sing to the Lord”, adopted by the US bishops’ conference in 2007.

If we compare the “New Mass” of November 29, 1964 with Sacrosanctum Concilium and its two implementing documents, Sacram Liturgiam and Inter Oecumenici, on the one hand, and with the “Parish Worship Program” on the other, one thing becomes overwhelmingly clear. The “New Mass” introduced on that day follows the “Parish Worship Program” almost to the letter, while neglecting several explicit provisions of the former. On the day the Mass changed it was not the decrees of the Council but the desires of the liturgy commentators that were implemented.

Practices like Mass facing the people, standing for Communion, removing Communion rails and singing vernacular hymns were all advocated by liturgists well before the Council, as we have seen. (It was even claimed that all these things were permitted by the rubrics of the older form of Mass, and these changes had already been introduced in a few parishes.)

Yet when these changes were introduced into virtually every parish in the US after the Council the resulting rite was considered a “New Mass”. Why?

The potential effect of even small changes in the liturgy was discussed decades earlier. Recall, for example, the 1945 article by Father H. A. Reinhold about a chaplain who said Mass facing the congregation (“The soldiers are ahead of us!” Worship, February 25, 1945). Father Reinhold commented that the change in position of the priest may be a simple change of no significance;

But if it is a significant symptom of an attitudinal change of great magnitude, don’t let us belittle it! There have been so many “unimportant” changes in the past — just outward rites, and yet they somehow shook the world (p. 173).
Among these “world-shaking” changes, Father Reinhold writes, were the change from leavened to unleavened bread, which he says led to a new cult “in which the sacrament became the terminus instead of the medium”. Similarly significant was the change to Communion under only one species, which, he claims, led to a “tabernacle-centered kind of mysticism” (pp. 173-174).

Half of our difficulties with the liturgy as it is on the books would never have arisen if it had not been for these two relatively small changes and their ensuing rationalizations. While they changed nothing in dogmatic facts, they overthrown a whole world psychologically and led to a popular attitude which it will be well-nigh impossible to uproot (p. 174).

The reader of this passage cannot but sense that Father Reinhold desires to uproot the “popular attitude” toward the Blessed Sacrament that he found so troublesome. And he is suggesting that introducing Mass facing the people and other apparently “insignificant” practices might have the effect of overturning the then-current “psychological world”.

Comments of some liturgists several years after the Council indicate that they believed that they had succeeded in doing just that.

In a 1980 address to the North American Academy of Liturgy, Monsignor Frederick McManus said:

the reformed eucharistic liturgy of the Roman rite is a most extraordinary and revolutionary accomplishment. After four centuries of increasing rigidity of text and form, almost overnight the Roman liturgy changed so notably that once familiar features of the preconciliar rite are now as remote to us as some obscure aboriginal ritual (“The Genius of the Roman Rite Revisited”, Worship volume 54, no.4, July, 1980, pp. 360-378).

Such a rupture with our past as Monsignor McManus described is certainly the overturning of a whole psychological world — and just as clearly was very far remote from the intent of the Second Vatican Council, which had insisted that

there must be no innovations unless the good of the Church genuinely and certainly requires them; and care must be taken that any new forms adopted should in some way grow organically from forms already existing (SC §23).

Today, more and more Catholics hope for a “reform of the reform” of the liturgy — that is, an honest evaluation and reappraisal of the current state of the Church’s worship in light of the Council’s intended liturgical reform, and, when necessary, making changes to correct problems. Some “progressives” criticize any such effort as “rejecting the Council” or “dismantling the reform”. But earlier advocates of change seemed to anticipate future criticism of their efforts to change the liturgy. In 1966 Jesuit Father Clement McNaspy wrote:

It takes humility to accept the fact that we are not at the end of change, but very much in a moment of transition; that many of our current changes can only be tentative and exploratory; that a future generation will look back on our efforts as gauche, or at best naïve though well intentioned. Like Faust we wish to perpetuate the precious moment, freeze it, impose it on the future. If we take this approach, we may end up with a diminished liturgy rather than a renewed one, and this would surely be the furthest thing from the intention of the Council (Our Changing Liturgy, New York: Hawthorn Books, 1966, p. 159-160).

That “future generation” of Catholics of which he spoke has already experienced the “dream Mass” of the commentators of the Sixties. They have found it to be diminished rather than renewed — and, indeed, far from the intention of the Council.

It is precisely because they embrace the Council and the liturgical reform it intended that people now are now calling for change.
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