

# In his first address to the members of “Una Voce in the United States” on June 13, 1970, Dr. Eric de Saventem outlined an essentially spiritual mission



As most of you know, UNA VOCE has gone through a testing time. The promulgation of the new *Ordo Missae* brought us face to face with what is fast becoming the loyal Catholic's problem number one: how to combine filial submission to the Holy Father with respectful but open criticism of some of His acts?

**In matters of such delicacy, the first need is to be precise, in our thinking and in our words. When the Delegates of the fourteen federated UNA VOCE associations met in Zurich in February, they decided unanimously that UNA VOCE should strive to obtain the maintenance of the Tridentine Mass "as one of the recognized rites in the liturgical life of the universal Church." But this was not tantamount to a condemnation of the new Ordo. By being "for" the Tridentine Rite of the Mass we are not "against" the new Ordinary of the Mass in the sense of outright rejection. Just as we were not "against" the vernacular when we pleaded "for" the retention of liturgical Latin.**

The Church has always known a plurality of recognized rites and of liturgical language. But that "Pluralism" -- to use the modern word -- grew out of respect for tradition; thus St. Pius V himself, when he introduced the uniform Roman Missal after the Council of Trent, specifically confirmed the legitimacy of certain other rites of venerable origin and usage. Let me

at this point remind you that the much-decried unification and indeed uniformization of the rites of the Mass which was achieved by the Missal of Pius V was undertaken by that holy Pope at the express request of the bishops assembled in Council. It was therefore not an act of curial high-handedness or of Roman disregard for rightful individuality of liturgical expression. The Bishops themselves asked Rome to prescribe a uniform rite for the entire Latin Church because they had found that on the diocesan or even synodal level, it was impossible to stop or even curtail the proliferation of unauthorized texts for the celebration of the Sacraments.

We are just witnessing a repetition -- both of the proliferation of unauthorized texts and of episcopal inability to cope with it. Perhaps we may also see a repetition of that act of wisdom which, just over 400 years ago, made the Bishops ask the Pope to draw up and to enact "in perpetuity" the uniform ritual of the Mass which was promulgated in 1570 and which has brought such immense blessing to the Church.

The Pluralism of today is of a different ilk: it is the watchword and war-cry of those who want to set tradition aside. That is why, in the midst of a new proliferation of liturgical rites and texts, we witness the practical suppression of the one rite which in perfect manner enshrines

the Church's most sublime treasure, the holy mystery of the Mass.

So far, the suppression is achieved *de facto* only and not *de jure*. Indeed, it would be unthinkable for the old *Ordo Missae* ever to be officially forbidden. To justify this, one would have to argue that it was in some manner "wrong" or "bad" -- either doctrinally or pastorally. To prove either would be tantamount to denying that the Church is guided by the Holy Ghost. It is therefore inadmissible even to suggest that the old *Ordo* might rightfully be outlawed.

But the *de facto* suppression is nonetheless real enough, and we must fight against it with all the means at our disposal. One argument is of course the very "Pluralism" which the reformers constantly invoke: unless it embraces the continued existence of the old rite, side by side with the new one, "Pluralism" in the liturgy is immediately exposed as sheer hypocrisy, thinly veiling both contempt of tradition and the arrogant anti-Roman bias of national Hierarchies and their liturgical commissions.

Remember that the three new Eucharistic Prayers, or Canons, were introduced not in place of but in addition to the old Roman Canon which was expressly confirmed and even given pride of place (on paper) for Masses celebrated on Sundays. It is therefore perfectly legitimate and reasonable to ask that the new *Ordo Missae* should, in the same way, be offered as an additional, alternative way of celebrating Mass, and not as an outright replacement of the old Rite of St. Pius V.

As for the new *Ordo*, it has, as you all know, become the object of strong, widespread, and extremely cogent criticism. This applies to the

order and prayers of the Mass itself, and to the so-called "Institutio Generalis" or "General Presentation of the new Ordinary of the Mass." The criticism bears on the official Latin texts and, in many countries more strongly still, on their vernacular translations. It was found that the texts reflect some of the new theological tendencies which inspired the notorious Dutch Catechism and which Rome itself has condemned. It was found that even where these tendencies were not reflected in the actual words used either in the new *Ordo* or in the General Presentation, they nevertheless came across unmistakably in the context and, more particularly in the psychological effects at which the new rite clearly aims. For these reasons, UNA VOCE as well as many others felt entitled, nay, obliged, to criticize the new *Ordo* -- in the same way as we have criticized other aspects of the post-conciliar reform before.



Is such criticism wrong -- is it unseemly, coming from those who regard themselves as loyal Catholics and as faithful sons of the Holy Father? **After all: the new Missale Romanum**

**was promulgated by the reigning Pontiff Himself, and it must therefore be assured that he considers it to be not only free from error, but also free of potentially dangerous tendencies and ambiguities, and that he regards its introduction as necessary for the greater good of the Church.** Let's look at this problem for a moment. Let us see what happened to the more recent major documents of papal guidance for the Church in matters of faith, morals, and liturgy.

You remember *Mediator Dei*, with its grave warnings against the very liturgical aberrations which have since become daily practice. You remember *Veterum Sapientia* of John XXIII, with its grave admonitions to safeguard the use

of Latin particularly in the Liturgy and in the seminaries. You remember *Mysterium Fidei* with its clear condemnation of certain new interpretations of the mystery of Transubstantiation. You remember the Council's Constitution on the Liturgy, promulgated by Pope Paul VI, with its clear guidance on the retention of Latin as the primary language for the Liturgy, and with its carefully circumscribed permission for the use of the vernacular in certain parts of the Mass. You remember the "Creed of the People of God" with its reaffirmation of all the essential truths of Catholicism and with its implied warning against any doctrines that impoverish or falsify the *Depositum Fidei*. You remember -- most recently -- the Decree *Memoriale Domini* which formally disapproves of the practice of Communion in the hand. And you are all only too familiar with the Holy Father's weekly warnings against the countless forms of subtle subversion from within, from Cardinals down to hot-headed vicars, from so-called eminent theologians down to irresponsible so-called "catholic" journalists.

The last twenty years have given us a great many instances of the reigning Popes expressing their clear and unequivocal disapproval of certain ideas, certain tendencies, certain practices, certain suggestions and attitudes which were manifesting themselves within the Church. Almost all have been totally disregarded -- by laypeople, by priests, by Bishops and Cardinals, and indeed: at the very top itself, where more than one reigning Pontiff has gone against the clear injunctions of his immediate predecessors.

After this digression, let me return to UNA VOCE and its two primary preoccupations: Latin, with Gregorian Chant, and the Tridentine Mass.

It is totally wrong to label us as reactionaries, as people who cling stubbornly to the ways of yesterday, whose minds are closed to necessary



and beneficial reform, or whose personalized concepts of liturgical prayer reflect the individualism of a past age. On the contrary: our insistence that in the Liturgy we should use a specific liturgical language and a specific liturgical form of music, and that for the Mass we should continue to use a Rite whose inspiration is theological rather than sociological, hieratic rather than communitarian -- this insistence is in reality an act of forward-looking "contestatation."

Contestatation against an impoverished notion of what Liturgy is. Liturgy is surely more than the "dialogue between God and His people." It is the hierarchically ordered enactment of the Sacred in profane reality. Liturgy is indeed a sacred action. As such it is essentially scriptural. To claim that Liturgy has become "more scriptural" thanks to more and more varied readings from the Bible, and to the liberal use of psalms for antiphonal and responsorial chants, is misleading when at the same time Liturgy is being robbed of most of the words and gestures and accessories that denote the sacrality of the action and that convey this sacrality to the

participants and call forth a response from their hearts rather than from their heads.

Contestation also against an impoverished concept of the priesthood. Just ask yourselves this: would the "crisis of the priesthood" have occurred and assumed the terrifying dimensions which we witness every day, if the priest had remained the "minister of the altar" (instead of the people), acting "in persona Christi" instead of being a mere president of an assembly? And Latin, just because it has for so long been a language reserved for ecclesiastical use and particularly for use in the Liturgy, gave tangible expression to the essentially supranatural character of the Sacrament. We have few means, anyhow, of making manifest to our senses -- that is to the ears, the eyes, the nose, the mouth, and the touch -- the essential difference between a sacred action and a profane one. Latin, vestments, incense, the wafer of the Host, the Priest's joined thumbs and forefingers after the consecration, the prohibition for layfolk to touch the sacred vessels or the consecrated species -- all these were necessary and in most cases spontaneously chosen means of manifesting that essential difference. And because of this, they gave a unique purpose and dignity to the celebrating priest and to his self-chosen isolation in celibacy -- another "sign" of the essential distinction between the "ministerial" priesthood of the ordained minister of the altar, and the apostolic general priesthood of every baptized Catholic. To do away with the "signs" always affects the thing they signify, and this is why the recent liturgical reforms are among the principal causes of the crisis of the priesthood.

### **Faced with all this: what can -- what should we do?**

Above all: we must gain new members for UNA VOCE. Not for the sake of bigger numbers, but to strengthen our mutual resolve, and to tackle more effectively the numerous tasks which await us. What are these tasks?

**Firstly: to preserve among ourselves, and to spread beyond this limited circle, familiarity with liturgical Latin. This is required by the Council itself.** Latin liturgical texts should be understood -- and for that you don't have to become a Latin "scholar." It is another virtue of this priceless "dead" language that, in the form in which it has come down to us as the Latin of the Church, it is an easy language, infinitely easier than most modern languages. And if even these can be mastered reasonably well in a few months for basic understanding, then that goes *a fortiori* for ecclesiastical Latin. Basic knowledge of the Church's own language gives timelessness to our sense of belonging and provides a link particularly with the great Saints of the past. Even if we make but little use of our knowledge outside the liturgy, the fact of being familiar with Church Latin will strengthen our *sensus ecclesiae*. And, since priests are nowadays so eager to emulate the laity, our interest in Latin may even bring it back into the seminaries. So here is something which your chapters can and should do: to organize courses for ecclesiastical Latin, with particular emphasis on liturgical texts.

Do not think, though, that Latin in the Liturgy has to be understood by everybody before it can regain its rightful place. The prevailing emphasis on rational understanding of every word spoken at the altar or ambo is another one of those impoverishments which we "contest." But it behooves us to make the extra effort of learning Church Latin not least in order to enable us to pass on to our children that minimum of linguistic knowledge which was previously part of their ordinary religious instruction.

### **Secondly: Gregorian chant should be practiced.**

If you cannot do it in church, set up a Choral Society. Where this is too difficult, the chapter could hold regular meetings at which records with Gregorian chant will be played, so that your ears -- and those of your children, or of friends whom you can bring along more easily

to this kind of gathering than to a formal UNA VOCE meeting -- should remain or become familiar with its beauty, and remain or get attuned to its unique quality of prayerfulness.

**Thirdly: members of UNA VOCE should be reasonably well-rounded in the Church's doctrine on liturgical matters and should know the basic pattern of liturgical history.** Too often we are left defenceless -- for mere lack of basic knowledge -- when arguing with fellow Catholics or with priests who have read all the latest books. Chapters should organize study groups and lectures, and headquarters should disseminate basic knowledge through their newsletter, and should provide chapters with a selected biography for the use of group leaders or individual members.

**Fourthly -- and this is most important: get the young. Without knowing it yet, they desperately need a liturgy that is richer in content and expression than mere "dialogue" (of which they get more than enough in all other spheres of Church life), mere entertainment or even catechesis -- richer than togetherness or an exercise in "sensitivity" (or should we say "insensitivity") training. They need the atmosphere of withdrawal, of recollection, of the true *laus Dei* which is totally different from brashly praising the "Lord of the Universe" through man's own feats or progress. They need the encounter, indeed, the confrontation with the "sign of contradiction," re-presented every day in the *Mysterium Tremendum* of Holy Mass**

A renaissance will come: asceticism and adoration as the mainspring of direct total

dedication to Christ will return. Confraternities of priests, vowed to celibacy and to an intense life of prayer and meditation will be formed. Religious will regroup themselves into houses of "strict observance." A new form of "Liturgical Movement" will come into being, led by young priests and attracting mainly young people, in protest against the flat, prosaic, philistine or delirious liturgies which will soon overgrow and finally smother even the recently revised rites.

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**It is vitally important that these new priests and religious, these new young people with ardent hearts, should find -- if only in a corner of the rambling mansion of the Church -- the treasure of a truly sacred liturgy still glowing softly in the night.**

treasure of a truly sacred liturgy still glowing softly in the night. And it is our task -- since we have been given the grace to appreciate the value of this heritage -- to preserve it from spoilation, from becoming buried out of sight, despised and therefore lost

forever. It is our duty to keep it alive: by our own loving attachment, by our support for the priests who make it shine in our churches, by our apostolate at all levels of persuasion.

May God give us courage, wisdom, perseverance -- and may He strengthen and deepen more now than ever before our love for the Church and for Her, Whom the Holy Father solemnly proclaimed *Mater ecclesiae* -- Mary, the Blessed Mother of God and our most holy Queen and Mother.