

HOW THE OLD MASS HAS CHANGED THE WAY I SAY THE NEWER MASS

From the old mass I have first of all taken with me the FOCUS of the priest in the mass - the focus on God, on offering up to God the perfect sacrifice of Christ – making all other things less important.

The vesting prayers in the sacristy help the priest with this focus - showing him his own unworthiness and need for God's help and grace. I end these prayers with "Ego volo celebrare Missam, et conficere corpus et sanguinem Domini nostri Jesu Christi, ..." expressing what the mass is. Then I walk into church with this same focus - not looking at people. With this same focus I genuflect before the altar, praying "Aufer a nobis ..." as I walk up to the altar, and "Oramus te, Domine .." as I kiss it – these are prayers asking for purification and forgiveness of my sins. As I kiss the altar at the end of mass I have also taken from the old mass the prayer "Placeat tibi ...". This prayer sums up very well what the mass is all about: "May the tribute of my humble ministry be pleasing ..." and "Through your mercy may it bring forgiveness to me and to all for whom I have offered it".

So the main contribution from the traditional mass in on the FOCUS it gives the priest. In the following paragraphs I will also mention some more details about how the traditional rubrics help keep this focus:

SPEAKING AT THE BEGINNING AND END OF MASS

I now only use the traditional form of the greeting: "The Lord be with you." I do not say anything about the mass at this point, except sometimes the name of the saint we celebrate. I may also say the name of the persons I offer the mass for, if I have a special intention and people want it mentioned. (I also use the full "Confiteor" at this point, but that is really the case with all Catholic masses in Norway.)

The most important teaching from the traditional mass when it comes to speaking is that the priest should say absolutely nothing of his own (outside the sermon). But at the end of mass, I occasionally give a few necessary and short announcements after the post-communion prayer. If I need to say something more lengthy, I do so just after the gospel is read.

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYERS

I now use EP-I 95% of the time – a few times I use EP-III. In EP-I I always use the optional (4 times) [Through Christ our Lord.], which actually makes quite a bit of a difference – and as far as I know very few priest include these options.

HANDS

It helps the priest quite a bit in his focus in the mass to hold/use his arms and hands according to the rubrics of the TLM. I hold my hands together in front of my chest, put the left hand put down flat on the altar when only right hand is used, to turn pages etc., inside or outside the corporal, all according to the old rubrics. I also make the sign of the cross at the end of the Gloria and the Creed, and at the Benedictus in the Sanctus.

FINGERS

I only partly hold thumb and index finger together after the consecration – I do when I touch other things (the missal, when I strike my chest etc.) but not completely according to the old rules. Maybe I should, but it becomes too complicated when the altar servers don't know about this. (I am not a parish priest – since I am a married man, a former Lutheran minister – and have little influence over how the servers are trained. When I say the traditional mass about twice a week I have properly trained servers, of course.)

EYES

In the old mass the priest is never supposed to look at people, except during the sermon; he faces people a few times, but with "his eyes cast down"

When celebrating the new mass I follow this rule for the most part, but look more directly at the people 4-5 times (and no other times) when I say "The Lord be with you", Let us pray, "Orate fratres .." and "The peace of the Lord be with you always."

In the old mass it is also specified that the priest should look at the host (constantly) as much as possible after the consecration. I follow this rule in the new mass now, and it has changed the way I celebrate the mass considerably.

HEAD

Influenced by the old mass I now bow my head every time the names Jesus and Mary are mentioned, and at the name of the Holy Father in the Eucharistic prayer, and the name of the Saint celebrated that day. I also bow my head the three extra times in the Gloria and at the "simul adoratur" in the creed.

I also make a deep bow during the whole "Confiteor" and the "Et incarnatus est ... " in the Creed.

CHALICE AND CIBORIUM

In Norway several priests tend to use the palla during mass, but they take it off/ put in on the chalice in a non-traditional way (like it is done in the Vatican, I think). I now use the palla as it is prescribed in the old mass.

Some ciborium are of the old kind with a lid, but the lids tend to be left on the credence table and not at all used during the mass. Now I follow the rules of the old mass, I use the lids and take them off only during the offertory and at the consecration of the host.

I always use a chalice veil and a burse – such veils are often used in Norway now (they are gradually coming back), but not burses.

GENUFLECTING

I do not add any genuflections to the rules of the new mass – nor any signs of the cross over the chalice and host.

PURIFICATION

I do not (yet) purify the chalice and other sacred vessels according to the old rules, but I do purify the paten with my right index finger, and I do purify the fingers of my right hand over the chalice. (See here also the paragraph about "fingers" above.)

VESTMENTS

I always cross my stole, like in the old days, but I do not wear a maniple when I celebrate the new mass. I have recently started to wear a biretta for all masses. This last thing seems to be even more important for people than for the priest; some reactions I have received about the biretta is that it makes mass look like "serious business", meaning (I think) that it helps people focus better on what the mass really is.

Oslo, Norway, 31 March 2011 – Fr. Oddvar Moi