

St. Anthony of Padua R.C. Church

160 Court Street, Buffalo, New York

TRADITIONALLY SPEAKING by *S. Casarotto, CS* 9/28/08

MORE THAN SILENCE

When people hear about the Latin mass, they often remark "All that silence!". Recently, one elderly priest, who celebrated it for many years, sarcastically commented: "No wonder that the old ladies were saying the rosary". I told him that there is nothing wrong with saying the rosary if that helps a person participate in the divine mystery and that the Vatican also has stated so. Besides, why are so many young people attending the Latin mass?

Tragically, participation in the mass is often understood simply as postures, words, and songs together with other people, forgetting that true liturgical participation is union with God who only makes us "His people." Today, silence is shocking because we are bombarded with sounds: radio and CD players at full volume; bands blaring deafening music, roaring traffic and the cellular phone glued to our ears. We are used to noise and silence makes us restless. People think that silence in church and particularly during the Eucharistic Prayer is the Black Hole. It should be. It is the emptying of our minds and hearts through humility, faith and adoration in order to be filled by God's presence and action.

The Holy, Holy, Holy at the end of the great hymn of praise of the mass (Preface) is the introduction to the great mystery. In Hebrew, "kadosh" (holy) means "awe." We are in awe at what is happening during the Eucharistic Prayer. There is no word to describe the Sacrifice of the Cross, the Mystery of Faith: Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again. Indeed Christ comes on our altars and in our hearts through Holy Communion. This commands, first of all, personal recollection, meditation and adoration. The great tradition of the Church is to celebrate the Eucharistic Prayer in an aura of silence. In fact, for centuries, and even now in Eastern Churches, both Catholic and Orthodox, the priest withdraws behind the iconostasis (screen), like Moses and Jesus withdrew on the mountain, to be alone "in union with God." Nobody would dare to condemn that liturgical silence and tradition.

Archbishop Malcolm Ranjit, Secretary of the Congregation for Divine Worship, stated: "The use of the vernacular has led many people to understand the mystery of the Eucharist more deeply and has procured a more intense relationship with the text of Scripture. However, the liturgical renewal has been affected by the experimental arbitrariness with which the mass today is being freely performed as a 'do-it-yourself liturgy.' The spirit of the liturgy has, in a manner of speaking, been abducted. What has happened is that our churches have become emptier. Of course there are other factors: the unbridled consumerist behavior, secularism, and an excessive image of man. We have to muster the courage to correct the course, because not everything which happened after the reform of the liturgy was according to the intentions of the Council. Why should we drag along ballast which the Council did not want at all?"

One day, St. John Vianney went to his church in the village of Ars and noticed an old man kneeling, motionless, in a pew, his face staring at the altar for a long time. Eventually, the saint asked him: "My dear friend, what are you doing?" And the old man replied: "I look at Him and He looks at me!" That's the highest form of Eucharistic participation: contemplation.

TRADITION - Recently, someone asked Fr. Secondo: "Is St. Anthony's a conciliar church?" "Yes, very much so!" said Father with a broad smile. "After the councils of Ephesus, Nicea, Trent, Vat. I and Vat. II."