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| **JESUS!**  **THE ONE CATHOLIC MASS**  **ITS VALIDITY, LICEITY, AND BENEFIT**  *Tract written by the Abbé de Nantes, CRC Journal, April 1975.*  The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is not the first of the sacraments, but it is certainly the greatest. It is also the most abundant, since for centuries the Sacrifice and Sacrament of the Last Supper and of Calvary has been re-iterated countless times each day all over the evangelized world. It is the greatest of the seven sacraments and therefore the most necessary and holiest of the actions of men, because Christ is its Sovereign Priest, acting *mediately* through the ministry of the ordained priest, and because He is its Victim and Gift, acting *immediately* through His Own Body and Blood, really, truly, and substantially present on the altar.  In this precious work, ordained for the constitution of Christ’s Mystical Body, the hierarchical Church co-operates with Christ by virtue of the gift of the Holy Spirit conferred on the Apostles and on their successors, in the first place on their head St Peter, and then on the Bishops of Rome after him. The Church, being one with Christ, offers the Holy Sacrifice to the Father for the assembled multitude.  The work is effected by the priest, who is the direct minister for those participating. The priest is therefore the instrument of both Christ and the Church, an instrument that is subordinate but active. And the faithful are the participants, whose spiritual worship disposes them to receive the fruits of the Sacrifice.  To know whether any given Mass presents all the requisite or desirable characteristics of perfection, one will observe that it is the action of Christ which assures its***validity***, the co-operation of the Church which assures its ***liceity***, and the disposition of the priest and the faithful which assures its ***benefit***.   |  | | --- | | **I.  THE ACTION OF CHRIST THE SOVEREIGN PRIEST DETERMINES THE VALIDITY OF THE MASS** |   By His words to the Apostles: *"Whenever you do these things you will do them in memory of Me"*, as understood by Tradition, Jesus instituted the two Sacraments of Holy Orders and the Eucharist. Priests therefore obey the Lord’s command and make use of the authority He conferred on them when they do what He did first, in the same substantial way, and with the intention of seriously and truly doing exactly what He did when He gave them this example and command.  1. By virtue of the fact that the celebrant has been ordained a priest and that he acts as such, he thereby makes himself the instrument of Jesus Christ, whose place he holds. In pronouncing these words and re-enacting these gestures, it is Christ Who infallibly acts through him and by him.  2. By virtue of the fact that the priest takes the bread and the wine, a new action is begun, distinct from any other, past or present, near or distant. It is not a narration, an evocation or a "simple memorial". Iit is a reiteration of the action. It is a new act of Christ.  3. By virtue of the fact that the priest pronounces the words of Christ – saying over this bread *"This is My Body"* (even though he does not specify *"which is given up for you"*) and saying over the wine *"This is My Blood"* or an equivalent form of words (even if the following is omitted or modified, namely *"Blood of the New and Eternal Covenant, the Mystery of Faith, which is shed for you and for many unto the remission of sins"*) – the form of this action manifests the physical presence of Christ, a presence that is both sacrificial and sacramental.  **Sacrificial Presence.**It is significant that the Body and Blood are separated here, as historically they were once before when Jesus shed His Blood on Mount Calvary to accomplish the great and unique Sacrifice of His death. We have here therefore both the sign and reality of the Memorial, the unbloody representation and reiteration of His redeeming death, operated by Jesus Himself, as both priest and victim.  **Sacramental Presence.** It is significant that this Body which is given up and this Blood which is shed, take on and assume the appearance of bread and wine, the common, universal food and drink of mankind. This is the sign and the proof of the invisible sacrament, God’s gift to men of His Own Life in Christ, for their spiritual growth in the Church.  When the ***priest***, as Christ’s servant, pronounces these unambiguous ***words*** over this new ***matter***, he consecrates them through the priestly power of Christ. It is Christ whose action is sovereign and who brings about the Presence, the Sacrifice and the Sacrament in one seamless action.  Those who deny this dogma, in part or entirely, are strangers to the faith, blind to the Scriptures and rebellious towards Tradition. They despise that which they know not and, failing to discern Christ and His Action, they incur the divine malediction. Heretics who deny the Mass and abandon it for some other rite, perform a mere simulacrum without Presence, Sacrifice or Sacrament. On the other hand, priests who deny or distort the dogma and yet still celebrate the Mass, actually accomplish more than they may intend or desire. This is because they are but subordinates of the Sovereign Priest and they do what their Lord and Master intends and desires, that is, the perfect Sacrifice He instituted and which He Himself continues despite His unruly or unfaithful ministers.  Some have expressed dangerous opinions on this matter, granting too much to the priest and  considering him as the "co-operator" of Christ.  The priest’s intention, even that which theologians call the internal intention, involves the minister of the Eucharist placing himself at the disposition of Christ for His work. It can never go beyond this, the priest imposing his own ideas and will on Christ as though he (the priest) were the dominant player! Whether he has the faith or not, whether his ideas are doubtful, confused or false, whether his will is upright or not, whether he is in a state of grace or sin, he must have the intention AT LEAST of doing what the Church does : that is the will to do what Christ willed, to follow the practice of the Society willed by Christ, whatever that may be, or even simply to accomplish a religious act in use among Christians. It is certainly preferable that the priest should hold more than just this minimum. But the faithful need only to satisfy themselves on this minimum in order to know and believe that the Mass is valid.  Outside the Church, in schismatic sects for example, this intention would need to be furnished with proofs and scrutinized, but not so in the Church. Apart from cases of deliberate mockery or pretence, it would be a very depraved soul whose prejudices would lead him to reject this minimum. In such a case, either this depravation would be deliberately concealed (and then who could detect it?) or else it would manifest itself by an unequivocal declaration of the priest that he was presenting "a piece of cinema"!  On this question of the essential and intrinsic validity of the Mass, the Novus Ordo and the Old Mass are absolutely equivalent, despite all statements to the contrary, my own included, if ever I have expressed such. One rite is as capable as the other to determine the consecratory sacramental and sacrificial Action of Christ. This is because of its divine institution, which both rites follow in substance, and because of the subjection of the priest to Christ, as implied in his intention to say Mass or "celebrate the Eucharist", no matter how confused or implicit this intention may be.  I stress this point because certain extravagant demands have led many of the faithful to disdain so-called modern Masses although they are perfectly valid, to deny the Real Presence effected by such Masses, and so to insult the sacerdotal character of the celebrating priest, all of which constitutes a sin against Christ Himself, the Sovereign Priest in His Sacrifice, which they imagine themselves to be defending!   |  | | --- | | **II.  THE ACTION OF THE CHURCH, CO-OPERATING WITH CHRIST DETERMINES THE LICEITY** |   The Ordination conferred on His Apostles by Christ gives each priest a personal power over His Body and Blood. But this power is dependent on the collegial power given to the hierarchical Church, a power of co-operating with Her Lord. And her mystic participation in every Eucharistic Sacrifice is manifest through the set of liturgical regulations which determine, according to the will of the Church, the confection, distribution and application of the fruits of the Sacrament. The rites and rubrics fixed by the Church guarantee her co-operation in the work of Christ and bring about the mystic fulfilment of this work. They (the rites) therefore determine the liceity of the Action.  However, the Church is both human and divine, fallible and infallible. Sin is mixed with holiness, even in her pastoral government and legislative work. What is canonically licit may not always be morally good. The laws of the Church do not therefore impose themselves with the same absolute right on the interior adherence and on the obedience of her members. I have explained in my *Letter to His Holiness Pope Paul VI* (CRC No 1-2, French edition) of 11 October 1967, how novelties show their true nature with the passing of time and how the Church, guided by the Holy Spirit, only assimilates the purest and holiest contributions of each epoch and rejects the rest. Hence the well-known ancient criterion : everything in the Church is clothed in the twofold character of antiquity and unanimous consent, and is, for that very reason, exempt from error and evil, edifying, infallible and holy. Whatever comes from age-old Tradition is unassailable and legitimate; on the other hand whatever is new is uncertain and remains open to discussion.  *The Old Roman Mass*, like so many other rites – the Carthusian, the Lyonese, the Ambrosian and the Oriental rites – but more than all of them on account of its long antiquity and its universal veneration, is perfect and holy without any admixture of error, ambiguity or defect. In his Bull *Quo Primum* St Pius V stood up once and for all against every Innovator, no matter how exalted his rank, who might at any time seek to oppose the full and unalterable liceity of this rite. The authority of a day has no right or mission to declare illicit what the Authority of all time has established and conserved, since it belongs to the treasure of tradition and is therefore infallibly true and absolutely good.  Any prohibition of this ancient Roman rite constitutes an abuse of power and is null and void. It justifies a suspicion of schism for rejecting tradition and a suspicion of heresy for departing from our holy dogmas. He who celebrates the so-called Mass of St Pius V allows Christ and the Church to accomplish this sacrament through his humble priestly ministry, and no whim or ill humour of any Bishop or Pope can disturb its divine harmony or alter its fullness.  On the other hand, *the Mass of Paul VI* is new. As a creation of the Church of today it is therefore licit, but it is by no means certain that it is good. Promulgated by the Pope and accepted by all the Bishops, its liceity is beyond dispute. It cannot be contended that the New Mass has not been promulgated by Apostolic Authority. To contend that its author Pope Paul VI is not the legitimate Authority is an evident act of schism. In a cases of conflict like this, typically Lutheran reasoning would oppose the visible hierarchical authority and appeal to the invisible authority of some holy, spiritual Church of its dreams, which would obviously judge every case as it did! It is proper to recognize that it is the Church who celebrates the Eucharist with Christ through every priest who follows this new Ordo Missae, which comes to him from the Church.  ***Whether it is a matter of the centuries-old Mass, longstanding rites, or the New Mass, it is always the one Mass of Christ and of the Catholic Church, valid therefore and licit.*** God would not allow the appearances and the laws to be so deceptive, nor would He permit that a rite of divine institution codified by the ordinance of the Roman hierarchy should be neither valid nor licit. If that were the case, the Gates of Hell would have prevailed. There would be no more Church.   |  | | --- | | **III.  THE ACTION OF THE PRIEST AND THE DISPOSITIONS OF THE FAITHFUL DETERMINE THE BENEFIT RECEIVED** |   Every valid and licit Mass produces abundant fruits of propitiation, sanctification and fraternal communion. But the benefits are only received by those who have made themselves worthy of them, through their state of grace and their fervour, and also through the effect of the instruction and edification of the liturgical Action itself. And if there is no one worthy present, then the fruits pass to the treasury of the Communion of Saints.  Can the canonically licit*Mass of Paul VI* be said to give instruction on the truth of the *Mystery of Faith*and to dispose its participants to receive its fruits? Is it free from all error and exempt from all malice? Since Tradition has not yet wrought its work of assimilation and rejection, we cannot be certain about this. It remains a matter of human opinion based on the customary trust placed by the faithful and their Pastors in the Pope and the Church of Rome – a trust which could in exceptional circumstances be deceived…  It is for those well versed in liturgy and theology to judge the worth of the *Novus Ordo*. But the decision to adopt it, to prefer it to the old rite, or on the contrary to avoid it or flee it absolutely, depending on whether one considers it a means of edification or a snare, belongs to the judgement of each person’s conscience, duly formed and instructed. It remains an open question among theologians. But none may set up his conscience as a marginal magisterium in order to bring accusations of sin against those who have adopted a line of conduct different from the one he advocates. The sin in any case could only be one of intention, a matter for the internal forum alone.  *As for us*, we consider the Missal of Paul VI to be the work of men’s malice. Its definition of the Mass is perversely heretical, its inventions are copies of protestant rites, and its minor alterations are inspired by a doctrinal relativism and an infectious spiritual lethargy, which gradually poisons and misleads those who make use of it. Finally, it has given the green light to every kind of degradation of the sacred rites, even the very worst profanations. Such at least is our opinion, demonstrated, proclaimed, and never refuted.  *Under these conditions, what divine and ecclesial good is there in this Mass?* The good still reaches those who celebrate or participate in this Mass with a Catholic faith, a sincere obedience to the Church, and a pure intention, and who furthermore preserve themselves from the snares of error or lukewarmness. On the other hand, to be attached to the New Mass through a liking for heresy and profanation is a crime. Those who have adopted the heretical intention of the authors of this rite commit the sin of heresy during the very Mass itself and, by profaning it, they cover themselves in sacrilege. Their crime is proportionate to the importance of their participation in the Action and the number of faithful who are thereby led astray. Finally, those who follow the orders of their superiors out of a blind and therefore disordered obedience, place themselves in grave danger of being caught in the trap laid for them.  The solution, however, is not to deny what by God’s grace remains common to all, namely the Presence of Christ and the authority of the Church maintaining the validity and liceity of our Catholic Masses. The solution lies primarily in a appeal to the innovating Pope to justify himself in the faith by proscribing Lutheran and modernist heresy and by excommunicating the heresiarchs, and to fight against the appalling liturgical disorder by insisting that the noble discipline of the Church is respected.  Then the Church of all times will decide, and all will be well. |