

# PAIX LITURGIQUE

Letter 56 published 2 February 2015

## CARDINAL ZEN: “THOSE WHO LOVE THE EXTRAORDINARY FORM OUGHT TO BE ABLE TO ATTEND IT.”

In our French-language letter #174 (April 2009), we dwelled on the choice made by Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-Kiun, S.D.B., who was bishop of Hong Kong at the time, to celebrate his last pontifical Mass in the extraordinary form of the Roman rite. On that occasion he had declared that he wished to devote part of his retirement to the faithful who are attached to the Church's traditional liturgy.

It's been five years now and Cardinal Zen has kept his word: he has been taking care of the spiritual and sacramental life of the former British colony's traditional community. He has celebrated Mass according to the Missal of Saint John XXIII, conferred confirmation, given lectures, assisted in the diaconal ordination of one of its members, and so forth.

At the end of 2014, after a lecture on the mission to Asia at the Pontifical Urbaniana University, the translator for our German-language letter was able to have a brief interview with his Eminence and to ask a few questions. We are grateful for his kind and very clear answers.

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### I - INTERVIEW WITH CARDINAL JOSEPH ZEN ZE-KIUN

1) *What is the place of the liturgy in your life, Your Eminence?*

Cardinal Zen: It is the most important time in my day. I am a religious [Salesian, ed.] and, in that capacity, I very much appreciate our community prayer. Besides, we have very good arrangements for the liturgy in our community.

2) *You were one of the first Chinese priests to celebrate the Novus Ordo, as a sign of unity with Rome. Since then, Benedict XVI has allowed the traditional Mass to be celebrated, which you are glad to do, particularly in Hong Kong.*

Cardinal Zen: Actually

it is not a question of “Latin Mass.” You can say the Latin Mass also with the new ceremonial. What you are talking about is the Tridentine Mass that was common before the Second Vatican Council. Personally, I did indeed welcome the direction that Benedict XVI gave when he was Pope. He was perfectly right to say that the Tridentine Mass had never been abolished. And if the faithful find that it better fosters their devotion, they must be given the possibility to get it. I have had the opportunity of introducing the post-conciliar Mass to Chinese seminarians [from 1989 to 1996, Cardinal Zen taught in Chinese seminaries which had until then been barred to Roman priests, ed.] and was quite happy to do so. But already at the time I reminded them that there was nothing wrong with celebrating the old liturgy. Our faith, our vocation, our saints, everything comes from that liturgy, from that prayer.

3) *Do you appreciate Latin?*

Cardinal Zen: Yes, a lot. I love the Gregorian chants and I know many by heart. I recite them in my personal prayers and I find them great! I'd like to see the ordinary form in Latin more often, as the Council wanted.

4) *In Europe, opponents to the traditional Mass claim that it concerns only a small number people. What do you think?*

Cardinal Zen: I don't see what the problem is. In Hong Kong too there is a small group. Those who love the extraordinary form ought to be able to attend it, they've the right to do so. There's no need to compel the faithful to gather in artificial groups: a small number is enough.

*5) So the extraordinary form isn't a threat to the Church's unity?*

Cardinal Zen: No, not at all. Why should it? There are all sorts of liturgies in the Church, notably those of the Oriental churches. There is nothing wrong with ritual diversity.

*6) Do you have a message for the faithful attached to the extraordinary form?*

Cardinal Zen: Yes, I do. There is clear evidence that the traditional Mass will remain important in the future. People who desire it must be able to attend it, so long as they are not in opposition to the new Mass. In Hong Kong, those who attend the traditional Mass also go to the new Mass and have nothing against it. Like all the faithful throughout the world, the Chinese derive much benefit from the Church's tradition.

## II - THE REFLECTIONS OF PAIX LITURGIQUE

1) We must first remember that ever since Mao's victory the Church has both an official presence (through the State-controlled "Patriotic Association") and a clandestine existence through a martyr Church that remains faithful to Rome. As a result of this strange situation, State-recognized Catholicism was utterly unaware of Vatican II, and therefore of the modern liturgy, until the policy of openness that Deng Xiaoping allowed in the 1980s. This openness is what allowed future Cardinal Zen to go and teach in the patriotic Church's seminaries at the end of the 1980s and to help spread the Novus Ordo. Nevertheless—and this is a revelation on His Eminence's part—he was already then so convinced of the traditional liturgy's legitimacy that he would explain to his students that the old Missal remained valid.

2) 2014 has been a year of grace for the traditional community in Hong Kong: two of its members, including one of its founders, have been ordained priests (one for the Priestly Fraternity of Saint Peter, the other for the diocese), and a third, who is a Salesian like Cardinal Zen, as a deacon. **One religious, one Ecclesia Dei, one diocesan: the traditional liturgy, lived in a peaceful context of spiritual growth, is a fruitful source of priestly vocations at the other end of the world too, and thus participates in furthering the New Evangelization.**

3) "Those who love the extraordinary form ought to be able to attend it, they've the right to do so." Let us pray that this basic wisdom from the Orient may enlighten our communities and our pastors and encourage them to grow in charity and generosity towards those who request the extraordinary form of the Roman rite.