

PAIX LITURGIQUE

Letter 81 published 21 March 2017

May the Traditional Mass flourish in the Church!

The 18th Cologne Liturgical Conference will open in Germany at the end of March. Its theme will be "*Summorum Pontificum*: Inspiration for the Future" and The Most Reverend Alexander K. Sample, Archbishop of Portland, Oregon, will be one of the key speakers of this event which intends to go beyond the German-speaking world.

This gives us an opportunity to publish the powerful homily given by Abp. Sample for the final Mass of the 5th international *Populus Summorum Pontificum* Pilgrimage, last October in Rome.

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October 30, 2016: Homily for the Feast of Christ the King

Given at the Church of the *Ss.ma.Trinità dei Pellegrini* in Rome

Sia lodato Gesù Cristo!

As we come to the end of this wonderful and beautiful pilgrimage during which we have celebrated Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI's *motu proprio* allowing for a greater and more generous availability of the Holy Mass in the *usus antiquior*, we do so on this great Feast of Christ the King. We are all most grateful to Pope Benedict for his loving care for those who are devoted to this ancient form of the Latin Rite, and we pray that the wider availability of the Traditional Mass will have a profound and lasting effect on our divine worship in both the Extraordinary and Ordinary form of the Roman Rite.

As we celebrate the Feast of Christ the King, Holy Mother Church reminds us of the centrality of the mystery of Christ in both our lives and in our worship. We exalt our Divine Savior as the center of all human history and as the one who reveals to us the very meaning and purpose of our lives. It is this mystery that we celebrate in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Let us review what St. Paul teaches us about the fullness of all that God wishes to reveal to us in his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord and King.

Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God. In the mystery of the Incarnation God has fully revealed himself to us in the Incarnate Word, his only begotten Son. He is the visible manifestation of God's mercy toward us poor sinners. It is good to recall this during this Jubilee Year of Mercy. In Christ we see mercy incarnate. Christ is present in every Mass, especially in the offering of the Holy Sacrifice and in his Eucharistic presence, Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity.

He is the firstborn of every creature, present at the creation of the entire universe. In a beautiful trilogy of expression, St. Paul reminds us that all things were created in the Eternal Word, he is before all creatures in his eternity, and all things are held together in him. Christ is at the center of the Father's creative will.

Christ is head of the Body, which is the Church. The Church is the mystical Body of Christ, his enduring presence in the created world. Through the Church, Christ continues his redemptive presence in the world. We are all individual members of that Body, as St. Paul will remind us, and Christ the King is the Head of his mystical Body, always present among us in his Word, the Sacraments and in the assembly of all the faithful. Christ can never be separated from his Church, as much as some will attempt to do so. We cannot have Christ without the Church, since he is intimately and eternally united to Her. We, the Mystical Body of Christ, are inseparably united to our Head, Christ the Lord. As such the Church is the universal sacrament of the salvation of the world.

Christ is the beginning and the firstborn of the dead. He has gone before us and made possible through his death and resurrection our own resurrection from the dead. Where he has gone, we one day hope to follow. His death is our ransom from death, and his resurrection is our rising to new life.

He holds the first place and all fullness dwells in him. In his divinity, forever united now to the human nature formed in the womb of his Virgin Mother, nothing is lacking. He is the fullness of what every human heart desires. Whatever we seek as a good in this life is merely a poor reflection of the fullness of beauty,

goodness, joy and perfection that is found ultimately in Christ. Every virtuous human longing is ultimately a longing for Christ.

This is the Christ that we honor as our universal King. But our Blessed Lord himself reminds us that his Kingdom is not of this world. The disciples of Jesus did not fully understand this until after his resurrection and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. We must never forget this ourselves. We do not live for completeness and fulfillment in this world, but seek to make this world an ever better reflection of God's Kingdom. We are only pilgrims passing through this earthly life on our way into the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of Heaven. Our whole life is a preparation for the fullness of God's Kingdom.

Christ's Kingdom, imperfectly present even now in his Church, is also a Kingdom of truth. Our Lord tells us that the reason he was born and has come into the world is to bear witness to the truth. All who belong to this truth hear and respond to his voice. The truth that Christ reveals to us is the truth about God, the truth about ourselves created in his own image and likeness, and the truth about the eternal salvation won for us by the passion, death and resurrection of Christ. This is eternal life, that we acknowledge and live in the truth.

The world in which we live becomes, it seems, increasingly more secular and materialistic every day. **The world no longer acknowledges a truth that is eternal and binding on all.** Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI famously named this the "dictatorship of relativism." But to live without the eternal truth of God, which is to live without Christ, is to live in darkness, ignorance, doubt and fear. Christ has come to bear witness to the truth and to free us from the darkness of sin and death and to enlighten us with the Good News of his mercy and love. The first words of his public ministry were, "The Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the Gospel!"

We are transferred into this Kingdom of the Beloved Son of God by participating in the redemption he has won for us through his Blood, receiving the remission of our sins. As St. Paul tells us, Christ has reconciled all things in himself through the Blood of his cross. We first receive the grace of this redemption on the day of our baptism, washed clean from original sin and sanctified by God's grace.

But this eternal mystery of our redemption is also renewed for us each and every time we participate in the offering of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Christ, who once offered himself as both Priest and Victim on the altar of the Cross, now offers himself, through the ministry of priests, in an unbloody and sacramental manner on the altars of our Churches every time the Holy Mass is celebrated.

Christ the King reigns triumphant over death even as he hangs on the cross for our salvation. His paschal mystery, made present for us in the Eucharistic Sacrifice of his Body and Blood, is the source of our ongoing sanctification as we give glory to God in our divine worship.

This reality is powerfully made truly present in every Mass, whether in the Ordinary or Extraordinary Form of the Latin Rite. **But the traditional Latin Mass, now called the Extraordinary Form, brings forth in sign, symbol and word this reality in a particularly clear and powerful way.**

The prayers of the Extraordinary Form, the ritual gestures and especially the liturgically eastward orientation of the priest at the altar bring out in an unmistakable manner the sacrificial nature of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. This is clearly a worship that priest and people offer to Almighty God for his Glory and for the sanctification of their souls.

Pope Emeritus Benedict recognized that the Ordinary Form of the Latin Rite, at least as it is celebrated in many places, has lost some of this clarity and luster. He taught that there can never be a rupture with tradition, but that authentic liturgical reform and renewal must take place in clear continuity with the former tradition and form of the Sacred Liturgy. That is why he issued *Summorum Pontificum*, precisely to **reconcile the Church with her past.**

It was Pope Benedict's hope that the two forms of the Latin Rite could and must mutually enrich each other, so that a true and authentic renewal of the Holy Mass would once again be possible. This has been referred to as a reform of the reform of the Sacred Liturgy.

This is so that the sovereignty of Christ the King could more powerfully be shown forth in the Holy Mass as he offers himself for our salvation, a mystery which is realized in every Mass. **May the Traditional Mass flourish in the Church so that many will come to benefit from this ancient form of the Latin Rite, all to the greater honor and glory of Christ the King.** To him be all glory, laud and honor, now and forever! Amen!