PAIX LITURGIQUE

Letter 85 published 27 August 2017

EXCLUSIVE: THE EXTRAORDINARY RESULTS OF OUR POLISH SURVEY!

Ten years after the motu proprio, we have decided to complete our 2009-2011 European survey campaign regarding the reception of Pope Benedict XVI's Motu Proprio. This campaign covered the continent's principal Catholic countries, whether in the wake of papal visits (Portugal, United Kingdom, Spain) or at the request of our local partners. However, it had overlooked the highest-ranking country in terms of Church vitality: Poland. We therefore decided that the time had come to survey the country of Pope John Paul II.

Rather than commissioning a survey from a commercial institute, we followed the advice of Una Voce Poland and turned to the Institute for Catholic Church Statistics (ISKK). It was founded in 1972 by the Society of the Catholic Apostolate (the Pallottines) and works for the Polish Bishops' Conference. The institute's Catholic character means that the survey was taken directly on a group made up of committed Catholics (1) which gives this poll an original importance since it deals only with practicing Catholics. After gathering over 800 responses, they selected 635 that matched the distribution of committed Catholics in the Polish population.

I - THE RESULTS

Survey conducted by the ISKK (Institute for Catholic Church Statistics) from May 13 to June 4, 2017. Online panel method on a cross section of 635 committed Catholics. (1)

> 1: Do you go to Mass? (1)
Every Sunday and holy day: 93.6%
Nearly every Sunday: 5.8%
Once a month: 0.6%

> 2: In July 2007 Pope Benedict XVI said that the Mass could be celebrated both in its modern form, termed "ordinary" or "of Paul VI"—with the priest facing the people—and also in its traditional form, termed "extraordinary" or "Tridentine"—in Latin, the priest facing the tabernacle. Were you aware of this?
Yes: 89.5%
No: 6.9%
No answer: 3.6%

> 3: What is your opinion of the Mass in the Extraordinary Form (in Latin and facing the tabernacle)? (Note: the total is above 100% because the pollster allowed multiple answers)
It is an expression of fidelity to the Church's tradition: 49.9%
It is something normal: 37.3%
It does not correspond to contemporary culture: 17.6%
It is a strange practice: 4.2%
Other: 16.7%
Hard to say: 12.1%

> 4: If the older Mass were celebrated (in Latin and facing the tabernacle) in YOUR parish, would you attend?
Weekly: 28.9%
Once in a while: 51.6%
Never: 15.1%

Hard to say: 4.4%

II - JUST LIKE EVERYWHERE ELSE . . .

Thanks to Pope John Paul II's prestige, Polish Catholicism, a leaven of victorious resistance to Communist dictatorship, went through a triumphant era in the late 20th century. From a doctrinal and liturgical point of view, it was less exposed to the "Springtime of the Council" and its abuses. Even today, Gregorian chant and Communion on the tongue remain the norm in most of the country's parishes.

In this rather conservative and isolated context, it is interesting to note that the extraordinary form—so often presented as a reaction to abuse—would draw one worshipper in four every Sunday if it were part and parcel of ordinary parish life. A result that corresponds to the average found in the other countries (19% in France in 2008; 25% in Germany in 2010; 27.4% in Spain in 2011; etc.).

III - PAIX LITURGIQUE'S DETAILED COMMENTARY

1) The Poles are aware of the extraordinary form's legitimacy

In Poland, nine committed Catholics (1) in ten know that the extraordinary form has full citizenship in the Church. This is a very high result. Besides the fact that it seems normal for committed Catholics to be informed on the different aspects of the life of the Church, one may also think that after ten years knowledge of Benedict XVI's motu proprio has made some headway: in the first place through local word-of-mouth, then through the place that the extraordinary form has on social networks, and also thanks to the work of associations such as Una Voce Poland that organize lectures, ceremonies, and pilgrimages to promote the Latin and Gregorian liturgy.

2) A Catholicism preserved from the liturgical wars

The answer to question #3, which was slightly modified by the ISKK pollsters as compared to our usual item (2), brings out the fact that only one in 25 committed Catholics sees the older liturgy as a "strange practice." Furthermore, less than one in five (17.6) considers that it does not conform to contemporary culture. In any event one may imagine that for some this answer is not a negative, since it only notes the incapacity of the contemporary world to make room for tradition.

On the other hand, the fact that one committed Catholic in two sees the extraordinary form as "an expression of fidelity to the Church's tradition" is unambiguous. This survey therefore shows us the face of a church which, while it certainly has suffered along with the whole Church from the break imposed by the liturgical reform, nevertheless has by and large remained immune to a "progressive" opposition against the older liturgy as well as to the rupture that has harmed, and continues to harm, our Western European churches.

3) 8 Polish Catholics in 10 . . .

. . . would gladly attend the extraordinary form if it were celebrated in their parish: 28.9% would prefer to do so and 51.6% would do so once in a while. The close to 30% of Massgoers who would attend the traditional Mass every Sunday if it were celebrated conveniently in their parish (19% in France in 2008, 40% in Italy, 25% in Germany, etc.) shows the true weight of the extraordinary form. This again confirms **the existence of a vast silent people (at least one in four Catholics) that aspires to more sacrality and solemnity in its liturgical and spiritual life**. Only 15% of practicing Polish Catholics express no attraction to the extraordinary form, which leaves a great field for the motu proprio Summorum Pontificum to make its way, patiently, among that country's parishes.

4) The scientific confirmation of all our earlier surveys

The fact that, thanks to the ISKK's specific competency, this Polish survey bears only on practicing Catholics makes it a reliable benchmark for analyzing the results of our earlier national surveys. All of our other surveys targeted Catholics generally, i.e. both Massgoers and non; at our request the polling institutes highlighted the answers specific to practicing Catholics. Because of the dramatic drop in even monthly Mass attendance among West European Catholics, however, the samples of Massgoers might be considered too small to be fully representative.

In reality, scientists are well aware that the more samples are numerous, the more the statistics are reliable. The consistency of the results obtained in the seven countries of our earlier surveys—France, Italy, Germany, Portugal, Great Britain, Switzerland, and Spain—was already a significant statistical element. Their agreement with the results of the Polish survey, obtained from a cross section exclusively made up of practicing Catholics, strongly confirms their validity.

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(1) The 635 persons whom the ISKK polled were aggregated from a selection of committed Catholics. **By "committed Catholics" the ISKK means: regular Massgoers (who in Poland are still those who attend Mass nearly every Sunday—whereas elsewhere in Europe it means only Catholics who attend Mass at**

least one Sunday per month); those involved in the life of the parish; and members of recognized Catholic movements or associations. Since they all attend Mass at least once a month, they are all practicing in the modern sociological meaning of the term.

(2) The usual question runs as follows: “Would you consider it normal or abnormal if the two forms of the Roman rite were regularly celebrated in YOUR parish?”