PAIX LITURGIQUE

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TRADITIONAL CATHOLICISM IN ENGLAND: THE WITNESS OF FATHER JOHN HUNWICKE

Father John Hunwicke (pronounced 'Hunnick') was once an Anglican priest, but a Catholic at heart "always." He took advantage of the opportunity Pope Benedict XVI had offered to return fully to Catholic unity by joining the Personal Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham . . . . As a committed Catholic, Father Hunwicke, who is intimately acquainted with the collapse of the Anglican Church, unfortunately perceives the same seeds of destruction at work today within Catholicism. He moderates the blog "Fr Hunwicke's Mutual Enrichment—Liturgical Notes," http://liturgicalnotes.blogspot.com/, and has become one of the great witnesses, in English-speaking Catholic circles, of the perils that must urgently be forestalled.



Paix Liturgique - Father, tell us about your conversion.

Fr Hunwicke - For a long time now there has existed within Anglicanism a "Catholic" tradition. As I've belonged to this current since my youth, I naturally subscribed to the entirety of the beliefs of the Catholic faith, including the dogma of papal infallibility as defined at the first Vatican council. At the time we all hoped one day to reach complete unity with the Catholic Church. That is why, when Benedict XVI, through the constitution *Anglicanorum Coetibus* of 4 November 2009, established an Ordinariate to reunite those Anglican faithful who wished to return to the Catholic fold, which allowed us to enter into full Catholic unity while retaining our own proper identity within the Church, we accepted his offer, for that is precisely what we had always wished for.

Paix Liturgique - How do you see the current crisis in the Anglican Communion? What is there for us to learn?

Fr Hunwicke - Catholics ought to learn from the Anglicans that if a community surrenders to the Zeitgeist instead of following its own faith and fundamental beliefs, this will lead it to disaster and collapse. The Catholic Church is now facing the same attacks from this Zeitgeist as Anglicanism did yesterday, particularly in the sphere of sexual morality and the issue of gender. Likewise, the problems raised by *Amoris Laetitia* and other 'Bergoglian' undertakings may muddle many of the clergy and faithful by means of verbal trickery. This surrender to the Zeitgeist may also affect problems regarding the ordination of women to priestly ministries. Mind you, as far as the ordination of women is concerned, verbal ambiguities aren't easy: either we ordain women, or we don't!

Paix Liturgique - Nowadays the greater part of the liturgy celebrated in the Catholic Church suffers from a lack of the sacred and of supernatural meaning. Does the Anglican use celebrated by the priests of the personal Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham still keep this sacred character?

Fr Hunwicke - The Ordinariate liturgy is generally celebrated in a far more traditional manner than the 'ordinary' Novus Ordo as celebrated in other churches of Britain and Europe. Our way of celebrating incorporates elements of the extraordinary form for optional use, for instance: the prayers at the foot of the altar; the

old Offertory prayers; the last Gospel; the old form of the *Libera nos* is used.

Paix Liturgique – Did you know the traditional Mass before you joined the Catholic Church?

Fr Hunwicke – The traditional Mass is that which I was taught in my Anglican seminary in the 1960s! I used to celebrate it in my last Anglican parish nearly every day of the week. That is what I was used to since boyhood in the Church of England in the 1950s.

Paix Liturgique – Do you still celebrate it?

Fr Hunwicke – Currently I celebrate it every morning.

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Paix Liturgique – Do you believe that the liturgy ought to be the business of specialists?

Fr Hunwicke – I think that liturgies ought especially not to be put together by committees of 'specialists.' Even if the liturgies are not immutable and never have been, they should only evolve in an organic, progressive manner, as they did peacefully throughout the centuries; certainly not in an artificial and compulsory manner.

Paix Liturgique – You've got reservations regarding the Novus Ordo, then?

Fr Hunwicke – Actually, even the most 'traditional' way of celebrating the Novus Ordo seems to me vitiated.

Paix Liturgique – We're witnessing a growth in the number of celebrations of the traditional Mass on every continent, and an ever-increasing interest in this liturgical form, particularly among younger people. What do you make of it?

Fr Hunwicke – Young people often have tastes different to their parents'. But in this case, there is more than meets the eye! As far as the younger members of the clergy are concerned, they clearly feel an attraction to a truly sacred priesthood. They don't see much interest in a clergy working as social workers, and quite right too. They wish to be true priests of Jesus Christ!

Paix Liturgique – Does it seem to you that the traditional Mass may help a new evangelisation?

Fr Hunwicke – As older people pass away, traditional Catholicism is all that will remain. At least that's what is happening in England and in France. The best help for traditional Catholicism is what Saint Francis once called his Sister Death! I think, therefore, that the new evangelisation will in large part be due to the traditional movement.

Paix Liturgique – Do the local rites, such as those of Braga, Lyons, Milan, and others, have a future?

Fr Hunwicke - I should like to think so, yes, but their return would have to happen naturally. Likewise it has been suggested that we restore the ancient rite of mediaeval England, the Sarum rite. We shall see how that turns out. But for the time being, restoring the traditional Mass everywhere in the Church must take precedence.

Paix Liturgique - Why is your blog called 'Mutual Enrichment'? What is the goal of you work on the Internet?

Fr Hunwicke - My blog started out as a place where 'Liturgical notes' were published, as opposed to the blog of Father Z, who provides a sort of liturgical service to the faithful. And yet, little by little, it became natural to support and explain the restoration that Benedict XVI had made possible. Later on, when the crisis of the current pontificate became obvious, it seemed natural to explain what is going wrong in the Church and to support Catholics puzzled and distressed by what Cardinal Brandmüller has rightly called the Apostasy made manifest under the current pontificate.

Paix Liturgique - Certain texts of yours have been controversial. Haven't you got into trouble?

Fr Hunwicke - Fortunately my Ordinary has always been favourable to me.

Paix Liturgique - In the Catholic Church many members of the clergy profess teachings at odds with the doctrine of the Church and disavow a great part of what our ancestors considered to be sacred. How can the faithful keep and spread the faith, while they seem to go against their pastors?

Fr Hunwicke - I am impressed by the number of young couples who establish beautiful Catholic families. And I am glad to see educated Traditional Catholic laymen rise up to defend the faith. When the bishops are afraid of Bergoglio and the clergy are afraid of their bishops, it falls to the laity to teach themselves the faith and to organise the availability of the traditional liturgy themselves. The laity is usually free of the intimidation to which the clergy often fall victim! Curiously (from the Bergoglians' point of view), the 'traditionalist movements' belong to the least sclerotic sections of the Church. As a matter of fact, clericalism, as something evil and oppressive, appears under its cruelest light in the areas of the Church where Bergoglian 'apparatchiks' dominate. Therefore laymen must show the way, especially when the clergy are too afraid.

Paix Liturgique - What would your message for the readers of Paix Liturgique be?

Fr Hunwicke - I should exhort them fearlessly to resist the works of Satan. Some of these satanic influences are to be found in secular society, which has taken root in many regions of old Europe, especially in what concerns sexual matters. But all of this has also entered into the Church, as Paul VI understood when he said that 'through some crack, the smoke of Satan has entered the Church of God.' I don't believe that Vatican has taught formal error, but it was based on, and relied (as Cardinal Ratzinger pointed out) on, an excessive and dangerous optimism. The thinking was that every one would be open to what the Church had to offer if only the Church found new ways of expressing the faith. But unfortunately, that was a mistake; it was an erroneous reading of the 'signs of the times.' In reality, the world was about to rid itself of the elements of morality it had inherited from its Christian past: the use of 'the pill' was the symbol of this. And the world wasn't only abandoning Christian ethics: it was preparing to persecute those Christians who were attempting to preserve those ethics. A vision of a secular world, which began as a proclamation of liberty allowing people to rid themselves of Christian imperatives, soon became a vision of a world persecuting anyone who does not subscribe to a secular point of view.