

PAIX LITURGIQUE

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2019 STATUS REPORT ON THE SITUATION OF THE TRADITIONAL MASS IN THE WORLD

Just as we did last year, we are publishing a one-of-a-kind status report on the traditional Mass. Christian Marquant, president of Paix Liturgique, here gives it in an informal presentation. In 2018 he gave three interviews in a row (Letters 102, 103,104) in which he provided, as precisely as possible, figures on the spread of the traditional liturgy over the whole world as well as on the priests and faithful who keep it going.

What were the results for 2019?

It was an ambitious and risky enterprise, this attempt we made last year at publishing an overview of the traditional Mass throughout the world: as far as we knew, there had been no such attempt at giving the measure of the situation on the ground. For that reason, in the very first interview on the subject, I invited all who could do so to communicate their reservations, criticisms, or new information to help us present as soon as possible a more rigorous study than what we had done. Indeed, we were the first to realize its imperfections. In a word, I was launching a sort of *wikireport* on the ancient Mass

And as a matter of fact, a good number of our correspondents did send us useful information for necessary corrections; I'll come back to that. Overall, however, neither friend nor foe sent us elements compelling us to call our report drastically into question. This was an invitation for us to repeat the process.

I'll follow the same format as last year:

- first, by trying to measure the spread of the traditional liturgy country by country;
- then, by attempting to evaluate the number of priests who celebrate the *usus antiquior*;
- lastly, and more briefly, by focusing on the number of faithful who wish to live their Catholic faith to the rhythm of the traditional liturgy.

The spread of the traditional liturgy in the various countries in the world: a 10% increase.

At the end of 2018 we indicated that the traditional liturgy was celebrated in 80 distinct countries, not counting overseas provinces or territories of countries such as France or the United Kingdom. Of course, I was not denying that there existed great disparities among the different countries where the *usus antiquior* was celebrated, but it was actually present in at least 80 countries of all sizes and on all continents.

That, in fact, is what the largest number of respondents mentioned. They let us know several countries that we had missed, even though the traditional liturgy was indeed present there. On the other hand, it was pointed out to us that the traditional Mass is no longer celebrated on the Ivory Coast, which was the only instance of a drop.

By the end of 2019, if one takes into account the corrections that were brought to our attention and the new countries for which we had received information about new traditional celebrations, one reaches a total of 88 countries—88 that we know of—(namely nine more and one fewer) where the *usus antiquior* is now regularly celebrated. That's 10% higher than the number we gave last year. (3)

The 9 countries added to our 2018 list are: Bosnia, Burkina Faso, as surprising as it may seem the United Arab Emirates, Georgia, Jersey, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, and Vietnam (see the complete continent-by-continent list below).

It avers, then, that on whole continents—I have in mind Europe and America—we have reached near-total coverage, and that any addition now concerns only small countries. In Asia, the entrance of Vietnam ‘into the club’ puts an end to the existence of a big Asian Catholic country without the celebration of the *usus antiquior*. Africa, for the time being, seems a little behind in this development. But as I said on the last days of the October 2019 *Summorum Pontificum* meeting, we shall soon be in a position to show that this is no longer true, since we’ve been able to measure that the desire of African Catholics to join the *usus antiquior* was as strong as elsewhere.

All in all, there aren’t many large Catholic countries left where the traditional Mass is not yet being celebrated, countries needing yet to be “conquered.” For my part, I can see Venezuela in the Americas, since the political and economic situation of that country means that nothing that seems “normal” elsewhere is easy there. In Africa, the great absentee is the Democratic Republic of Congo, a country that is also experiencing a certain instability, which makes it hard to start up the traditional liturgy or even introduce a community of priests. But I believe that these two exceptions will be resolved in the near future.

Priests attached to the traditional liturgy

To use the classification I had used last year, one can consider three groups of priests who celebrate the traditional liturgy:

-the group made up of Lefebvrist priests,

-the group made up of Ecclesia Dei priests, whom it would be best to call *Summorum Pontificum* priests now, since the Ecclesia Dei Commission has been folded into the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. I shall therefore call them Ecclesia Dei/*Summorum Pontificum* priests,

-lastly, the diocesan and regular priests who are not members of communities exclusively devoted to the celebration of the *usus antiquior*.

A/ The Lefebvrist priests

I am not using a polemical term: I mean priests who, one way or another, have links to the Society of Saint Pius X. It is probably the best-known and easiest-to-measure group. It is an aggregate of three elements:

1° / The Society of Saint Pius X itself: its official site has just announced that it is made up of three bishops and 654 priests, for a total of 657 priests. This number is roughly identical to the number we gave in 2018.

2° / The communities that share links with it: it is more difficult to measure the precise number of priests belonging to communities in the SSPX orbit: the Capuchins of Morgon, the Benedictines of Bellaigue, the Fraternity of the Transfiguration, and a few others that are less well known in France. Last year we estimated that their number hovered around 50 priests. More specific information we have received have made us readjust this number to 55 at the end of 2019.

3° / Lastly the dissident group now commonly termed ‘the Resistance,’ since that is what it calls itself: the number of priests in it number about 50.

All this yields a total of 762 Lefebvrist priests for the year 2019.

B/ Ecclesia Dei/*Summorum Pontificum* priests as a whole

They fall into three groups:

1° / Those communities that are attached to the former Ecclesia Dei commission: we estimate them at about 580 priests (Fraternity of Saint Peter 320; Institute of Christ the King 115; Institute of the Good Shepherd 55; Administration of Saint John Mary Vianney 36; and a further 50 priests belonging to other Ecclesia Dei institutes).

2° / The traditional communities not attached to the CDF office that succeeded to the Ecclesia Dei Commission (yet able to turn to it for technical questions) who depend either on a diocese or another religious community (for instance, Sainte-Croix de Riaumont, which depends on the Abbey of Fontgombault, or the Society of Divine Mercy, which depends on the diocese of Toulon). The number of their priests is the hardest to ascertain. Although the number of priests in the Fraternity of Divine Mercy or in the community of Riaumont are known, other groups in Europe or in America are more difficult to gauge. Nevertheless, a figure of 50 priests would be the minimum estimate.

3° / Lastly, the monastic communities affiliated with religious federations. They depend on the Congregation for Religious (Fontgombault and its daughter houses through the Congregation of France or Solesmes): there are about 120 priests connected with the abbey Fontgombault and its daughter houses, and about 30 more attached to other houses for a total of 150 priests.

So one reaches a total of 780 Ecclesia Dei/Summorum Pontificum priests.

C/ Lastly, diocesan and regular priests who are not involved in communities exclusively devoted to the celebration of the *usus antiquior*.

In our 2018 report we reached a number of 3000 priests (please refer to that report for more details). This is the topic that elicited the highest number of the comments and precisions we received after our 2018 report was published. In fact they invited us to raise the number, for it is now obvious that all over the world—just take a look at the geographical increase in celebrations—there are diocesan or religious priests who celebrate the traditional Mass in private, within their communities or for communities of the faithful. Yet, as easy as it is to tighten up our information on priests belonging to traditional communities, it is much more difficult to be precise on the others. So for now we'll have to estimate that there are over 4000 diocesan and religious priests in the world who are not part of traditional institutes and who regularly and happily celebrate according to the traditional rite (I meant *form*: Freudian slip!)

This gives us a total sum of about 5550 priests attached to the traditional liturgy (760 priests in the Lefebvrist family; 780 priests in the Summorum Pontificum family; 4000 diocesan and other priests), i.e. about 1.33% of the priests in the whole Catholic Church (1). The number is low in itself, but is on the rise, as everyone can see for himself.

The faithful attached to the traditional liturgy or desirous of worshipping in it.

Last year we said that after our many survey polls conducted in the whole world, it was possible, if one weights the results of these surveys (the answers in favor of the traditional Mass are probably, for a certain number of Catholics, a sort of “protest vote” against the form of religion the clergy has been imposing on them), to think that at least 10% of Catholics on the planet, i.e. 130 million laymen (2), wished to live their Catholic faith within the traditional liturgy of the Latin Church. This percentage is more plausible if one takes into account that, in a country like France, the statistical floor of Catholics who always attend the traditional Mass, irrespective of accessibility, is 6%.

The same applies to priests as to the laity. Our claims were founded not on statistics but on opinion polls, although the consensus among sociologists is that they are, when all is said and done, a very good indication. It turns out that our most recent survey polls, which were conducted in 2019 in Korea and in the USA, give even higher results than the survey polls we had conducted for Europe and Latin America. We can therefore at least say that last year's estimate has been reinforced: over 130 million Catholics in the world aspire to live their Catholicism according to the traditional liturgy.

Conclusion

I have a pretty serene outlook for the future, actually, despite the difficulties that opponents of liturgical peace tirelessly cause their traditional brethren. This liturgical peace is the first condition of true peace in the Church. People often worry that what one pope—Benedict XVI—has done, another may undo. I'll first

point out that the *motu proprio* of Benedict XVI and the texts before it merely legitimized a situation that had come into being through the will of traditional laymen. And it is clear today that the *usus antiquior* and all that comes with it and all that it undergirds, especially as far as concerns the teaching of the catechism, can no longer be buried or set aside. The Tridentine liturgical family henceforth constitutes an unavoidable group within the Catholic universe, today and tomorrow.

To finish I'd like once again to appeal to all those who may be able to help us improve the results of our 2019 report, so that the 2020 report, which we'll publish in January 2021, may be even more thorough and accurate.

(1) *Annuaire statistique de l'Eglise 2016* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2018), 80. The most recent statistics for the number of Catholic priests provided by the Vatican Statistics Office in 2018 concern the year 2016. This figure indicates a number of Catholic priests, Latin and Oriental combined, of 414,467.

(2) *Ibid.*, 17-19. Catholics of the Latin rite are now 1,299,000,000 faithful.

(3) List of countries:

1/1 - European countries where the traditional Mass is celebrated:

Germany, Austria, Belgium, Belarus, Bosnia Herzegovina, Croatia, Denmark, Spain, Estonia, Finland, France, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Jersey, Vatican City, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Norway, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, United Kingdom, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Czech Republic, Ukraine.

1/2 -European countries where the traditional Mass is not celebrated

Albania, Andorra, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Guernsey Island, Macedonia, Moldavia, San Marino.

2/1 - New World Countries where the traditional Mass is celebrated

Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, USA (+ the French Overseas Departments of Guadeloupe, Guyana, and Martinique).

2/2 - New World countries where the traditional Mass is not celebrated

Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Belize, Dominica, Guyana, Jamaica, Panama, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saint Lucia, El Salvador, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Venezuela.

3/1 - African countries where the traditional Mass is celebrated

South Africa, Benin, Burkina Faso, Camerons, Congo Brazzaville, Ivory Coast, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Mauritius, Kenya, Madagascar, Nigeria, Uganda, Tanzania, Zimbabwe (+ the French overseas department of La Réunion)

3/2 - African countries where the traditional Mass is not celebrated

Algeria, Angola, Botswana, Burundi, Green Cape, Comoros, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Malawi, Mali, Morocco, Mauritania, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Central African Republic, Republic of Djibouti, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, São Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Swaziland, Chad, Togo, Tunisia, Zambia.

4/1 - Asian countries where the traditional Mass is celebrated

Sri Lanka, China, Korea, United Arab Emirates, Georgia, India, Indonesia, Israel, Japan, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan, Vietnam.

4/2 - Asian countries where the traditional

Mass is not celebrated Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Myanmar (Burma), Bhutan, Cambodia, Iraq, Iran, Jordan, Kirghistan, Kuwait, Laos, Lebanon, Maldives, Mongolia, Nepal, Oman, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Palestine, Qatar, Syria, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkey, Yemen.

5/1 - South Pacific countries where the traditional

Mass is celebrated Australia, Fiji, New Zealand (+ the French territories of New Caledonia and Polynesia).

5/2 - South Pacific countries where the traditional Mass is no celebrated

Brunei, Federated States of Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Samoa, East Timor, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu.