

THE SOCIETY FOR ECUMENICAL STUDIES

***A Challenging Reform* (Archbishop Piero Marini, Liturgical Press, Collegeville, 2007)**

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The liturgical reforms that resulted from the first major work of the Council came not as innovation and rupture, but evidently as the culmination of the Liturgical Movement from 1909 (with its even older roots in the Solesmes family of Benedictine monasteries), and of reforms and restorations conducted throughout the reigns of Benedict XV and Pius X through to Pius XII. Furthermore, the revision of the liturgy came from an overwhelming desire from among the Council Fathers. It may not have come to take the shape at first envisaged, but it was continuous from the immediate precedents of 50 years' work and development, and also the direct, pressing pastoral concerns of bishops from all over the world. Again, micro-ruptures, yes; discontinuity and innovation, not to judge from what they were thinking at the time, the overwhelming support for the reforms in votes, among national Bishops' Conferences and the express (but not uncritical support) of Pope Paul throughout, in the face of stiff Curial reaction.

My own reaction to the restoration of the so-called Tridentine Mass is that what has been revived is not the 'timeless Catholic Mass of the ages' but the ancient Liturgy in an unsatisfactory mid-state of its undergoing thorough change, recovery and development (including the use of the vernacular), a process interrupted and affected by Vatican II. To be fair, this is what Pope Benedict seems to think in his hope that one day the two 'forms' of the rite can be reintegrated, so that what was lost treasure from the old (the 'extraordinary form') can be brought back to enrich the revised and restored 'ordinary form'. I fear this is optimistic, as we now seem polarised between those who conceive the Liturgy and the life of the Church exclusively in terms of "going back" to *intégrisme* or the supposed "changed course".

Lambert Beauduin's 1909 onwards Liturgical Movement almost came unstuck because he and his collaborators tried to go too fast too soon; but the patience and determination they learned won through. Perhaps Annibale Bugnini, secretary of the

Consilium charged with implementing the reform, also pushed too hard and failed, in the end, to carry everyone with him. But reforming his reform (which is really the bishops' and Pope Paul's) may be desirable through further organic "micro-ruptures" and legitimate processes of ongoing development and restoration, as seems to have been the case through most of the 20th century. It will not be achieved by denouncing the reform as a usurpation of tradition and a rupture whose mending leads to defensive/aggressive isolation and partialisation. This goes right to the heart of our understanding of the Church; and the appearance of "churchmanship" (liturgical and ecclesiological) within the Catholic world is lamentable – especially in light of what the world expects and needs from Christian proclamation at this time.