

## ARE YOU ANTI-CONCILIAR?

DR.ROBERT BROWN

This seems to be open season for insisting on the protection of Vat II documents from those who over the years have developed mistrust of some of the texts. Of course, such statements pretend to protect both the Novus Ordo and the way it is commonly said.

The invocations on Vat II documents is nothing new, nor for that matter is the sloppy and erroneous use of texts to try to justify certain positions. The innovation is the accusation that anyone not meeting certain ideological criteria of the 1970s is anti-conciliar .

Often the accusations attempt to use liturgy as an entrance to 1970s ideology masquerading as Catholic theology. Sometimes texts from the Vatican II document on liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium (SC), are used to try to undermine the position of those who want to use the pre Vat II Missal. In assessing such criticisms, a few facts must be kept in mind:

1. There is no mandate in SC that mass be in the vernacular. None. Zip. Nada. Nihil. There are permissions that the vernacular be used—but nothing that can justify the almost complete vernacularization of liturgy that has existed for fifty years. The pope and bishops can prefer it, with their own subsequent mandates. Attempting to justify such mandates, however, by insisting that any position favoring Latin liturgy is anti-conciliar is not only erroneous but more than a bit dishonest.

The Petrine Office brings with it extraordinary power, but it doesn't extend to magically changing texts that were written almost sixty years ago.

2. There is no text in SC that calls for the promulgation of a New Rite. Of late those in favor of Latin liturgy, especially use of the 1962 Missal are being accused of creating the phrase pejoratively so as to arouse indignation. Such accusations are a waste. In fact, Paul VI himself was the source of the phrase. During a Wednesday audience November 26, 1969 he used the word “innovation” to refer to the changes, then seven times refers to the “new rite”. \*

3 . There are, however, certain texts in the Vat II document on priestly formation that somehow have escaped those who accuse others of being anti-conciliar.

From *Optatam Totius*, which deals with formation of priests:

*No. 13. Moreover they are to acquire a knowledge of Latin which will enable them to understand and make use of the sources of so many sciences and of the documents of the Church.*

I wonder how many bishops criticizing those who want Latin liturgy for being anti-conciliar ordain priests who can “understand and make use of the sources of . . . the documents of the Church”. In fact, smart money would be that not 1% of priests ordained in the past Twenty to Forty years have such proficiency in Latin. (If the number exceeds 1%, it is likely those students have gone far beyond what the seminary requires in Latin.)

And yet those who want Latin liturgy are accused of being anti-conciliar.

4. Another tactic has arisen: Those who attend the Old Latin Mass must now affirm that the Novus Ordo is valid. For the past 50 years I have attended the Old Mass, sometimes regularly, sometimes not. I have also become acquainted with many who do regularly attend it. I have only met one person, a Microbiologist no longer living, who thought the NO was not valid. I replied using St Thomas' understanding of Sacramental Form, and he had no reply.

The irony is that a recent poll in the US found that only one third of all Catholics believe that at mass the bread and wine substantially become Christ's Body and Blood. In considering Catholics who regularly attend mass, the poll found that only two thirds believe the mass makes Christ's Body and Blood present.

So it's quite likely that a greater percent of those who attend the Old Mass think the Novus Ordo is valid than those who regularly attend the Novus Ordo itself.

5. And then there is the question of the Divine Office, now known colloquially as the Liturgy of the Hours. In fact, Sacrosanctum Concilium is also explicit about the use of the Latin in the Divine Office.

*101. 1. In accordance with the centuries-old tradition of the Latin rite, the Latin language is to be retained by clerics in the divine office. But in individual cases the ordinary has the power of granting the use of a vernacular translation to those clerics for whom the use of Latin constitutes a grave obstacle to their praying the office properly.*

Two principles predominate here. First, clerics are to say the Divine Office in Latin. Second, exceptions may be made for those who lack Latin proficiency. Understandable procedures. In fact, what has happened? Almost all clerics in the West (excepting those in Orders dedicated to the Old Latin Mass) read their Office (excuse me, the Liturgy of the Hours) in the vernacular. The exception is not those who don't use Latin but those who do.

There was the story a few years ago of a young US priest asking his bishop whether he could read his Breviary in Latin. The bishop (who later became an Archbishop) told him no, explicitly contradicting Vatican II.

And yet, anyone inclined to Latin liturgy is accused of being anti-Conciliar.

6. One more point is to be made, the question of whether the Novus Ordo is the Roman Rite. In one sense, which is juridical, the Roman Rite is what has been

promulgated by the Bishop of Rome, the pope. In another sense, however, the Roman Rite is what historically has been for centuries the Rite used in Rome.

So the question is whether the Novus Ordo is historically the Roman Rite. That question can be answered by simply looking at the Novus Ordo Missal, which notes that Eucharistic Prayer I is the Roman Canon. This designation is not seen alongside any of the subsequent Eucharistic Prayers. The obvious conclusion is that according to the Missal itself, the Roman Rite is only being used when Eucharistic Prayer I is being used.

The fifty year history of the liturgical changes have sponsored various contradictory changes. First, a big deal was made of the liturgical innovation that produced a new rite. Later, certain neo-con defenders suppressed the previous claims, insisting that nothing was new and ignoring what had actually been spoken and written. Now, certain people want to blame advocates of Latin liturgy for cooking up any reference to innovation for the Novus Ordo.

So the question must be asked: Who is more anti-conciliar: Those who are devoted to the Old Latin Mass? Or those who are accusing them?

\* <https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/library/changes-in-mass-for-greater-apostolate-8969>

See also from the previous audience of Nov 19:

<https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/library/mass-the-same-8968>

**Dr. Brown holds Baccalaureate, Licentiate, and Doctoral degrees in Theology from the Pontifical University of St. Thomas in Rome (the Angelicum), where his graduate concentration was in Thomistic studies. From 2001-2005 he taught theology at Our Lady of Guadalupe Seminary in Denton, NE. More than fifty years ago he and three friends (all graduates of the University of Kansas), searching for a monastery that had preserved Gregorian Chant, discovered the Abbey of Fontgombault in central France. In September of 1999 the Latin Benedictine Office returned to the United States when Fontgombault established a foundation in Clear Creek, Oklahoma.**
