

# OF OLD AND NEW

Today is the feast of St. Bede. He died on 25<sup>th</sup> May 735 AD, lying on the floor of his cell surrounded by his brethren and praying the words: "Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen". We learn this from the letter written by St. Cuthbert, his disciple, on occasion of his teacher's death.

It is good to know that we still pray today the Glory be. As we pray it today, we feel immediately at one with Bede, and we glorify the Blessed Trinity with the fervor he had in his heart. We pray the Psalms, some written over 2900 years ago, and often we feel at one with the ancient people of God who recited them from the heart, and with the monks and people down the ages, right up to our own times.

We should never dismiss prayers which have nourished the Church for centuries in favor of new forms of prayer which are the result of tiredness with all that is old. The Our Father is 2000 years old, and so is the Hail Mary, and so is the Novena to the Holy Spirit.

What about the supreme act of worship of the Church, Holy Mass? Blessed Antonio Rosmini had an immense love for Holy Mass, as it was in the ancient Tridentine form. When he celebrated Holy Mass by himself - as many priests are doing today during these times of Coronavirus - it took him a very long time, immersed as he became in the great mysteries of the celebration. We have the written evidence of many ordinary people and of many saints who witnessed his celebration of Holy Mass.

There is no doubt that many people today, especially young people, find the celebration of the Tridentine Holy Mass very appealing to their spirit and particularly sacred and solemn. There is, however, also much debate between the supporters of the Tridentine Holy Mass and the vast majority of priests and faithful who hold very dear the celebration of Holy Mass as it was reformed by the Vatican II Council. What would Blessed Antonio Rosmini have said about such debate?

In his book, *The Five Wounds of Holy Church*, Rosmini highlights with vigour as the first wound the division of clergy and people at Mass. The use of the Latin language throughout the celebration, the number of mysterious acts by the celebrant not understood by the people, the non-participation of the laity in what was being done at the altar created such a division that, while the priest appeared to celebrate Holy Mass by himself, the people in the church followed their own private devotions.

What Rosmini called the “first wound” was the non-participation of the laity in the sacred liturgy – Holy Mass and the celebration of other Sacraments. It was not the use of the Latin language, nor it was the number of symbolic, mysterious acts by the celebrant. He wrote and published a booklet in which he put side by side the Latin words and their translation, to allow the faithful to follow with clear understanding. He also asked from priests to educate and explain to the faithful all that was being done during the celebration of Holy Mass and the Sacraments.

Vatican II based its wide-ranging reform of the celebration of Holy Mass and the Sacraments on its desire for the full participation of the faithful, allowing the translation into the vernacular, and making more evident the meaning of many of the actions carried out by the priest. Some people feel that it went too far, claiming that participation has not much improved and that the removing of the mystery has had the result of making banal what was before extremely rich and awe-inspiring.

For Rosmini, the healing of the wound would occur only when there is full participation of the faithful and full understanding of the mysterious actions taking place during the liturgical celebrations. He did not advocate the suppression of the Latin language, on the contrary he produced very strong reasons for its preservation. He did not advocate the elimination of mysterious, sacred symbols, on the contrary he saw them as awe-inspiring and extremely nourishing if understood by the faithful.

We need perhaps a new Vatican Council to pick up once again Rosmini’s recommended remedies for the celebration of Holy Mass and the Sacraments being careful not to be as drastic as the reform which followed Vatican II has been. Participation is of fundamental importance and so is understanding. There is no reason why Holy Mass as it has been celebrated in the Church for centuries cannot be kept and slightly revised to make sure that the two fundamental guidelines are implemented. We ought to treasure the beauty and spiritual wealth of the Church, without paying attention to the conclusion that antiquity is a handicap for the faithful of today. Such a conclusion would be nonsense in view of the perennial newness of Christ, who was, who is, who is to come.

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