

## THE NOVUS ORDO'S TREATMENT OF CHRISTMAS

One thing that exasperated me when I used to attend Mass and recite the Divine Office in the *Ordinary Form* was its cavalier treatment of the Christmas season. I wrote recently to Dr Peter Kwasniewski and invited him to let the Catholic world have a paper on the topic. He sent me a schema he had prepared for the season just past posted at the end of this article. The reader might care to peruse it before considering what follows. As one commentator has remarked, the promoters of the *Novus Ordo* seem to subscribe to the view shared by the retail world that the Christmas season ends with Christmas Day. The reader will note in particular the studied lack of commemorations of the Christmas season and the absence of Gloria and Creed throughout the Octave in the new rite. A major element of dysfunction is the rushing of the feast of the Holy Family which should never precede the Epiphany.

The liturgy always used combine, in a single theme, three events: the Epiphany, the Baptism of the Lord and the celebration of the miracle at Cana, but it did so with discretion, separating the time of their celebration to reflect the great separation in time of the three events. The *Novus Ordo* jumbles them together to the harm of each and the detriment of Christmas season and the Epiphany.

The Epistle and Gospel readings in the new rite for the season are out of kilter. It is as if the promoters of the *Novus Ordo*, driven by the imperative to get the faithful studying as much of the Old and New Testaments as possible in the two year/three year cycles had to hustle lest they fall behind schedule. Consider the Epistle readings specified for 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> January, extracts from St John's First Letter. Splendid in content; just inappropriate. Consider the Gospel passages for the same period, taken largely from St John; appropriate for the period leading up to Easter perhaps; completely inappropriate for the Christmas/Epiphany seasons.

Then there is the submersion of the feast of St Thomas a'Becket. When one thinks of the immense sacrilege committed by the arch-Protestant Henry Tudor (Henry VIII), against the remains and the tomb of the great Archbishop of Canterbury because he had dared resist the secular power in the person of Henry II and undergo martyrdom in defence of Christ and His Church, his feast should *never* be overlooked. Unfortunately, St Thomas joins dozens of other saints throughout the liturgical year to be treated dismissively in the *Novus Ordo*.

All of this provides yet another motive for the faithful to return to the *Usus Antiquior*, the 'extraordinary form' of the Mass and its adherence to the Church's ancient calendar for the liturgical year.

Michael Baker

January 19<sup>th</sup>—Second Sunday after the Epiphany (Extraordinary Form)

Second Sunday of Ordinary Time (Ordinary Form)

**Just How Different Are the EF and OF Calendars Around Christmas and New Year's?**  
The following chart is based on the dates as they occur in the current year (2019/2020) in the USA.

DATE	OLD CALENDAR	NEW CALENDAR
Dec. 25	Christmas	Christmas
Dec. 26	St. Stephen with Commemoration of Christmas (Gloria & Creed)	St. Stephen (no Christmas commemoration) (no Creed)
Dec. 27	St. John with Commemoration of Christmas (Gloria & Creed)	St. John (no Christmas commemoration) (no Creed)
Dec. 28	Holy Innocents with Commemoration of Christmas (Gloria & Creed*)	Holy Innocents (no Christmas commemoration) (no Creed)
Dec. 29 (Sunday)	Sunday in the Octave of Christmas**	The Holy Family
Dec. 30	Christmas (Gloria & Credo)	Christmas feria (no Creed)
Dec. 31	Christmas with Commemoration of St. Sylvester (Gloria & Creed)	Christmas feria (no Creed) <i>(optional memorial: St Sylvester)</i>
Jan. 1	Octave of the Nativity and the Circumcision of Christ	Mary, Mother of God
Jan. 2	Christmas feria	SS. Basil and Gregory Nazianzen (no Gloria)
Jan. 3	Christmas feria	Christmas feria <i>(optional memorial: Holy Name of Jesus)</i>
Jan. 4	Christmas feria or Saturday of Our Lady or St. Elizabeth Ann Seton (with Gloria)	St. Elizabeth Ann Seton (no Gloria)
Jan. 5 (Sunday)	Holy Name of Jesus	Epiphany [sic]
Jan. 6	Epiphany (Twelfth Day of Christmas)	Christmas feria
Jan. 7	Epiphany feria***	Christmas feria
Jan. 8	Epiphany feria	Christmas feria
Jan. 9	Epiphany feria	Christmas feria
Jan. 10	Epiphany feria	Christmas feria
Jan. 11	Saturday of Our Lady	Christmas feria
Jan. 12 (Sunday)	The Holy Family	Baptism of the Lord
Jan. 13	Baptism of the Lord (Octave of Epiphany)	"Ordinary Time" [sic] begins
Jan. 14	Season of Epiphany (lasts until Septuagesima)	Ordinary Time feria
Jan. 19	Second Sunday after Epiphany	Second Sunday of Ordinary Time
	etc.	etc.

\* By older custom, Holy Innocents would be celebrated this day in violet & without Gloria or Alleluia.

\*\* By older custom, the collect of St Thomas of Canterbury would be said on this day as well.

\*\*\* Epiphany ferias are an echo of the old Epiphany octave; the festal Mass is repeated daily.