

## NEMESIS & THE NOVUS ORDO

“In central Rome... one mother of young children explained to me that an EF celebration, she had discovered, was the only place she could take her children without their behaviour attracting negative comments from an aging congregation...”

Some sixty five years ago I recall my paternal grandmother, Edith May Baker, telling me of an incident that occurred at Mass involving her infant second son, my father John Gavan. The child was misbehaving and she rose to remove him when the priest addressed her from the altar and told her not to take the child outside. I was reminded of this when I read the sentence reproduced in the epigraph above taken from a recent article by Dr Joseph Shaw of *Una Voce* in the *Homiletic & Pastoral Review* entitled ‘The Demographics of the Extraordinary Form’.<sup>1</sup> *Una Voce’s* initiative followed the distribution to the world’s bishops in early 2020 by the *Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith* of a questionnaire seeking information on the old rite’s impact in their dioceses.

Dr Shaw’s article deserves the attention of all who are interested in the growing impact on the Catholic faithful of the traditional form of the Mass relative to that of the *novus ordo*.

In order of importance, the first statistic he exposes gives the lie to the party line among *novus ordo* bishops and priests that the extraordinary form appeals predominantly to the old. The figures show that it is particularly attractive to young adults and the parents of young children. The second reveals that the rite has attracted many converts and has been the means of return of many lapsed to the faith. The third reveals its popularity among the very young, a phenomenon facilitated, the author reasonably surmises, by their greater use of social media.

A further statistic is that very few people of middle-age are to be found among the old rite’s congregations. When one considers how, with its suppression or transference of feast days to lessen disruption of the working week, or out of deference to secular demands, the *novus ordo* appeals to those immersed in the world, its devotees’ resistance to change is understandable. Commentary by those contributing to the statistics gathered by *Una Voce* makes understandable, too, why priests of the same class (those trained in the *novus ordo*) are actively resistant to the extraordinary form. Local ordinaries may be supportive—in line with Pope Benedict’s appeals in *Summorum Pontificum*—but in the main they are surrounded by antipathetic clergy.

The report shows that congregations at the extraordinary form are more balanced as regards the ratio of the sexes and more representative of the racial mixes that make up modern society. That is, they are more *catholic* in their representation than those of the *novus ordo* whose attendants tend, exaggeratedly so, to be elderly and female.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.hprweb.com/2021/01/the-demographics-of-the-extraordinary-form/#respond>

Dr Shaw's report of the situation in Luxembourg illustrates the issues at stake:

The population of Luxembourg is about 600,000 of which only half hold Luxembourgish passports, but of these a great many came originally from Portugal, Italy and other places and many have never really integrated. As anyone who lives here will testify, Luxembourg is not a cultural melting pot like London, but rather, a ghettoized society in which each linguistic group sticks to its own.

A very significant contributor to this phenomenon is the vernacular Mass. The Luxembourgish Mass, the Italian Mass, the Portuguese Mass, the English language Mass, the French Mass, the Polish Mass and so on are all focuses of attendance by the various expatriate communities. If you attend any of these you are unlikely to meet anyone whose native language is not that of the Mass you are attending.

It is at the TLM that you will find a real mixture of ethnic backgrounds. There, you can meet people of Luxembourgish, Hungarian, British, French, Polish, Japanese, Belgian, Italian, Nigerian, Austrian, Dutch and Spanish nationality, united by the common language of the Church: Latin.

The Church's older priests are approaching retirement and death and their predilections will retire and die with them, as will those of their now predominantly aged congregations.

Just as no society grounded in contraception can survive—a death wish is part and parcel of its moral choices—so no celebration of the Catholic liturgy that turns its back on the young, on the married and their children can survive. These are the banes which afflict the *novus ordo*. Its days are numbered.

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The *Una Voce* report may serve to circumvent a bias against reporting the true impact of the extraordinary form on the Catholic faithful that might reasonably be expected to appear in returns from the world's bishops. We are in debt to *Foederatio Internationalis Una Voce* for the diligence of its members.

Michael Baker

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