

WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE *NOVUS ORDO*—PART II

“Is it really possible for an ecumenical council to say that any heretic has the right to draw the faithful away from Christ, the Supreme Pastor, and to lead them to pasture in their [sic] poisoned fields?”

Norman Thomas Cardinal Gilroy, Archbishop of Sydney 1940-1971¹

Whether they did so wittingly or unwittingly, the bishops of Vatican II attacked three elements of the Church's undertaking—

-) the Blessed Eucharist,
-) the sanctity of the office of the priesthood, and
-) the truth that membership of the Catholic Church is necessary for all men for salvation.

The Church's sacred liturgy, as Peter Kwasniewski reminds us in a recent paper, *The Ninefold Kyrie*², is not something useful. Some things are above use, such as fine music and art. These are ends in themselves and it is for this reason that we call them 'fine'.³ Now, the things which most deserve to be called 'fine' are the ceremonies of true religion, the Mass, the Divine Office and the celebration of the Sacraments, for these concern *man's ultimate end*, union with his Creator and Redeemer here on earth and forever in heaven. The very last consideration about our celebration of the Church's liturgy is its utility. We have a duty to 'waste' our time in its action because it is infinitely more important than the merely useful.

Their blindness to this distinction (*inter multa alia*) warped the thinking of the bishops of Vatican II. It grounded their condemnation of what they asserted, in *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, to be 'useless repetitions' in the liturgy. It sullied the whole approach of those who set about reforming the liturgy after the close of the Council. Of this defective attitude the *novus ordo* (the *forma ordinaria*) is the apotheosis.

Let's look at the three elements the Council bishops attacked in reverse order.

The Council attacked the truth of the doctrine that membership of the Catholic Church is necessary for all men for salvation.

This is most manifest in the Council's final document, the *Declaration on Religious Liberty* in which, after giving the doctrine lip service (in chapter 1), the bishops proceeded to betray it in the chapters that followed. If man is free to embrace any religion he chooses, as the Council held, if he has a fundamental right to do so regardless of the demands of right reason and the revelation of Almighty God,

¹ Quoted in John W O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II*, Cambridge Mass., 2010, p. 218

² *The Ninefold Kyrie: An Example of "Useless Repetition"?* on the New Liturgical Movement website—<http://www.newliturgicalmovement.org/2018/07/the-ninefold-kyrie-example-of-useless.html#.W2I0x9IzbIU> An edited version is reproduced in the Appendix to this paper.

³ 'Fine' is from the Latin noun *finis*, meaning end.

it was utterly illogical for them to assert that their teaching “[left] untouched the Catholic doctrine on the moral duty of men... toward the true religion and... the one Church of Jesus Christ”.

The Council attacked the Office of the priesthood

In adopting the Protestant perception of the priest as a function of the people of God the Council’s bishops rejected the Church’s position that he is chosen by God to stand in the place of Christ before men. The Protestant view is that the priest (or pastor) is a servant, a means to an end. The Catholic view is that the priest is an end, as Christ (Whom he represents) is an end, and that we are bound to heed him as we would heed Christ if we are to embrace the salvation promised us by God.

The sanctity of the office of the priesthood appears nowhere more clearly than in the celebration of High Mass in the Tridentine rite (*forma extraordinaria*). The celebrant, the one who stands in the place of Christ, is the focus. The centrality of his position is adverted to again and again in the ceremonies—

- in the emulation of his posture by servers and faithful in standing for the opening psalm (*Psalm 42*) and *Confiteor*, in sitting for the *Gloria*, in standing for the Gospel, for the Creed;
- in the precedence accorded him in all the actions of the Mass;
- in the conduct of those who exercise the priestly functions on his behalf—sub-deacon in chanting the Epistle, deacon in the chanting of the Gospel;
- in the order of precedence in which the *thurifer* uses the censer;
- in the deference with which his hand is kissed by *thurifer* and by servers in the execution of their offices.

The celebrating priest consummates the action of the Mass by his invocation of Christ’s words in the double consecration. He is the *alter Christus* for all who attend, the one who performs the functions Christ Himself would perform. Indeed, Christ *is* present among them, present in the person of the priest.

The effect of the Council’s abandonment of the Church’s understanding of the sanctity of the priesthood is seen in the utter devastation of priestly and religious vocations and the disruption of the life of the faithful that followed the Council.

The Council attacked the Blessed Eucharist

The reverence due to the Blessed Sacrament is reflected in the detail and the rigour of ceremony that has marked the holy sacrifice of the Mass since time immemorial. It is reflected in the attitude, one of respect for the sacred, given the altar on which the eternal sacrifice is offered.

“The essential principles of the liturgy were... strongly preserved by the traditional Church, foremost among them the understanding of the altar, which, far above any text, is central to the sense of Christian worship. This understanding has been destroyed by modern changes. The altar was replaced by a table, following an amateur’s deduction from church archaeology, and the whole sense of what an altar is was lost in the disruption. What we see in modern churches is, in effect, not an altar but a

platform for the priest's apparatus. We have all seen altars on which the most prominent object is a microphone—an apt symbol of the mechanical communication to which the liturgy has been reduced... [O]n the traditional altar... the only permitted things are the sacred vessels and the missal... In the traditional liturgy, as in the primitive Church, neither crucifix nor candles stand on the altar itself, and even less is there a place for flowers, which are extraneous to liturgical tradition... The placing of candles, and even more, of flowers on the altar is precisely the kind of late custom that the liturgists professed to be reforming; the result of their work has been to produce aberrations of which even the most ignorant priest of the old order would not have been guilty." (H.J.A. Sire, *Phoenix from the Ashes: the Making, Unmaking and Restoration of Catholic Tradition*, Kettering Ohio (Angelico Press) 2015, p. 263)

The Council bishops' attitude to the Blessed Eucharist, and to the Mass of which it is the Divine fruit, may be gathered from their behaviour at the discomfiting of Cardinal Ottaviani, Secretary of the Holy Office, in the Council's First Session on October 30th, 1962.

[The Cardinal said] "Are we seeking to stir up wonder, or perhaps scandal, among the Christian people, by introducing changes in so venerable a rite that has been approved for so many centuries and is now so familiar? The rite of Holy Mass should not be treated as if it were a piece of cloth to be refashioned according to the whim of each generation." Speaking without a text, because of his partial blindness, he exceeded the ten-minute time limit which all had been requested to observe. Cardinal Tisserant, Dean of Council Presidents, showed his watch to Cardinal Alfrink, who was presiding that morning. When Cardinal Ottaviani reached fifteen minutes, Cardinal Alfrink rang the warning bell. But the speaker was so engrossed in his topic that he did not notice the bell, or purposely ignored it. At a signal from Cardinal Alfrink, a technician switched off the microphone. After confirming the fact by tapping the instrument, Cardinal Ottaviani stumbled back to his seat in humiliation. The most powerful cardinal in the Roman Curia had been silenced, and the Council Fathers clapped with glee. (Ralph A Wiltgen, *The Rhine flows into The Tiber*, New York, 1967; my copy Tan Books, 1985, pp. 28, 29)

The loss of the respect due to the Blessed Eucharist was confirmed in what followed, described by Sire as a "tide of anarchy... let loose in the Church as soon as the Council ended". (op. cit., p. 245) There followed —

- admission of ministers other than the priest for the distribution of Communion,
- reception of Communion while standing,
- reception of Communion in the hand,
- wholesale distribution of the Precious Blood with the inevitable desecration that follows on human clumsiness,
- celebration of Mass in places other than a dedicated church ('home Masses').

Sire goes on:

“In May 1967 the official process of desacralising the Mass was taken a long step further by the instruction *Tres Abhinc Annos*. It sanctioned the abandonment of the Latin Canon, and, in addition, gestures were abolished such as the laity’s genuflection at the *Incaratus* in the Creed, the repeated signs of the cross made by the priest during the Canon, the first genuflection at the Consecration, and most of the kissings of the altar; the priest was no longer required to keep his forefinger and thumb together after consecrating the Host, and the washing of hands at the end of the Mass was made optional. The attack on reverence and on the concept of the Mass as an action in which gesture is as expressive as words, was embodied in these changes.” (Sire, op. cit., pp.245-6)

All that the modern Catholic has grown to expect of his local priest, his—

- inability to refrain from adding his own input in the vernacular to the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice;
- deliberate acts, or words, of desacralisation after Communion;
- inappropriate bonhomie towards the faithful in the sacred place;
- diminution, or denial, of one or other elements of the Church’s doctrine in his sermons or interventions—

derive from this threefold attack initiated by the Council’s bishops. They have produced in the faithful a languishing of the seventh of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, *Fear of the Lord*. And, since as St Thomas teaches, the Supernatural Virtues and the Gifts grow like the fingers on a hand, it has produced a diminution generally of the force of the Virtues and of the Gifts among the faithful.

The Novus Ordo is doomed

Naturam expelles furca, tamen usque recurret, the Roman poet Horace wrote⁴: “You may toss nature out with a pitchfork, she will always return.” Grace imitates nature. *A fortiori, ergo*, though the sacred has been pitched aside by the reformers it is inevitable it will return. The Church’s dedicated reverence for her Founder, Jesus Christ, will not abide the desacralisation and trivialising of the Mass which the reformers have embodied in the *novus ordo*, as it will not abide the prevarications and compromises of the faith embraced by the bishops of the Second Vatican Council and their successors.

Come the Pope who will return the faithful to the fullness of their calling, it is inevitable the rite will be condemned as it deserves.

But why wait? Every bishop has the fullness of the priesthood. Any bishop may heal the rite of its major defects in his diocese. Let him direct his priests to abandon the ersatz Eucharistic prayers (which are nothing but novelties for the sake of novelty) in favour of the Roman canon, ‘the First Eucharistic Prayer’. Let him direct that Mass be offered *ad orientem*, i.e., facing Almighty God, not *versus populum*. Let him direct that his priests abandon:

⁴ *Epistles* bk. 1, n. 10, I, 24

-) all interventions in the vernacular in the course of the Mass;
-) limit their contribution in the vernacular to a sermon exploring the lessons in Gospel and Epistle, and only on Sundays and solemnities;
-) offertory processions,
-) the 'kiss of peace'
-) interventions by anyone other than the priest before, during or after Mass, for any purpose.

Let him forbid, moreover, the presence of any woman or girl on the sanctuary. Let him insist that Communion will be given only to those kneeling, and never in the hand. Let him direct that a sacred silence, one that respects the immensity of the Divine Presence, shall be ever maintained by priests and people in all his churches at all times.

Let the bishop put his episcopacy on the line in these matters. Let him be a leader of his people, a shepherd, not a bloody sheep!

Michael Baker

24th August, 2019—*St Bartholomew*

APPENDIX

THE NINEFOLD KYRIE: AN EXAMPLE OF “USELESS REPETITION”?

Peter Kwasniewski,

New Liturgical Movement website, 30th July 2018

Like the Byzantine liturgy, the traditional Roman liturgy is characterized by many examples of what we might call “purposeful repetition.”

The *Asperges* antiphon and the Introit antiphon are repeated after their verses and doxologies. The doxology is said many times throughout Mass. *Psalm* 42 as laid out at the start features a number of repeated phrases. The *Kyrie*, of course, has nine petitions in three sections (3 x 3), of which the outer members are verbally identical. The *Confiteor* is said by the priest, then repeated by the servers with small differences, and then said again later in the Mass, right before the communion of the faithful. The *Domine, non sum dignus* is said three times by the priest, and then three times by the servers (either alone or together with the faithful). If we look beyond the Mass to the Divine Office, we see many more examples.

Most of these repetitions were discarded or brutally reduced in the liturgical reform, purportedly in pursuance of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 34, which called for the reduction of “useless repetitions” (*repetitiones inutiles*, or *ineptas* as the original draft read).

St. Gertrude the Great was privileged with some of the most wondrous and detailed visions that any saint has ever received. In her *Revelations*, we read about a mystical Mass celebrated by Our Lord, in which Gertrude saw the Eternal High Priest Jesus Christ offering the High Mass in the convent. Here is the part that pertains to the Kyrie:

At the first *Kyrie eleison*, He granted her the remission of all the sins which she had contracted through human frailty; after which, the angels raised her up on her knees. At the second, He pardoned her sins of ignorance; and she was raised up by these princes, so that she stood before God. Then [at the third] two angels of the choir of Cherubim led her to the Son of God, who received her with great tenderness.

At the first *Christe eleison*, the Saint offered our Lord all the sweetness of human affection, returning it to Him as to its Source; and thus there was a wonderful influx of God into her soul, and of her soul into God, so that by the descending notes the ineffable delights of the Divine Heart flowed into her, and by the ascending notes the joy of her soul flowed back to God. At the second *Christe eleison*, she experienced the most ineffable delights, which she offered to our Lord. At the third *Christe eleison*, the Son of God extended His Hands, and bestowed on her all the fruit of His most holy life and conversation.

Two angels of the choir of Seraphim then presented her to the Holy Spirit, who penetrated the three powers of her soul. At the first *Kyrie eleison*, He illuminated her reason with the glorious light of Divine knowledge, that she might always know His will perfectly. At the second *Kyrie eleison*, He strengthened the irascible part of her soul to resist all the machinations of her enemies, and to conquer every evil. At the last *Kyrie eleison*, He inflamed her love, that she might love God with her whole heart, with her whole soul, and with her whole strength. It was for this reason that the choir of Seraphim, which is the highest order in the heavenly hosts, presented her to the Holy Ghost, who is the Third Person of the Most Holy Trinity, and that the Thrones presented her to God the Father, manifesting that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are One God, equal in glory, co-eternal in majesty, living and reigning perfect Trinity through endless ages. [1]

On another occasion, we read of how “the saint receives a triple absolution and benediction from the Blessed Trinity, through the merits of Jesus Christ.” Once again this threefold mystical grace was granted precisely during the *Kyrie* of the Mass:

As the saint heard Mass one day with the greatest fervour, it appeared to her that her guardian angel took her in his arms as if she were a little child, at the *Kyrie Eleison*, and presented her to God the Father, to receive His benediction, saying: “Eternal Father, bless Thy little child.” And because for a time He replied not, as if He would testify by His silence that so miserable a creature was unworthy of this favour, she began to enter into herself, and to consider her unworthiness and nothingness with extreme confusion. Then the Son of God arose, and gave her the merits of His most holy life to supply her defects, so that she appeared as if clothed with a rich and shining robe, and as if she had attained to the full age and strength of Jesus Christ.

Then the Eternal Father inclined lovingly towards her, and gave her His absolution thrice, as a sign of the triple remission of all the sins which she had committed against His omnipotence in thought, word, or deed. The Saint offered in thanksgiving the adorable life of His only Son; and at the same time the precious stones with which her garments were adorned emitted a harmonious concert to the eternal glory of God, which testified how agreeable it is to Him to offer Him the all-perfect and holy life of His Son.

The same angel then [at the *Christe*] presented her to God the Son, saying: “Bless Thy sister, King of Heaven”; and having received from Him a triple benediction, to efface all the sins she had committed against the Divine Wisdom, he then presented her to the Holy Spirit, with these words: “O Lover of men, bless Thy spouse”; and she

received from Him also a triple benediction, in remission of all the sins which she had committed against the Divine Goodness.

Let those who read this reflect on these three benedictions at the *Kyrie Eleison*. [2]

By the time St. Gertrude was beholding these visions (she lived from 1256 to ca. 1302), most of the great *Kyrie* chants of the Gregorian repertoire had already been composed. These chants artistically exploit the musical balance and contrast made possible by a 3+3+3 structure. Perhaps the most stunning example is the *Kyrie* of Mass IX, the *Missa cum jubilo*.

The very fact that an age-old structure, numerologically luminous, on which mystical visions and musical masterpieces had been built up, was put aside by a committee of self-styled “experts” shows the extent to which the reform proceeded from crass contempt for liturgical tradition and sacred music, in spite of what *Sacrosanctum Concilium* had said elsewhere. How many examples of this sort of thing, examples sadly available *ad nauseam*, would it take to convince the fence-sitters that the reform deserves nothing better than the rubbish bin?

The ninefold *Kyrie* of the Mass is obviously directed to the Holy Trinity, as its oddness of number blocks any impression of “call and response”. It is not a dialogue between “presider and assembly” but a cry of the faithful to the Most Holy Trinity. The sixfold *Kyrie*, on the other hand, is a textual expression of the anthropocentric “closed circle” of which Ratzinger wrote: the priest or cantor calls out “Lord, have mercy” to the people, and they respond to the priest or cantor. The *object* of the prayer (the Holy Trinity) is in tension with the *structure* of it (a binary this-that, back-and-forth)—since *one* set of *Kyrie eleison/Christe eleison/Kyrie eleison*, as in the monastic Office, would have sufficed, if God were the one being addressed.

Let me try to express this point again: the ancient ninefold *Kyrie* was replaced with a sixfold *Kyrie* in order to facilitate an “active participation” construed verbally and extrinsically, for there is no other textual, ritual, or musical justification for it.[3] We see here how utilitarian considerations outweighed continuity with tradition, aesthetics, and theological coherence. The lumbering sixfold *Kyrie* is symptomatic of the entire mentality behind the *Novus Ordo*, a point Henry Sire captures well in his book *Phoenix from the Ashes*:

The achievement of the liturgical purists, as they condemned the incoherences of the old rite, has thus been to introduce far more incoherences in the rite they have invented. The reason for this is the lack of integrity in their intentions, but it also stems from the method used when the Consilium set about recasting the liturgy. The Mass was divided into sections and each one given to a separate committee to revise. The result was that each part of the Mass had to be slightly tampered with; otherwise the committee concerned would not have justified its existence. The changes made follow no liturgical logic. In the *Kyrie eleison*, the old threefold repetition, going back to the earliest days of the Church, has been replaced by a twofold one. This was in pursuance of the Modernists’ principle of abolishing ritual repetitions. Yet, if that were logically followed, there is no reason why the prayer should not be reduced to *Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison*, or indeed to *Kyrie Christe eleison*. Thus both logic and tradition go overboard so that a committee should do its petty meddling. At the same time, while one committee pruned repetitions here, another was introducing them in another part of the Mass, those of the responsorial psalm and the bidding prayers, which show repetitions of a kind from which the old rite was free. In their poverty of conception, the innovators’ rule was that repetition was wrong unless they could think of nothing better themselves. [4]

Sire has put his finger on an irony that few have dared to speak about, namely, that the *Novus Ordo* exhibits more and worse defects in some of the very areas against which the cancer-phase Liturgical Movement directed its blazing arrows. Thus, we find far more useless repetition in the *Novus Ordo* than in the traditional Mass. Think about the Prayer of the Faithful: how many millions of times have we wearily said “Lord, hear our prayer” to the laundry-list of ill-formulated, poorly-read petitions at the podium? Or how many times have we repeated the response to the responsorial psalm, while visions of Hallmark cards danced in our heads, or we wondered if we or the rest of the people would remember the response, or whether all this has any point to it except to give the unemployed some work to do? Those who rejected the repetitions of tradition were punished for their pride with the lacklustre redundancies of concocted rites. [5]

In the Byzantine Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, *Lord, have mercy* is sung over 40 times by the people. The cascading petitions create an aura very like that which silence creates in the Roman Rite. An Eastern Orthodox Christian online wrote the following, to someone’s objection about the number of *Kyrie’s* in the liturgy:

I have found that the more I say it, the more genuine I get. It’s like the first 10 times I’m slowly getting rid of all distracting thoughts. The next 10 times, I’m starting to get myself in the right frame of mind for prayer. The next 10 I’m starting to think about the meaning behind each word. Then during the final 10 I can actually pray it from my heart. [6]

The fact that lip service is paid to the “ancient and glorious East” by the very liturgists who savagely denuded the Roman Rite (or the Ambrosian or Mozarabic, etc.) or who today defend its naked state, shows up the intellectual dishonesty of the reforms and their pursuit of agendas at all costs, even at the price of consistency of principle. The Eastern liturgical tradition contains countless examples of textual and ritual repetition on a scale far more extravagant than anything the Latin tradition ever boasted. Take the liturgy of baptism, with its many threefold statements; or the multitude of prostrations in penitential seasons.

At the end of the day, the problem boils down to this: is *usefulness*, “cash value” so to speak, the best or ultimate criterion of whether something belongs in the liturgy or not? Let us ask this question: Is it *useful* to contemplate God? Do we justify our contemplation by saying that research shows that it strengthens the brain, promotes good sleep and low blood pressure, and leads to statistical improvements in cheerfulness? Or is it something worth doing for its own sake, or rather, for God’s sake—and *therefore*, not surprisingly, something beneficial to us? Similarly, repetition, which is always meaningful and profitable when done in faith, hope, and charity, is a discipline primarily aimed at offering God praise, adoration, and glorification, an earthly likeness of the song of angels crying out “Holy, holy, holy...” in the presence of the Most Holy Trinity.

It is therefore strange, passing strange, that the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy should tell us that repetition must be “useful”. It is useful, but not in a utilitarian way, as David Clayton has recently explained—and yet, it is hard to see how the Council meant anything other than a surrender to modern American pragmatism: let’s get things done as quickly and efficiently as possible. Boyz, we got things to do!

The solution, as it always has been and always will be, is to treat with the utmost respect all that proceeds from the mouth of God in His liturgical Providence. The

ninefold Kyrie of the Mass was just such a thing, coming to us from ancient times, stretching unbroken through the dark centuries of Roman decline, the bright centuries of the Middle Ages, the tempestuous centuries of Reformation and Revolution. No one would have thought of changing it—no one, that is, until the [cretins] who believed that their lego-brick liturgies, assembled in study weeks, were superior to the vintages of Christendom matured over long ages. In verses that apply equally well here:

“When they knew God, they have not glorified him as God, or given thanks; but became vain in their thoughts, and their foolish heart was darkened. For professing themselves to be wise, they became fools” (*Rom* 1:21–22).

And:

“The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain” (1 *Cor* 3:20).

Or perhaps most aptly of all:

“Omnes declinaverunt, simul *inutiles* facti sunt” (*Ps.* 13: 3).

Kyrie, eleison.

NOTE

[1] Source: *The Life and Revelations of St. Gertrude* (London: Burns & Oates/New York: Benziger, 1870), of which a typo-ridden version is available...

[2] Ibid.

[3] I am aware that when litanies are recited, there is a doubling of the Kyrie rather than a tripling. But this is the authentic structure of the litanies, even as the ninefold structure was the authentic structure in the Mass. It flies in the face of all respect for inherited rites to do violence to an ancient (6th-century) structure in order to bring it into conformity with a modern predilection for call-and-response mechanisms.

[4] H. J. A. Sire, *Phoenix from the Ashes* (Kettering, OH: Angelico Press, 2015), 261.

[5] And please do not tell me that the responsorial psalm was something ancient that, having been forgotten, was rightly revived. In the form in which it was re-launched in 1969, and above all in the manner in which it is done, it has nothing to do with ancient practice.

[6] This comment is from a thread in which various Orthodox laymen are discussing the benefits of repetition in liturgical prayer. It interests me especially because there is no indication that anyone in the discussion is a theologian or a liturgist; they are just ordinary folks trying to live their tradition, as we should do.

<http://www.newliturgicalmovement.org/2018/07/the-ninefold-kyrie-example-of-useless.html#.W2I0x9IzbIU>