

# Pastors who celebrate Tridentine Mass speak about its appeal

WASHINGTON - Like sacred music and Michelangelo's "Pieta" sculpture, the Tridentine Mass is part of the church's heritage and should be honored rather than defamed, a Chicago priest said.

In response to Pope Benedict XVI's July 7 directive to make the Tridentine Mass more available to the faithful, Father Dennis Kolinski, associate pastor of St. John Cantius in Chicago, said he disagrees with critics of the Mass and the directive. Some people have said the directive will lead the church in a more traditional direction and cause division in the church.

But Father Kolinski said the Mass is part of the church's liturgical history.

"How can you say something derogatory about something that has cultivated saints for the past 500 years?" said Father Kolinski, who celebrates the Tridentine Mass at his parish and is a priest of the Society of St. John Cantius.

He sees the pope's decision as being a pastoral move to serve the faithful who desire to worship God through this form of the Mass and who find it to be beneficial for growing in their relationship with God.

Catholics drawn to the Tridentine Mass, the Latin-language liturgy that predates the Second Vatican Council, are often attracted by its aesthetic beauty as well as its tradition, Catholic News Service learned in interviews with other priests who also celebrate the rite.

"The people that come here are very dedicated to it," said Father Edward Burba, pastor of St. Mary Church in Akron, Ohio. "By and large they don't have anything against the post-council Mass, but they find the beauty of the Tridentine Mass uplifting."

Father Burba credits the celebration of the rite with bringing back Catholics who had left the church and joined schismatic groups when the modern liturgy was put in place. "That's been very edifying," he said.

Eric Restuccia, 39, is too young to remember when the Tridentine Mass was the norm, but has come to appreciate it over time and now finds it compelling.

“What I love about the old Mass is that it underscores the supernatural character of the Mass – that ultimately the action of the Mass is Christ offering himself to the Father – and then we join ourselves to that,” said Restuccia, who attends St. Josaphat Church in Detroit, Mich.

“The old Mass more clearly expresses its sacrificial character,” he told *The Michigan Catholic*, newspaper of the Detroit Archdiocese.

Restuccia is not alone as part of the younger generation regularly attending the Tridentine Mass.

Father Alfred Harris, of St. Mary Mother of God Church in Washington, noted an equal number of younger and older Catholics at the weekly Sunday Mass, which draws an estimated 350 people.

In Toledo, Ohio, Father Stephen Majoros has been celebrating the rite at St. Joseph Parish for several years.

He said he offers it because as a priest he wants to provide whatever will help his parishioners grow in their relationship with God.

“I don’t deny them anything that they need or want for the good of their spiritual life,” he said, adding he would celebrate whichever form of the missal the people preferred.

The new Roman Missal, introduced in 1970, is the ordinary way of Catholic worship. The 1962 Roman Missal contains what is commonly known as the Tridentine rite.

As a member of a religious order founded to bridge both liturgical traditions of the church, Father Kolinski believes the Tridentine Mass can bring people together rather than divide them.

While some people think the Tridentine Mass is divisive, “we found it actually to be unitive. We offer both here, and it brings people together. People cross the lines,” he

said.

How easily the pope's directive can be implemented is yet to be seen, said Monsignor Bill Parent, former vocations director for the Archdiocese of Washington and pastor of St. Peter's Parish in Waldorf, Md.

The directive contains a provision that a stable group of laypeople may ask their parish priest for the Tridentine Mass to be celebrated and that the priest should "willingly accede to their request." However, it also states that priests must be qualified to celebrate the Mass, leaving the faithful with recourse to the bishop for another way to participate in the rite if their priest is unable to fulfill the request.

But Monsignor Parent said that the majority of priests are not yet trained in how to celebrate the Tridentine Mass.

Although most priests are taught Latin in the seminary, it's not a matter of just reading the Latin. The priests need to be trained in making the proper gestures that accompany the prayers, and they first need to practice saying it, "so it's not painfully awkward for everyone," he said.

But even with the directive, Father Burba said he expected celebrations of the Tridentine Mass to continue to be offered at limited venues.

"I don't think you're going to see a huge outpouring of demand for it," he said.