ONE GENUFLECTION FEWER IN THE NEW MASS

Bp. Michał Stobnicki

Beloved in Christ the Lord, on the feast of the Circumcision of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the octave of Christmas, we gather at Christ's altar and begin a new calendar year. On the threshold of this new calendar year it is worth reminding ourselves why we remain faithful to Catholic Tradition. Why we desire to take part in the Mass of all time, that Mass which the Church has celebrated for centuries, that Mass which perfectly renders worship to God, One in the Holy Trinity, that Mass in which a holy, pure and immaculate sacrifice is offered, as the most venerable liturgical prayer of the Church, the Roman Canon, says.

In the Roman Martyrology today we also commemorate the martyrdom of Saint Almachius, who called the pagans to conversion with the following words: "Today is the octave of the birth of Our Lord. Turn away from superstitious idolatry and sinful sacrifices." The only sacrifice worthy of God's majesty, the only sacrifice that can appease the divine majesty for our sins, is the sacrifice of Our Lord Jesus Christ. That sacrifice which is made present in every Holy Mass. Every Holy Mass makes present that sacrifice which Christ the Lord offered on Good Friday on the altar of the Cross.

For several decades now the so-called *Novus Ordo Missae*, the new order of the Mass, has been in operation in the world; it was imposed on the Catholic world after the Second Vatican Council. Many Catholics today wonder what the relationship is between the so-called Tridentine Mass, the Mass of all time, which for centuries was celebrated in churches, and this new order of the Mass, introduced several decades ago. Many voices are heard claiming that there is no great difference, that both are Mass, that there is no need to worry about which Holy Mass one attends. My dear brethren, nothing could be further from the truth.

LEX ORANDI, LEX CREDENDI

Today, on the threshold of this new calendar year, I wish to draw your attention to a seemingly small change in the liturgy which expresses a deep and serious theological change, a change in the faith. The Fathers of the Church repeated: *lex orandi*, *lex credendi*, which we could translate: as you believe, so you pray; as you pray, so you believe. The liturgy in which we take part is not the work of chance, it is not some whim of ours, but it is an expression of the faith we profess. Through these external actions, external deeds, words, we wish to express what we believe, and what is an interior act. We bend our knees if only to express our submission, our subordination to God, that we acknowledge Him as a being higher than ourselves, that we acknowledge our dependence on our Creator and Saviour.

THE PRIEST'S TWO GENUFLECTIONS

During Holy Mass, when the priest recites the holy Canon, the heart of that Canon is the words of transubstantiation, words which the priest repeats *in persona Christi*, in the name of Christ, acting in the name of Christ, lending Our Lord his hands, his lips, his tongue, and he pronounces over the bread and wine the words: "This is My Body," "This is the chalice of My Blood." And in this way transubstantiation takes place: the substance changes, to speak the language of philosophy. Of the bread and wine the accidents remain, what we see with the eye: a piece of white bread which tastes like bread, but its substance, its essence, is already something completely different. It is the Lord Jesus, it is the Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ. And the holy Church calls this change, this transubstantiation, *transubstantiation*, the change of substance, the change of essence. And as the holy Church confesses, this change takes place precisely through these words, through the priest's repetition of the words of Christ the Lord.

And therefore, as soon as the priest in the Mass of all time pronounces the words of transubstantiation, and transubstantiation takes place, and so God has become present on the altar, he immediately genuflects, bends his knees, to render worship to God present among us. And only then does he lift the host, show it to the people for adoration, and genuflect again. And every time he touches the Lord's Body, he genuflects [...], thereby expressing his reverence, expressing through this posture of adoration the praise due to God.

ORIGIN OF THE CHANGE

In the new Mass, the so-called Mass of Paul VI, among many other changes, a small change was introduced: the priest no longer genuflects twice. He only pronounces the words of transubstantiation, or as they say, the words of institution, as a kind of narrative, shows the host to the people, and only then genuflects. This was justified by saying that it would be a simplification, since why should the priest kneel twice when he can kneel just once.

Only that behind this tiny, seemingly small liturgical change, the elimination of one genuflection, lies a completely new theological conception, whose roots are nowhere other than in the teaching of Martin Luther himself, in Protestantism. For Martin Luther taught that this host does not become the Body of Jesus at all, but that somehow Jesus becomes present for a moment, unites himself with this bread, but only as long as there is the assembly, as long as there is the congregation taking part in the liturgy. He spoke of *consubstantiation*, and so he denied the teaching of the Catholic Church. Which also found its expression in the Protestant liturgy, where genuflections were eliminated, abolished.

And then the Second Vatican Council comes, and in its time a very fashionable theologian of the day is the Dutch Dominican Father Schillebeeckx, who says openly that the Church's teaching on transubstantiation, the teaching of Saint Thomas Aquinas on the change of the bread and wine, is simply outdated, that modern man is not able to accept it, that a new theological conception has to be created. And he creates one, which he calls *transignification*, a change of meaning. In other words, Father Schillebeeckx says: you go to Holy Mass, but in this host there is no Jesus at all, only its meaning for you changes. As long as you regard this host as the Lord Jesus, for you it can be the Lord Jesus. But that is your faith. The faith of the people causes this host to become, for a moment, in some way, the Lord Jesus. And look: Father Schillebeeckx, a friend of Paul VI, enjoying extraordinary support, despite the fact that he preaches street-level heresies.

This is only one example concerning the Most Blessed Sacrament. This conception is, after all, reflected in the new liturgy, because the priest genuflects only afterwards, when he has shown the host to the people. In other words, the new Mass no longer expresses that transubstantiation takes place, that the priest brings about transubstantiation by repeating the words of Christ the Lord, acting in the name of Christ. It is only the faith of the people, the faith of the gathered community, the faith of the congregation that causes the Lord Jesus to become present in some way. But this presence, exactly as in Protestantism, lasts as long as the community is gathered. The community disperses, the Lord Jesus vanishes, because there is no one left to believe that something happened in that host.

HOSTS IN BLACK BAGS

My dear brethren, I will give you one very concrete, sad example, a fruit of this theological change, a change which denies that the Lord Jesus is truly, really, substantially present under the Eucharistic species. John Paul II went in the 1990s on a pilgrimage to North America. A Holy Mass took place there for a crowd of pilgrims, and a certain Polish priest took part, concelebrated, and he distributed Holy Communion. He was told that when he finished he should go to the tent next to the altar, where he could leave the Blessed Sacrament. And so he did as he was told, he went, carrying the ciborium with the hosts, and watches what happens next. He gives it to one priest, a "snake" [?], one passes it from hand to hand, and at the end black rubbish bags. And these hosts land in rubbish bags. You are nodding your heads in horror, but, my dear brethren, this is after all the logical consequence of a change of faith. If the Lord Jesus is somehow present in this host as long as the assembly lasts, when there is no assembly, there is no

Lord Jesus, plain bread remains. And so they load the hosts into those black rubbish bags. The priest clutches his head, horrified. Just then [...] ends and the whole procession with John Paul II passes by that very tent. And what does John Paul II do? He genuflects very piously and walks on. He did not utter a single word that a huge, organised, institutionalised profanation was taking place right there, if transubstantiation had taken place there.

FAITHFULNESS FROM THE FAITH

Therefore, my dear brethren, on the threshold of this new calendar year we need to remind ourselves anew that our faithfulness, our remaining with the Mass of all time, is not some whim, does not come from the fact that we like to sing a bit in Latin, that we like it when the priest puts on a beautiful chasuble. But this faithfulness of ours to the Mass of all time comes from the fact that we desire to take part in a liturgy which expresses the Catholic faith. We desire to pray as we believe.

Look at how many people over the last several decades have been brought to the loss of faith precisely because they took part in a protestantised liturgy, in a liturgy in which the knees are straightened, in which you can no longer kneel, in which the Lord's Body is treated worse than a piece of cake, in a liturgy in which there is no room for recollection, for contemplation, for silence. Here people cannot find their way when silence falls. There must be guitars, there must be a priest-emcee who will entertain the community. And where in all this is the place for God, for the God who, after all, speaks in silence?

Therefore, my dear brethren, let us remind ourselves constantly what our faithfulness to the Mass of all time comes from: that it comes from the fact that we desire to preserve the Catholic faith. And let us not be deceived by all those tragic false prophets who wish to convince us today that it does not matter which Mass you go to, that in sum there are no great differences. And remember the example of Saint Almachius, and remember his words, which today we should cry out, calling to their senses so many lost, deceived Catholics: "Today is the octave of the birth of Our Lord. Turn away from superstitious idolatry and sinful sacrifices."

Amen. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.