

Is Rejecting the Pius XII Liturgical Reforms Illegal?

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by Rev. Anthony Cekada

How can you justify using the older rubrics and Missal?

QUESTION: *I was just wondering how you justify rejection of the Holy Week "reforms" under Pius XII. If the principle of "epikeia" is invoked, it would seem this does not apply given the validity of the reigning Pontiff, and his rightful authority to make such changes. I was under the impression that epikeia only applied when a law began to work against the common good and needed to be ignored. I would appreciate your insight.*

QUESTION: *Regarding the 1955 Holy Week changes: in reading the arguments from 1955 for the reasons for the changes, the "innovators" talked of "returning to earlier traditions" and of "simplification of the ceremonies", etc.: the same arguments made later for the entire Novus Ordo. Admittedly, the whole thing stinks of Bugnini. Annibale admitted in his memoirs that this was an important step towards the liturgical anarchy he later created with Paul VI and all their Protestant friends and bishops. I have no doubt in my mind that the 1955 changes should have been thrown out (like the rest of Bugnini's "innovations").*

However, I have two main questions: what does this say to us of Pope Pius XII in those latter years for permitting and utilizing this new ceremony, and also, since we have been Interregnum since 1958, what justifications do we utilize to individually celebrate the older ceremonies which were replaced before 1958 without making it appear that we are "picking and choosing" which ceremonies we want to utilize. Is it because of the belief that Pope Pius XII would never have agreed with the changes if he knew what occurred afterwards like we do know? Is it because he never really promulgated the changes (as some believe)? Or is it simply because Bugnini was behind it all? I would greatly appreciate your thoughts on this as this topic has puzzled me for quite some time.

RESPONSE. Over the years we have been repeatedly asked this question. The answer is quite simple, and is based on the common-sense principles that underlie all the Church's legislation.

The laws promulgating the Pius XII liturgical reforms were human ecclesiastical laws, subject to the general principles of interpretation for all church laws. As such, they no longer bind on two grounds:

1. Lack of Stability or Perpetuity. Stability is an essential quality of a true law. The 1955 reforms were merely transitional norms; this is self-evident from subsequent legislation and contemporaneous comments by those responsible for creating them.

In his 1955 book on the changes, *The Simplification of the Rubrics*, Bugnini himself makes this abundantly clear in the following passages:

- "The present decree has a contingent character. It is essentially a bridge between the old and the new, and if you will, an

arrow indicating the direction taken by the current restoration....”

- “The simplification does not embrace all areas which would deserve a reform, but *for the moment only* the things that are easiest and most obvious and with an immediate and tangible effect... In the simplification, being a ‘bridge’ between the present state and the general reform, compromise was inevitable...”

- “This reform is only the first step toward measures of a wider scope, and it is not possible to judge accurately of a part except when it is placed in its whole.”

In a 1956 commentary on the new Holy Week rite (*Bibliotheca Ephemerides Lit.* 25, p.1.), Bugnini says:

- “The decree *Maxima redemptionis nostrae mysteria*, promulgated by the Sacred Congregation of Rites on 16 November 1955 [and introducing the new Holy Week] is the third step towards a general liturgical reform.”

Such norms (as we now realize), thus lacked one of the essential qualities of a law — stability or perpetuity — and are therefore no longer binding.

2. Cessation of Law. A human ecclesiastical law that was obligatory when promulgated can become harmful (*nociva*) through a change of circumstances after the passage of time. When this happens, such a law ceases to bind. (I have written several articles that touch upon this topic.)

Traditionalists apply this principle (at least implicitly) to a great number of ecclesiastical laws, and it applies equally to the 1955 reforms.

The many parallels in principles and practices between the Missal of Paul VI and the 1955 reforms now render continued use of the latter harmful, because such a use promotes (at least implicitly) the dangerous error that Paul VI's "reform" was merely one more step in the organic development of the Catholic liturgy.

Indeed, this is the very lie that Paul VI proclaimed in the first two paragraphs of *Missale Romanum*, his 1969 Apostolic Constitution promulgating the *Novus Ordo*.

It makes no sense to support this deception by insisting that the 1955 legislation still binds — especially when we now know that it was all part of a long-range plot by Annibale Bugnini's modernist cabal to destroy the Mass.

Here, from his 1955 book, *The Simplification of the Rubrics*, is Bugnini announcing the long-term goal of these changes:

- “We are concerned with ‘restoring’ [the liturgy]... [making it] a new city in which the man of our age can live and feel at ease...”

- “No doubt it is still too early to assess the full portent of this document, which marks an important turning point in the history of the rites of the Roman liturgy...”

- “Those who are eager for a more wholesome, realistic liturgical renewal are once more — I should say — almost invited, tacitly, to keep their eyes open and make an accurate investigation of the principles here put forward, to see their possible applications...”

- “More than in any other field, a reform in the liturgy must be the fruit of an intelligent, enlightened collaboration of all the active forces.”

And here is Bugnini describing how his “reform” commission got the liturgical changes approved by Pius XII:

“The commission enjoyed the full confidence of the Pope, who was kept abreast of its work by Monsignor Montini [Paul VI, the modernist who would promulgate the Novus Ordo] and even more, on a weekly basis, by Father Bea [half-Jew, modernist, and premier ecumenist at Vatican II], confessor of Pius XII. Thanks to them, the commission was able to achieve important results even during periods when the Pope’s illness kept everyone else from approaching him.” (*The Liturgical Reform*, p.9)

Thus, the Mason’s liturgical creations were presented to the sick pope for his approval by the two scheming modernists who would be major players in destroying the Church at Vatican II.

Bugnini in his memoirs, indeed, entitles the chapter on his involvement with the pre-Vatican II changes as “The Key to the Liturgical Reform.” It prepared the ground for what would follow.

I devote two weeks of my seminary liturgy course on the “Modern Era” to an examination of the pre-Vatican II antecedents to the later “reforms.” The problems outlined in the articles by Bp. Dolan and Fr. Ricossa on our web site thus far are only the tip of the iceberg.

Traditionalists rightly set aside as inapplicable many other ecclesiastical laws. *A fortiori*, they should ignore liturgical laws that were the dirty work of the man who destroyed the Mass.

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