

PAIX LITURGIQUE

Letter 104 published 19 August 2019

OVER 100 MILLION CATHOLICS WORLDWIDE WISH TO LIVE OUT THEIR CATHOLIC FAITH IN THE TRADITIONAL LITURGY

THE SITUATION OF THE TRADITIONAL LITURGY THROUGHOUT THE WORLD AT THE END OF 2018: THIRD PARTY THE FAITHFUL

We have established that the traditional Mass is now celebrated in over eighty countries. We have also demonstrated that over 4,500 Catholic priests celebrate Mass according to the *usus antiquior*. In the present letter we shall deal with the number of Catholics throughout the world who are attached to the traditional liturgy of the Church. We have asked Christian Marquant to show us the results of the survey he presented at the *Summorum Pontificum* conference in Rome on 26 October 2018.

Oremus - In this third part of our report let us deal with the issue of the faithful attached to the traditional Mass.

Christian Marquant - To address this issue we have to follow the path we've taken from our Oremus days to the present. Remember that thirty years ago the ecclesiastical authorities refused to acknowledge our actual existence For that reason we had to think hard and use means which, over the course of more than three decades, have allowed us to reach a fair assessment of the number of Catholics attached to the traditional liturgy throughout the world. In the first place, we had to think about how to get at a satisfying answer for France . . . and the rest of the world followed!

Oremus - How did you go about it?

Christian Marquant - Our first step was to draw up the number of traditional Masses in France in order to establish the number of the faithful attending them.

Oremus - Did you arrive at the precise number of laymen who practice the extraordinary form?

Christian Marquant - No, only a starting figure. As you know, there are very few celebrations of the traditional Mass compared to the Mass in the ordinary form. This holds true for France, but also to very many other countries. Hence numerous laymen who live far from traditional chapels can attend these celebrations only intermittently. Furthermore, many Catholics nowadays, even those attached to the traditional liturgy, don't practice every Sunday, either because they are influenced by the prevailing laxism, or on the contrary because they prefer not to attend Mass and stay home to read it in a Missal when they are unable to attend the older Mass because they find the new one too hard to bear. So the core of laymen counted up on any given Sunday needs to be rectified according to these two parameters.

Oremus - Are the priests aware of this?

Christian Marquant - Of course! But they don't all quite know what to make of it. As far as I am concerned, taking into account the elements I just mentioned, the sum total of practicing Catholics on any given Sunday must, on average, be multiplied by three to gauge the real number of laymen attached to any given chapel. Especially if you want to take in to account the very intermittently practicing Catholics who go to Mass only for the great solemnities such as Christmas and Easter, or even for Palm Sunday, which is still an attraction for many semi-practicing Catholics.

Oremus - **How many does that amount to, for a country like France?**

Christian Marquant - Given the figure of about 450 chapels where the traditional Mass is celebrated in France, and given an average attendance of 150 faithful, we have a basis of Catholics in attendance of at least 67,500 faithful on a typical Sunday.

Oremus - **Is this the number you are inclined to rectify?**

Christian Marquant - Of course! By tripling this figure—that is, if you reckon that there are on every Sunday 67,500 faithful attending a traditional Mass in France—it is legitimate to conclude that the faithful belonging these chapels amount to at least 200,000.

Oremus - **That's rather low.**

Christian Marquant - Indeed, it is low compared to the 40 million Frenchmen who claim to be Catholic. But let's not forget that of these 40 million only about 2.4 million may be considered “regular” Massgoers according to criteria close to those we used to reach the number of “traddy” Massgoers in France. This means that our 200,000 laymen who attend the traditional liturgy would represent about 8% of French Massgoers, which is far from insignificant.

But you can't leave it at that; you can't rest content with this type of count. Indeed the last time I spoke I pointed out that the number of chapels where the traditional Mass is celebrated is so small that we must take into account not only the faithful who actually attend “extraordinary” Masses but also those who would like to but usually cannot do so.

Oremus - **Yet today we have means of transportation that make this participation possible for all.**

Christian Marquant - Theoretically you are correct but only very few, very rare laymen, who can legitimately be called heroes, are able to make such a choice. The vast majority of the faithful attached to the traditional Mass are men and women who may be motivated but who, for a variety of reasons—age, large family, limited financial means, family or social obligations, etc.—cannot be reasonably expected to make such a choice. Also, some of them are the “Silent Ones of the Church.”

Oremus - **“Silent Ones of the Church”: what does that mean?**

Christian Marquant - These “Silent Ones” are those Catholics who feel uneasy with the innovations that have been imposed in the Church over the last fifty years in catechesis and liturgy. They are not in the habit of questioning authority or expressing themselves to it. They are content to go along, albeit reluctantly, and to wait for better days when—so they hope—worship will be in greater harmony with their doctrinal and spiritual instincts, which in my view is the instinct of faith.

Oremus - **But then, these Silent Ones never speak up?**

Christian Marquant - They no longer speak up, or not very loudly, and with good reason. Every time I have chatted with some of these laymen, I've noted that at the beginning of the innovations, in their parishes, they let their pastors know their wishes and their difficulties. But, as they were most often roughly upbraided

as clinging to the past, being retrograde or nostalgic, they usually preferred to keep quiet . . . or leave.

Oremus - **Do you believe that the drop in religious practice is due to it?**

Christian Marquant - It would be a big exaggeration to reduce the phenomenon of the drop in religious practice in the West to this cause alone. The principal reason, according to the historian Guillaume Cuchet, is the generalized feeling that the Council had erased all absolutely obligatory duty from the lives of Catholics. But there was also an aspect of the disenchantment of the faithful from their Church since the Council, particularly regarding the church-as-building: another historian, Luc Perrin, has shown the extent to which dislocations in the worship space had rattled Massgoers. Besides, it is a matter of common knowledge that a substantial number of Catholics stopped practicing when they fled from the liturgical revolution because their “religion had been changed on them.” In reality all these motivations overlap: the conciliar clergy, from the top to down, sought to impose a new way of praying and believing. This, leaving aside the fundamental judgment one may have on this innovation, did not work at all on the lay side. Was it a heresy? Quite possibly. Whatever the case may be, it has been an indisputable failure with a religious practice now down to 2% of baptized Catholics in France!

Oremus - **Forgive me for insisting on this point, but how can you gauge the number of silent laymen who, by definition, do not express themselves?**

Christian Marquant - They don’t express themselves out loud, but they do speak up, especially given the chance. In France, since the 1970s—that is, since the brutal imposition of the liturgical reform in our parishes—we have had several opportunities to meet them and measure the extent of this disenchantment.

Actually this term, “the Silent Ones,” had been invented by Pierre Debray, a terrific man, a convert, and a magnificent orator who had given the name “Silent Ones of the Church” to his movement. Pierre Debray, however, spoke high and loud for others! He had organized an “Assembly of the Silent Ones of the Church” in Versailles in November 1970. Its success ought to have provided food for thought to specialists in the sociology of religion, but they long remained blind despite all the clues they could have picked up.

Notably this clue: in 1976, right in the middle of the summer when there was so much talk about Archbishop Lefebvre, who had just been struck by a disciplinary measure for the first time, *Le Progrès*, a daily newspaper of Lyon, commissioned an opinion poll on this “Lefebvre affair.” The results were quite extraordinary—in fact we’re going to republish this opinion poll in full in a forthcoming *Paix Liturgique* Letter. I’ll mention just two of its findings:

- 28% of surveyed Catholics approved of Archbishop Lefebvre’s decision to ordain priests without a mandate from Rome.
- And more significantly, 48% of practicing Catholics judged that “the Church today, by dint of reforms, has gone too far”

Cardinal Renard, archbishop of Lyon at the time, was asked about this by the journalists of *Le Progrès* and admitted that he’d been surprised by those figures. But as far as we know this did not lead our bishops to undertake other surveys, or even to create a commission within the French Conference of Catholic Bishops. Anyway, at the time Church leaders were unable to see this reality: they, and they alone, knew what was best for the Church and for Christians, and nothing could have diverted them from their grand reforming design.

You will easily understand that, in direct contradiction, our desire was great to try and find out more about these “Silent Ones,” who were often our neighbors, and to gauge their numbers for the beginning of the third millennium, thirty-five years after the end of the council.

Oremus - **What did you do?**

Christian Marquant - More surveys. That actually was the context in which Oremus-Paix Liturgique took the survey route. Still, keep in mind that it was a whole new field for us and that we had no experience in it. Also, this adventure turned out to be very costly; some friends even told us not to go there on the grounds that the very principle of an opinion survey is vitiated . . . (whereas this method is regularly used by our adversaries).

And so, in 2001, we crossed the Rubicon—the term is barely an exaggeration, given the stunning results we gathered over time, a veritable coup d’État, or rather Church coup—and commissioned our first French poll from Ipsos. Then we repeated the experiment in France in 2006 and 2008, at the time of Benedict XVI’s visit to France, relying both times on the services of CSA.

Let us not go into the details; they are to be found in booklets available to all. Let's stick to the results. Note first that the results of all three surveys are, globally speaking, identical, which indicates a great stability of opinion.

I'll point out just three figures among the results:

- a/ Overall, 30% of Mass-going Catholics would gladly attend the “extraordinary” Mass if it were celebrated in their parishes.
- b/ Two thirds of Catholics find normal the cohabitation of the two forms of the rite in their parish.
- c/ Those opposed to this liturgical plurality (i.e. against granting the right of citizenship to the traditional form) amount to less than a third of Catholics, yet they are still in control of the parishes and structures of French Catholicism and are fiercely opposed to any appeasement.

Oremus - **What lesson do you draw from these results?**

Christian Marquant - The most important result is that one can now count these “Silent Ones”: at the end of the day, 30% of parishioners wish to attend the traditional Mass IN THEIR PARISHES.

These figures, if compared to the method of measuring traditional laymen relatively to observed practice, mean that it is no longer 200,000 faithful who are attached to the traditional Mass in France, but at least 25% of the Catholics of France, that is, at least ten million Frenchmen! This changes everything.

Oremus - **How did you end up conducting opinion polls outside of France?**

Christian Marquant - We were tired of hearing the enemies of Peace tell us time and again that the traditional phenomenon was a strictly French affair. We knew, through our friends in Italy and elsewhere, that this movement was dynamic in most countries of the Catholic world. At the time we were in relations with our friends at the Italian blog “Messainlatino”,* to whom we proposed launching a similar survey in Italy.

But I have to say, outside of “Messainlatino” of course, most of our Italian friends tried to discourage us, claiming that their country was not France and that results there would be bad if not catastrophic. . . In a word, a veritable Stockholm syndrome!

Nevertheless, we launched an opinion poll in 2009” with the Doxa institute, in partnership with our friends at “Messainlatino. I'll gloss over the details . . . the results were even better than in France:

- 71% of Italians “find normal the celebration of the two forms of the rite in their parishes”;
- over 60% of practicing Catholics said that they wished to attend the traditional Mass IN THEIR PARISH.

Oremus - **Is that when you decided to pursue this campaign?**

Christian Marquant - Yes; only financial considerations kept us from doing so right away. Still, between 2010 and 2017 we commissioned similar surveys in seven countries, namely Germany, Portugal, and the United Kingdom in 2010, then in Switzerland and Spain in 2011, and lastly in Poland and Brazil in 2017.

Oremus - **With what results?**

Christian Marquant - With identical, sometimes better, results than in France; NEVER WORSE.

For example, in liturgically ravaged Portugal the results were extraordinary (30% of practicing Catholics would gladly attend the TRADITIONAL LITURGY EVERY WEEK and 25% more would do so at least once a month . . .).

You can find all the details of these surveys in our booklets

In sum, the most spectacular result is that in the ten countries we were able to survey one finds a minimum of 25% of the faithful who would prefer to live their Catholic faith in the traditional liturgy in their parishes.

Oremus - **What does this mean?**

Christian Marquant - Concretely this means that throughout the world 25% of Catholics are attracted to the traditional liturgy, that they generally know of each other only through occasional contacts or hearsay, and that they are deeply dissatisfied with the liturgy they are being served, if you'll pass the expression.

Now according to the Vatican statistics, Latin Catholics today number 1 299 000 000 faithful.** One could guess that a fourth of them might constitute the people of Summorum Pontificum.

Even if you stick to a fraction of the number, bringing it down to 10%, we'd have at least 130 million Catholics on the planet hoping, more or less expressly, to be given a liturgy "like in the old days," or, if they are better informed, hoping for their pastors to apply the motu proprio that Benedict XVI proclaimed on 7 July 2007.

Oremus - **But don't you think that this attraction concerns only the faithful of Old Europe?**

Christian Marquant - Don't be fooled, others are more Catholic than we are! In 2017 we conducted a survey outside of Old Europe, in Brazil, whose results are more favorable to the traditional Mass than what had transpired in France.

But we share your curiosity: that is why we have just commissioned an opinion poll in Korea, admirable Catholic Korea; we'll be publishing the results soon. I can already tell you that they are as good as those obtained in Europe or Brazil. This allows us to say unequivocally that our global approximation is not without a factual basis and that it would be erroneous to seek to apply it to Old Europe alone. The whole world is waiting for a liturgical renewal!

Oremus - **Is it your intention to continue your opinion polls?**

Christian Marquant - Yes, if Providence helps us find generous benefactors, which would make it possible. On average a survey like those we've been talking about costs us €7,500. As it is, at Cardinal Burke's request we've launched a survey in the United States. We were thinking of a survey in Mexico, another in Asia

There are also countries where the economic situation makes it difficult to conduct a survey. I'm thinking of most countries in Africa. So we are planning on making mission trips to countries where there is no traditional Mass yet, but where we have a feeling that "Silent Ones" await.

Oremus - **Are these mission trips still in the planning stage, or a forthcoming reality?**

Christian Marquant - We have already undertaken several trips of this type; we'll describe them in future Letters. I'll give you an example. In January 2019 we undertook an exploratory mission to Angola, a country where the traditional Mass is not celebrated (or rather, is no longer celebrated, since it once used to be). I

can tell you that in that country we found many laymen and priests who aspire to this celebration. We discovered that the Society of Saint Pius X intends to move in soon . . . Naturally we'll help these Angolans gain access to the traditional Mass and we hope that this country will be included in our 2019 report on countries where the extraordinary Mass is celebrated.

Oremus - And in conclusion ?

Christian Marquant - Saint Thomas says that every man who comes in to the world is ordered to the Church. This is why every Christian must be a missionary. Liturgically speaking, I would say that, more directly, all Roman Catholics are necessarily—if they are still Catholic—nostalgic for the fullness of the Roman liturgy.

More concretely yet, the faithful who aspire to the traditional liturgy or who are attached to it are certainly over 100 million on earth. Am I exaggerating? Believe me: the Council's stars are dimming, and one may well soon see surprising "returns" in the Church. In any event, you will see that within ten years the traditional Mass will be celebrated in all countries that have a Latin Catholic community. So the immediate question is not how many "silent" laymen there are in the world, but how all of us, priests and faithful, are going to be able to help these priests and laymen, our brothers, who are preparing to live on the traditional liturgy for their own greater spiritual and doctrinal good and for the greater glory of God.

* See our Letter 677: "MESSAINLATINO AUX ORIGINES D'UNE PRISE DE CONSCIENCE TRADITIONNELLE EN ITALIE."

** Annuaire statistique de l'Eglise 2016 (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana , 2018), 17-19.